

Minutes of the 53<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the UK Computing Research Executive Committee on Tuesday 10 March 2020 at 10:00 held online

**PRESENT**

Jane Hillston (Chair)  
David De Roure  
Cliff Jones

Chris Johnson  
David Hutchison  
m.c. schraefel

Ann Blandford  
Luc Moreau  
Jie Xu

**BY INVITATION**

Edmund Robinson (CPHC)  
Andrew Rylah (IET)

Jessica Bonham (EPSRC)

Bill Mitchell (BCS)

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Maxine Leslie (BCS)

**APOLOGIES**

Rhys Perry (EPSRC)

James Davenport/Tom Crick (BCS Academy)

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair recorded her thanks to Members for accommodating the last minute change to an online meeting. Apologies were received as above, noting that J Bonham was in attendance for EPSRC/UKRI.

**2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 29 October 2019 were APPROVED and are now ready for transfer to the UKCRC website. **ACTION: Secretariat/A Rylah**

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

**UKCRCEC meeting held on 29 October 2019**

Item 3: Matters arising – BCS/UKCRC to nurture champions for Select Committee liaison and work together to coordinate strong messages (see Chair's report, NCSC meeting discussion below).

**CPHC-UKCRC collaborative working 29 October 2019**

Item 3: Ethics – the Chair indicated that a session on ethics was being planned as a CPHC Conference session, although she was unable to attend. There was a question about these sessions going online and E Robinson indicated that the Conference Committee was considering this, with a decision due by the end of March and will keep Members informed on how the ethics strand develops. **ACTION: E Robinson**

**UKCRCEC meeting held on 4 June 2019**

Item 5.1: Consultations and submissions – this process was in place, but had not been formally documented. The Secretariat to liaise with B Mitchell and C Johnson to formalise this. **ACTION: C Johnson/B Mitchell/M Leslie**

**3.1 Amendments to Membership webpages**

It was noted that the version circulated for this meeting was not the most up to date version and A Blandford undertook to circulate the most recent version to the Exec for comment.

Members AGREED an amendment to the process to remove the reference to nominating via the Executive Committee, to ensure that the process is democratic in advance of finalising the document and liaising with the IET to update the membership webpage. [*post meeting note: actions complete*]

#### 4. CHAIR'S REPORT

RECEIVED and NOTED the report.

UKCRC/EPSRC workshop: The Chair thanked those who attended the December workshop and in particular A Blandford who had chaired the afternoon session. J Bonham indicated that the workshop had been useful to raise awareness of Big Ideas in the wider community. The morning session had concluded with a lively barnstorming talk by C Johnson. EPSRC was open to running a further session, provided there was a clear idea of what we are aiming to achieve, with a tangible output. Another idea was to run a further career forum which might cover some areas from the workshop. A Blandford suggested recording workshop sessions in future with a view to writing them up for the wider membership.

m.c. schraefel suggested working with EPSRC to resource some research-based community-focussed workshops (eg, AI, HCI, sustainability and health) to bring together research areas nationally, if it is part of UKCRC's remit. The Chair supported this, although indicated that this activity would rely on volunteers. J Bonham invited Members that had ideas for workshops to contact her or R Perry to discuss how EPSRC could support UKCRC in such activities and, in turn, EPSRC will keep UKCRC informed of any workshops coming up. M Leslie to add ideas for workshops as a standing item on future Executive Committee agendas. **ACTION: M Leslie**

Membership: the Chair is keen to encourage Members to think about nominating industry-based to increase dialogue with research in industry in the UK.

*C Johnson joined the meeting*

Interaction with NCSC: the Chair reported that she had attended a meeting in January at GCHQ (with a University of Edinburgh hat on) at which Ian Levy (Technical Director of NCSC) was expressing concerns about getting appropriate technical expertise into government to give advice. The Chair had spoken to him about UKCRC and then, by coincidence, C Johnson met with him the following week (as per the Consultation report, Item 5). Members were asked to consider a proposed joint meeting with NCSC to explore possibilities further, either attached to the scheduled June meeting, or by forming a more specialist group. The Chair had also heard of subsequent discussions about the idea of senior academics being seconded to NCSC. C Johnson added that Ian Levy's proposal was for an NCSC Fellow and it would be valuable to build a prototype in this area. This was a particularly opportune time to look to having influence with major announcements on research funding about to be made.

There are two main issues here, which are firstly that most consultations currently fall between AI and cybersecurity, but there is a more general issue of getting people with computation expertise to engage with policy makers to ensure that funding decisions take this into account. This is important for EPSRC also.

