



UK Research
and Innovation

RT2 02

UK Research and Innovation – High-level Sector Round Tables

ROUND TABLE 2

Valuing and Measuring Natural Assets for Agriculture and Land Management

Wednesday 21 November 2018, 10:30-14:30

(refreshments available from 10:00)

Prince Philip House, 3 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5DG

OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT UKRI FUNDING INSTRUMENTS/PROGRAMMES FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

This paper outlines why the Research Councils engage with business and policy, why NERC is investing in this Round Table, and existing mechanisms to support academic, policy and business collaboration.

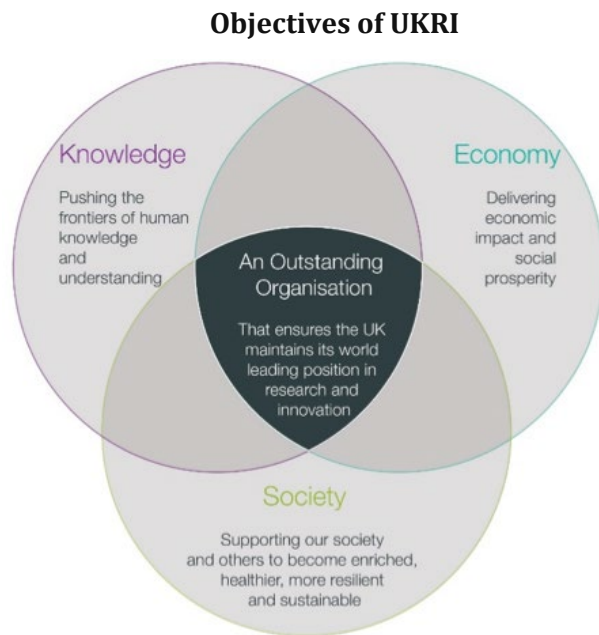
Jodie Mitchell

Senior Programme Manager, Innovation Team, NERC

1. WHY THE RESEARCH COUNCILS ENGAGE WITH BUSINESS & POLICY

As part of the newly formed [UK Research & Innovation](#) (UKRI), the [Natural Environment Research Council](#) (NERC) has a role in supporting business, policy-makers and wider society access the latest research to develop innovative tools and approaches, provide robust evidence for policy-making and support business growth, thereby maximising the value from publicly funded research. NERC does this by:

- working with business, policy-makers and wider society to understand their needs and priorities and sharing these with the research base;
- enabling partnerships with the research base by signposting to where particular research strengths exist and facilitating access to knowledge, skilled people, data and infrastructure;
- funding collaborative projects which translate research into industry-relevant tools and approaches;
- strengthening the capacity of the research base to address the needs of business and society.



2. WHY IS NERC INVESTING IN THIS ROUND TABLE?

Issues around Valuing Nature are increasingly of interest to businesses, policy-makers and society. As funders of the £6.5M [Valuing Nature Programme](#) NERC is investigating how Valuing Nature research can be translated into business and policy decision-making, and what role NERC has in supporting this. Through the round table NERC would like to:

- understand what businesses and policy-makers are doing to develop and operationalise the concept of valuing nature/ natural capital within their organisations;
- identify where there are opportunities to apply existing knowledge/data/skills from the research community and to identify what new knowledge is required to help business and policy-makers do this;
- gauge the interest and capacity of business and policy-makers to work collaboratively with the research base to access knowledge;

- explore different models of collaboration and funding which would enable greater interaction between academics, policy and business around this agenda, and is workable for and brings benefits to all.

The [Valuing Nature Programme](#) already supports academic-business-policy collaboration through the [Business Interest Group](#), [Business Impact Schools](#) and funding [Valuing Nature placements](#) for academics to work within policy and business settings. The findings from this Round Table will inform further investment in research and innovation (in particular by NERC but also by other relevant funders).

3. EXISTING MECHANISMS TO SUPPORTING ACADEMIC-POLICY-BUSINESS COLLABORATION

The purpose of this section is to: (1) highlight a number of funding opportunities which may be suitable to take forward academic-policy-business collaboration around the 'valuing nature' agenda; (2) stimulate a discussion on what mechanisms and types of funding could support academic-policy-business interaction around Valuing Nature issues in the future.

