



Natural
Environment
Research Council



Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

Deputy Executive Chair

Candidate Prospectus
September 2024



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Welcome

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Deputy Executive Chair of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), one of the constituent Councils within UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). NERC was formed in 1965 from the merger of several environmental research related organisations. It became part of UKRI in 2018 alongside the six other Research Councils, Research England and the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK.



NERC is the UK's main public funding body for research into the environmental sciences, ensuring the health of atmospheric, terrestrial, polar and marine science and addressing critical challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. NERC maintains a range of national science infrastructure such as polar research stations, Royal Research Ships, and aircraft that monitor atmospheric conditions as well as satellite technologies, data centres and monitoring stations around the world. NERC is also responsible for the British Antarctic Survey, which maintains the UK's scientific presence in Antarctica, as well as the British Geological Survey, responsible for monitoring seismic and other environmental activity.

The government is committed to tackling the linked climate and nature crises in ways which grow our economy sustainably and improve the lives of citizens. The research and innovation which NERC supports, itself and by leading partnerships across UKRI, will be a crucial part of delivering on this mission.

In 2024/25 NERC, operating from both Swindon and London, has a core budget of £325m in addition to cross-cutting funds from UKRI and the Antarctic Logistics and Infrastructure partition. The role of the NERC Deputy Executive Chair represents a unique opportunity to help lead this key national funding body and be part of our work to assess and improve the health of the environment.

In launching this recruitment campaign, we are committed to fair and open recruitment processes and actively encourage and hope to see applications from across the UK, and from a wide range of diverse backgrounds.

I trust you will find the information enclosed in this pack of interest and we look forward to receiving your application.

Professor Louise Heathwaite
NERC Executive Chair



About UKRI

[UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\)](#) is the UK's largest public funder of research and innovation. We invest more than £8 billion annually to advance our understanding of society and the world around us and deliver benefits for society, the economy, and the environment.

Our organisation comprises nine councils – the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK, the seven disciplinary Research Councils and Research England, which is responsible for supporting research and knowledge exchange at higher education institutions in England. As a UK-wide organisation we work across the four UK nations and with the devolved funding bodies and governments to understand and support different priorities that span research and innovation in different parts of the UK.



Through our Councils and the critical national capabilities provided by our centres, units and institutes, we deliver, support and champion the creativity and vibrancy of research and innovation in the UK, for the benefit of society.

UKRI is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

Find out more in our 5-year strategy, [Transforming Tomorrow Together](#)

About NERC

NERC funds ambitious and adventurous research and innovation, and provides the training, skills, and infrastructure the UK needs to remain at the forefront of environmental science.

NERC provides a national capability through the large research infrastructure, services, facilities and data centres that enable this research and make its results available. This includes research stations around the globe, a fleet of ships and aircraft, and satellite technology to monitor environmental change on a global scale. The long-term data which these NERC investments enable is a critical national resource supporting economic growth and enabling the UK's global leadership on environmental issues.

NERC's core role is in assessing the health of the environment and the impact of human activities upon it. We ensure the UK has the fullest possible understanding of the atmosphere, oceans, and the environments in which we live and work. This work informs the development of solutions which address environmental issues in a sustainable way. In partnership with government and industry, we ensure that our knowledge of the environment facilitates green growth, protects the UK against



environmental threats, and ensures innovation which is responsible and balanced with environmental needs.

NERC's responsibilities, as set out in the Higher Education & Research Act 2017, are to:

- carry out research into environmental science, technology and new ideas
- encourage and support the provision of postgraduate training in environmental science, technology and new ideas
- facilitate, encourage and support environmental research, technology and new ideas
- facilitate, encourage and support the development and exploitation of environmental science, technology and new ideas
- facilitate, encourage and support knowledge exchange in relation to environmental science, technology and new ideas
- collect, disseminate and advance knowledge in environmental science, technology and new ideas
- promote awareness and understanding of environmental science, technology and new ideas
- provide advice on any matter relating to NERC functions
- promote awareness and understanding of NERC activities

Our mission

NERC's core role is in assessing the health of the environment. To discover and diagnose emerging issues, we must ensure the UK has the fullest possible understanding of the atmosphere, oceans, and the environments in which we live and work. The growing impact of human activities on our environment makes this role more important than ever. To do this, we will fund ambitious and adventurous research and innovation, and we will provide the training, skills, and infrastructure the UK needs to remain at the forefront of environmental science.