Members agreed that this would be a valuable discussion to take forward and that a small working group to include representation from UKCRC, CPHC, EPSRC, BCS and the IET should be convened to ensure that a set of clear and coherent objectives are agreed before meeting with NCSC, preferably at the joint UKCRC/CPHC meeting on Tuesday 30 June. D Hutchison and C Johnson undertook to discuss this further offline.

**ACTION: D Hutchison/C Johnson/J Hillston**

This also relates to the action from the last meeting for BCS/UKCRC to nurture champions for Select Committee liaison and work together to coordinate strong messages, although this

could not be progressed due to the suspension of Select Committee activities during the General Election period. It was agreed that the working group should look at interaction with government with the area of cybersecurity being used as an example of broader interaction. B Mitchell also flagged the establishment of the DCMS-funded UK Cyber Security Council which the IET and BCS are involved in and this will definitely have the ear of government going forward.

Royal Society sectional committee and nominations: In the last couple of years, a small working group was formed to consider potential nominees for RS Fellowship through Section Committee SC0. The list potential nominees was passed to the chair of SC0 Steve Furber in early July. The Chair has led this working group for the last two years but is looking for a volunteer (or suggestion) to take on the role this year. It was suggested that someone on the existing group could take over as its chair and then a new member, from the Executive Committee, be appointed. As there were no volunteers, the Chair will look to nominate someone from the Committee to ensure that there is adequate representation.

**ACTION: Chair**

## **5. CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS**

RECEIVED and NOTED the report. C Johnson reported that the consultations had been published up until the last 3 months and, as per the usual process, were published on the website following the AGM. There is a consultation with DCMS on revision of the Cyber Security Breaches report being worked on and another call out for the Scottish Road map for AI. C Johnson had polled the membership about taking “regional” consultation and everyone had responded positively.

C Johnson had met with the chair of GCRF (Global Challenges Research Fund) and other contacts involved with GCRF at BEIS and DFID. If good progress is made during the next meeting with the CSE team, the second phase will be to meet with the GCRF Steering Group, in particular as there is an under-representation of Computing Science in GCRF-related projects and an awareness that applications are being built in developing countries on a base of weak computational infrastructures. There are therefore significant research opportunities here.

*C Johnson left the meeting.*

## **6. RESEARCH FUNDING AND POLICY**

### **6.1 EPSRC Update**

Members RECEIVED and NOTED the [report](#), which could be circulated to the full UKCRC membership [*action complete*]. Concern was expressed about the speed of the changes to Pathways to Impact. J Bonham indicated that EPSRC still values impact and that the changes had been introduced to make the process easier and less bureaucratic and had been rolled out across the Research Councils, not just EPSRC. It will be important to ensure that impact is embedded within applications.

It was felt that this could be particularly problematic for those about to submit a research proposal when the change was introduced and also relates to previous conversations between UKCRC and EPSRC about lead times for calls not being family-friendly. [*Post meeting note from J Bonham: EPSRC have updated our assessment criteria which should clarify how impact will be assessed as part of the proposals moving forward and clear guidance is available at <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/changes-to-pathways-to-impact/>*]

*D De Roure joined the meeting*

## 7. REPORTS

### 7.1 Membership Panel

The Chair informed Members that, as previously announced, Kevin Jones will be stepping down as Chair of the Membership Panel and recorded her thanks to Kevin for all the great work that he'd done, both in streamlining the application process and corralling the panel to work in a timely way to process the increased volume of applications. The current position was that there was one application due. There was still one vacancy on the Membership Panel and Exec Members were asked for suggestions. C Jones raised a query about whether nominees for Membership Panel are required to be Members of UKCRC for at least 1 year, as is the case for Executive Committee membership. M Leslie undertook to check this. **ACTION: M Leslie**

### 7.2 Open Publishing Working Group

RECEIVED and NOTED the report by Edwin Hancock, Chair of the UKCRC Computer Science Publication Working Group. Further discussions were being undertaken by the Working Group and a further update will be provided at the next meeting in June.

### 7.3 International Matters inc Zurich report

RECEIVED and NOTED the report. In addition to the report, Informatics Europe had approached UKCRC with a request to sign a joint statement on Informatics Research Evaluation which had been discussed and approved in Zurich. E Robinson indicated that CPHC had also been approached to sign this and the CPHC Membership would be consulted. The Chair undertook to circulate the statement to the UKCRC Membership to check if there were any objections to UKCRC signing. *[post meeting note: action complete]*

E Robinson reported that there was some discussion in Zurich on open access and open science, with different countries at different stages in the adoption, presenting different plans for infrastructure development. There was therefore a need for discussion and lobbying to resolve this.

