



Natural
Environment
Research Council

Responsible Business Statement

September
2024

OUR ROLE

NERC enables world-leading environmental science which helps us sustain and benefit from our natural resources, predict and respond to natural hazards and understand environmental change. We fund ambitious research and innovation, and provide the training, skills, and infrastructure the UK needs to remain at the forefront of environmental science. Our research helps society understand and find solutions to the social, environmental and economic challenges it faces.

We act as **advocates for the natural environment**, working closely in partnership with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), other funders, businesses, government and the public.

This statement covers our operational and delivery activities, including that of NERC Centres and collaborative activity with our National Capability partners.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

NERC has a responsibility to deliver benefits to society and to the environment beyond our research outcomes. This statement sets out our commitments to act responsibly through our operational delivery model for research and research funding in line with the **UKRI values** and **NERC Strategic Delivery plan**.

The principle that we should aspire to have a positive contribution permeates through each of our commitment pillars, presented below, informing the action we take to **add value and ensure impact**.

OUR COMMITMENT

NERC will play our part in addressing the societal and environmental challenges we face – not only through the research we enable but also how we operate as an organisation. This includes key commitments to:

- Reaching **Net Zero** operational carbon emissions by 2040 in line with the UKRI Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
- Increasing diversity and inclusion within Environmental Science research as set out in the NERC **Diversity and Inclusion** plan.
- Funding and delivering **high quality research, innovation and infrastructure** in a responsible way founded on good governance.

This statement is a living document, it will change as our priorities evolve and in response to feedback. We will review and report against this statement annually.



NERC Responsible Business Pillars

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH

Working in partnership to adopt responsible research practices and to promote good research conduct.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Driving our positive impact through restoring and enhancing the natural environment, resourcing responsibly, mitigating climate change and building resilience to our future climate.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Supporting a positive and inclusive culture for staff and wider community while raising awareness of the benefits we bring to wider society.

RESPONSIBLE STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Acting in a transparent and fair way across our practices, considering the long-term implications to our stakeholders and with partners that share our core values.

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH



RESEARCH INTEGRITY

1.1 We promote and support research integrity across environmental science research, encouraging a positive research culture and high scientific quality from a trusted scientific community.



RESEARCH ETHICS

1.2 We will continue to conduct research in line with recognised ethical research standards, protecting animal welfare, human rights and reporting transparently and impartially on outcomes.



PARTNERSHIPS FOR RESEARCH

1.3 We utilise our partnerships with those that share our values to effectively drive innovation and collaboration within the scientific community to generate positive outcomes and research impact.



SUSTAINABLE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

1.4 We will continue to promote sustainable laboratory and field work practices and encourage researchers to rethink scientific methods to minimise social and environmental harm while maximising research benefit and capability.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY



CARBON

2.1 We are delivering a comprehensive carbon pathway programme in collaboration with UKRI and our centers. Our focus is on effective carbon management, understanding our wider impact and delivering projects. We will deliver long term cultural change and drive innovation in how we deliver research.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2.2 We will ensure our operational activities generate positive outcomes for air, water and land quality. Through our Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Plan we understand and are adapting to climate risks.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

2.3 We continue to make operational choices that protect, restore and enhance the natural environment, improving biodiversity and ensuring effective biosecurity to protect pristine polar environments in which we operate.



RESOURCE USE

2.4 We will use our physical and digital resources in an efficient, sustainable way. Fostering a responsible approach to the sourcing of goods, use of water and management of waste while promoting the circular economy model.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

3.1 We will embed and actively promote diversity and inclusion at all levels and in all that we do. This includes promoting an inclusive working environment with empowerment for all. We will support a diverse grant holder community, including through equitable practices, and acknowledge difference can drive scientific excellence and innovation.



EMPLOYMENT CREATION & SKILLS

3.2 We support staff to be the best they can be through training, learning and development activity while creating opportunities and support for those starting their career journey. We reward individual & team good practice and excellence alongside our UKRI partners.



COMMUNITY & ENGAGEMENT

3.3 We fund and deliver activities to increase public awareness of our positive research outcomes while supporting community activities we value.



HEALTHY WORKPLACE

3.4 We protect and support staff mental and physical health and wellbeing, ensuring their safety at work and providing welfare support to employees in need.

RESPONSIBLE STRATEGIC DECISIONS



GOVERNANCE

4.1 We protect NERC's impartiality through robust systems of governance and ensure through our business practices we are transparent and accountable.



BUSINESS ETHICS

4.2 We will enhance processes to ensure we make fair and well considered business decisions balancing organisational, environmental and societal needs. We are aware that there will be a broad range of consequences of the strategic decisions we make, we will take action to understand this and minimise harm.



PARTNERSHIPS

4.3 We will continue to partner with businesses, international teams and wider communities who share our values, as well as central government, to help bring about positive change.



WORKING CONDITIONS

4.4 We ensure our workforce is well supported and that every employee's voice is valued and heard by promoting and encouraging open discussion in the workplace. This includes through trade union engagement and convening forums for staff to share views.