A large number of funding mechanisms exist to promote the exchange of knowledge from academia to business, policy and wider society, as well as to drive world-leading academic research related to real-world challenges. Funding is available from the EU, UK public bodies (including Research Councils, [Innovate UK](#), national academies) as well as universities and the private sector. Each funder has their own rules for who is eligible to lead bids and receive financial support, what subject areas they are willing to support and how the application process operates.

As highlighted by the [Dowling Review of Business-University Research Collaborations](#) (July 2015) the support for the innovation system is complex. The creation of UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) in April 2018, a new organisation incorporating the seven Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England, responds to the [Nurse Review](#) of research councils. Although in early stages, the creation of UKRI signals evolution in how the academic-policy-business interface as well as the interface between research disciplines (which crosses the boundaries between the seven research councils) are supported.

'Collective funds' are now an important source of funding for councils to access and while it is possible for the environmental science community (academic, business and policy organisations) to scope and develop bids, the key opportunities for engagement are through the funded programmes.

The [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#) was launched in 2017 to 'strengthen UK science and business innovation and take on the biggest challenges that society and industries face today'. Bids must be industry-led and have a 'grand challenge' focus in clean growth; artificial intelligence and data economy; ageing society; and the future of mobility. Two waves of funding have been completed with £1.21bn funding awarded so far. An announcement on the third wave of funding is expected in April 2019, with a fourth round to be confirmed.

The [Strategic Priorities Fund](#) is a £560m fund launched in 2018, open to UKRI and BEIS Public Sector Research Establishments (such as UK Space Agency, Met Office, National

Physics Laboratory). The fund will:

- Drive an increase in high quality multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research and innovation;
- Ensure the system is able to respond to new strategic priorities and opportunities (as reflected in the Nurse Review);
- Ensure that UKRI's investment links up effectively with cross-departmental research and innovation priorities and opportunities.

The first wave awarded £60m funding to programmes in the following areas: Clean Air: Analysis and Solutions; Constructing a Digital Environment; Landscape Decisions; UK Climate Resilience. Bids are currently being developed for a second wave.

The table below highlights further funding schemes that are being led by UKRI and individuals organisations within it:

Scheme name	Focus of schemes	Funding
UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships	Supports early career researchers and innovators with outstanding potential in universities and UK registered businesses to tackle difficult and novel challenges, including those at the academic/business and interdisciplinary boundaries.	There will be six calls for these fellowships; two calls per year between 2018-19 and 2020-21 (financial years), typically awarding at least 100 fellowships per call across UKRI's remit. This is a single scheme across the entire UKRI remit, with no ring-fenced budgets for specific areas and no barriers to interdisciplinary or cross-sector research.
Strength in Places	Takes a place-based approach to research and innovation funding, to support significant regional economic growth.	Consortia of UK businesses and publicly funded research organisations can apply for up to £50 million per application.
Innovate UK's Knowledge Transfer Partnerships	Provides funding for researchers to spend time working with, or within a business, bringing in knowledge, technology or skills acquired through academic research to help the business innovate and grow. This can act as a foundation for long-term collaboration and development.	Business-led bids for 1-3 years, funding to both business and academic, business shares cost.
Innovate UK Open programme	Supports game-changing or disruptive ideas. These can be for a completely new	Business-led bids, funding to both business and academic. Supports

	product, service or process, or an unprecedented use for an existing one that take it above and beyond what's currently available. In all cases there should be a clear route to market and potential for rapid commercialisation.	innovation at various stages. It helps companies develop projects from feasibilities studies including market research, through to prototype testing, development and demonstration.
--	--	--

NERC is in the process of re-thinking its strategic funding as we transition towards a more combined approach to research and innovation. There are currently three key funding modes under development:

- 1) A Research and Innovation Priorities fund to support major activities that address complex environmental science questions. Programmes might typically range in size from £5 million to £20 million depending on their scope and partnership funding. They may constitute a number of funding streams and consider, for example, capital, training and business sector needs.
- 2) Highlight Topics will typically support programmes up to the value of £4 million and four years in length. Projects will have a defined focus and will be driven by the environmental science community through NERC's [ideas process](#).
- 3) A Partnerships and Opportunities fund will provide a timely response to opportunities for NERC to partner with external organisations/ funders. Small to medium-scale strategic research and innovation activities will be supported with NERC funding being at least matched by the partner organisation.

Each of these funding modes will require a community effort to develop and deliver, and NERC strongly encourages its partners to pitch ideas and work closely with our Head Office to explore the most appropriate models for collaboration and funding.