### 7.4 CPHC

E Robinson reported that the CPHC conference was still being organised but consideration was being made as to whether to go ahead with a meeting that requires travel given the current situation. The AGM is due in April and E Robinson will be standing for Chair. There is considerable government activity on teaching at the moment with concerns about universities, funding, value for money and the quality of provision and it will be important to engage with government (particularly DfE) on this in the coming months. D Hutchison expressed concern about the situation with Chinese students and their reluctance to take up places. E Robinson agreed and added that universities are training too few people in digital skills. There is a need to attract overseas students to help to meet this need but government policy does not assist with international student recruitment.

### 7.5 BCS Academy

B Mitchell reported that the BCS Membership Director, Holly Porter, would be holding an ideation workshop to explore with the Academy Board how the membership offer to students can be strengthened. Over the last couple of years, about 40 Student Chapters have been established in universities and the plan is to make these more sustainable and build into them more structure that will help students develop professionally whilst studying. For the National Centre for Computing Education, just short of 260 teachers

have been successful in gaining certification. A programme of support/induction for new Computer Science lecturers is being explored, in a similar vein to that delivered for maths lecturers. The BCS School Curriculum & Assessment Committee, chaired by Muffy Calder, was set up around 18 months ago and is getting good traction with DfE, Ofqual and Ofsted. A long term sponsor has been secured for the BCS Lovelace Medal in the form of the Ada Lovelace Institute. In terms of university accreditation, a number of new MSc courses in Data Science have emerged as a result of funding by the Office for Students and are requesting accreditation, which will require some innovative thinking as these programmes do not fit the current accreditation criteria. Due to changes in the Washington Accord, a number of institutions are moving away from CEng to Chartered IT Professional accreditation which BCS is looking at.

BCS is currently undertaking a joint study with the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, off the back of a report undertaken for the Office for AI/Office for Students. This relates to how ethical issues can be embedded in the curriculum and is about to go out for consultation at a series of workshops.

Lastly, B Mitchell reported that following nomination by the DfE and Office for AI, he had been awarded an OBE for services to computing and AI, which was recognition for the work undertaken in this area by BCS and a result of good relationship building by BCS. The Chair thanked B Mitchell for his report and wished him congratulations.

In relation to the new lecturer scheme, E Robinson queried a possible overlap with an approach that had been made by Alan Hayes (Bath), although it was acknowledged that there had been contact between the Academy Board Chair, Sally Fincher and A Hayes, so was likely to be part of the same initiative. The Chair asked about the CPHC 'Chair in 10 Years' workshop, which was in a similar area as she had received feedback that it was really valuable. E Robinson undertook to check on the status of the 'Chair in 10 Years' workshop and report back. **ACTION: E Robinson**

## **7.6 IET**

A Rylah reported that he had met with the IET web team in preparation for migrating to a new IET website at the end of Quarter 2/start of Quarter 3. As this will effect the UKCRC website, it will be important to gather feedback from the Executive Committee, particularly as they are looking to avoid lift and shifting the existing content, some of which had not been reviewed for some time.

The plan was for the new UKCRC homepage to follow a similar structure to the new IET homepage [www.theiet.org/](http://www.theiet.org/) with five sections: about us, members (including the private area), reports (recent and archived), events and how to join. Then there could be sub-sections underneath these five main sections.

There is an IT Steering Group meeting on 26 March. After some discussion it was agreed that L Moreau would be the intermediary between A Rylah, the web designers and the Executive Committee. A Blandford also volunteered to comment on any developed webpages if L Moreau needed it. **ACTION: A Rylah/L Moreau**

D De Roure reported that an IET "Internet of Things" conference event is being planned for 2021 in collaboration with the PETRAS National Centre of Excellence and will circulate information via the list on this. **ACTION: D De Roure**

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**8.1 ResearchFish:** A Blandford reported that another data gathering period was underway but there had been very little improvement since 2014 when EPSRC started using these as methods for improving research outputs. There were some positives but

the interface is not good. J Bonham indicated that the UKRI is currently looking at all of its online systems and colleagues are aware of the problems.

**8.2 Consent for meeting invitations:** M Leslie reported that individual consent for sharing of email addresses would be required for sending meeting invitation (as agreed at a previous meeting) and undertook to request consent from individual Members to do this. **ACTION: M Leslie**

**8.3 Increasing access to archived reports:** the Chair reported that she had received an email from Erol Gelenbe following the AGM in December about the archiving of responses to consultations on the UKCRC website. As the structure of the UKCRC website was currently under review by A Rylah and L Moreau, the Chair undertook to respond to Erol that a review was currently underway.

**8.4 BCS Academy Board representation:** it was noted that James Davenport was stepping down as Academy Board observer on the UKCRC Executive Committee and James was thanked for his involvement during his term as Chair of the Board. Members noted that Alastair Irons would be taking over as Academy Board observer with immediate effect.

The Chair thanked Members and closed the meeting at 11:53.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020**

The next EC meeting is scheduled to be held at BCS London on Tuesday 30 June and will be a joint UKCRC/CPHC meeting (exact meeting format to be confirmed). The AGM will be a virtual meeting to be held on Friday 4 December 2020 at 14:00.

### **COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2020** *Commencing 11:00 unless otherwise stated*

**\*Tuesday 30 June** – online

**Tuesday 27 October** – IET Offices, London or online

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR 2020**

**Friday 4 December at 14:00** – online

\*Co-located with the CPHC Committee meeting to be held in the afternoon.

*NB:* BCS and IET rooms subject to availability



## **EPSRC Update for UKCRC March 2020**

### **New Head of ICT Theme at EPSRC**

James Dracott has taken over as the Head of the ICT Theme at EPSRC, replacing Samantha Francis who has been promoted to Deputy Director, Research Base. James is keen to meet and engage with the computing research community in the coming months.

### **Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB)**

EPSRC is pleased to announce the recruitment of twelve members to the Science, Engineering and Technology Board – Full details of the announcement and membership can be found on the EPSRC website. The new members are drawn from across EPSRC's stakeholder groups, including both academia and business, and represent a diverse range of expertise and experience in research and innovation. The role of the board is to use scientific and technological insight to identify and champion bold new research challenges at the cutting edge of engineering and physical sciences for future investment.

### **Change to Pathways to Impact**

From 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 a separate Pathways to Impact statement and Impact summary will no longer be required for all UKRI schemes. To reflect this change, assessment of impact will be considered as part of overall proposal assessment and EPSRC's standard criteria has been updated to account for this. The impact agenda is vital. UKRI exists to fund the researchers who generate the knowledge that society needs, and the innovators who can turn this knowledge into public benefit. The change is designed to simplify bureaucracy at the point of application as well as to help streamline our systems for applicants. It also enables impact to be truly embedded throughout applications as appropriate. For more details, see: <https://epsrc.ukri.org/files/funding/change-to-pathways-to-impact-epsrc-external-briefing/>

### **Review of EPSRC Doctoral Support**

EPSRC is conducting a review into the doctoral education it supports. It will consider the types of training and experiences students undertake and whether these continue to provide all the relevant and future proofed skills they will need. The review will also consider how the landscape can adapt to future skills need changes and what changes in the support EPSRC provides might be required. In order to ensure that sufficient evidence is gathered to allow the review to make holistic recommendations, EPSRC will be running a series of engagement activities. These will be a mixture of in person events, online evidence submissions and other activities throughout the spring of 2020

### **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

Two evidence reviews on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), published by UKRI, have informed the organisation's forthcoming five-year plan to foster a more inclusive and diverse research and innovation environment. The reviews, carried out by Advance HE on behalf of UKRI, establish a picture of what is currently known about the key challenges for EDI both in the UK and internationally, and the effectiveness of different interventions and practices. The reviews can be found on the UKRI website: <https://www.ukri.org/news/ukri-publishes-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-evidence-reviews/>

### **Live Funding Calls:**

- **Turing AI World-Leading Researcher Fellowships:** This investment aims to build new UK capability and maintain the resilience of the academic research base by investing in the recruitment and retention of world-leading and high-potential researchers. UKRI will invest up to £18M to fund a small number (3-5) of sizable awards (£3-5 million) for up to 5 years.

Deadline for outline proposals is 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020. For more information:

<https://www.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/turing-artificial-intelligence-world-leading-researcher-fellowships/>

- **Digital Health Sandpit:** To bring together diverse communities in the area of Digital Health, EPSRC on behalf of UKRI will be delivering a three-day Sandpit through which £1.2million of UKRI funding will be made available, in order to address research challenges associated with novel technologies for improved self-monitoring and health management. Full details and the application form for participation can be found on the EPSRC website: <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/call-for-participants-in-a-three-day-sandpit-focused-on-digital-technologies-for-health-and-care/>

### **UKCRC/EPSRC Workshop**

The second in a series of 2 workshops organised jointly by EPSRC and UKCRC with the aim of uniting and invigorating the computing research community was held in Edinburgh in December 2019. The workshop included exploration of collaborative research opportunities, dialogue on government consultations and advocacy, the UKCRC AGM and discussion of regulation and ethics in computer science research. There was a high level of enthusiasm and engagement throughout the day. The EPSRC ICT Theme are keen to continue to engage with the wider research community and want to continue to find mechanisms to get the community's input to identify adventurous and exciting research opportunities. If you have an ambitious, transformational idea which could transform the research landscape, please submit through the Big Ideas page:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/ourportfolio/epsrcbigideas/>

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