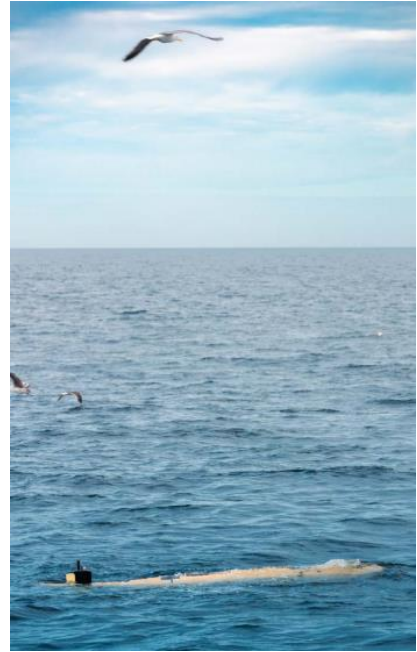




About the role

This role secures the scientific resilience of NERC to support our environmental science community and government, business and industry stakeholders that underpins NERC as a scientifically credible funder and resilient organisation within UKRI.

As the Deputy Executive Chair for NERC, you will provide highly respected, senior strategic leadership of NERC's research, innovation and commercialisation activities. You will play the pivotal role, working with the NERC Executive Team and NERC Science Committee, in leading the generation of ideas and innovation to underpin the delivery of internationally leading NERC-funded science. A key aspect of this will be to give confidence and assurance to the NERC executive chair, UKRI Board and NERC Council, and colleagues across UKRI and in government, that NERC science is led and managed, with a collaborative and collegiate approach across the NERC Executive Team and wider senior leadership team.



The NERC Deputy Executive Chair is the scientific backstop for the NERC Executive Chair in driving and delivering NERC's vision across environmental science research and innovation nationally and internationally. Working closely with the Executive Chair, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Directors, and Associate Directors you will secure NERC's position as *the* funder of world-leading research and innovation in environmental science in the UK; in maintaining and growing NERC's international science presence and partnerships; and in building NERC's commercialisation portfolio working with business and industry both nationally and globally.

This role will work with the NERC Executive Chair, and other NERC Directors to foster and further strengthen the research, innovation and commercialisation science base of NERC. In partnership with the COO, the role holder will embed transformation ensuring that appropriate processes and controls are established in the wider organisational context, and reviewing the way these functions are delivered to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency. The role holder has leadership and oversight of all NERC science funding lines, including with NERC centres and strategic delivery partners, and leads the alignment with UKRI, other Councils, relevant government departments and external stakeholders. The role holder will have specific responsibility for leading all major cross-cutting objectives relating to environmental science compute infrastructure and data science innovation and commercialisation including and growing earth observation and developing measures to embed environmental science in government industrial strategy and missions.



Key Accountabilities

Senior Leadership

- The NERC Deputy Executive Chair will act as the right hand and scientific backstop for the Executive Chair, overseeing all NERC science activities, including NERC centres and strategic delivery partners to ensure the smooth-running of NERC science funding and support of the scientific community, while strengthening relationships with other funders, government departments, universities and business and industry to ensure interoperability and effectiveness in delivery.
- Lead the development of NERC science funding ideas, innovation and commercialisation, to put in place clear mechanisms to ensure robust and effective science delivery, giving confidence and assurance to the NERC executive chair that NERC science is appropriately led through a collaborate and collegiate approach across NERC and within UKRI.
- Ensure NERC is well placed to contribute to designing and developing collective research, innovation and commercialisation approaches, especially environmental data science and compute using a range of tools to capitalise on short-, medium- and long-term opportunities, and working as needed with Executive Chairs and relevant Directors from across UKRI, as well as key external partners.
- Work alongside the NERC COO to coordinate the day-to-day NERC Executive Team and senior leadership team approach, setting future science funding considerations in line with the NERC Delivery Plan and UKRI's mission, ensuring the wider science, innovation and commercialisation context informs NERC decision-making and that of UKRI, and including engagement with our funded science community wherever they are based.
- Working alongside the Director for Strategy and Analysis, lead NERC's contribution to UKRI's collective research and innovation strategic themes, programmes, and associated funds with a particular focus on UKRI's 'International' goals and objectives.
- Is a visible and convincing leader for NERC in cross-UKRI digital research infrastructure programmes, ensuring that environmental data science leads, identifies and exploits the benefits derived from new digital infrastructures and the growth in opportunities across UKRI and wider with government, business and industry nationally and internationally.
- Acting an ambassador for NERC in the academic, business and industry communities you will ensure NERC, and its scientific community provide a strong, unified voice for environmental science research, innovation and commercialisation in the UK and internationally.

Stakeholder Relationships

- Engage and influence relevant stakeholders interested in environmental science at the most senior levels outside and across the organisation and in DSIT to build support and confidence in the NERC delivery plan and to catalyse new ideas and communicate the strategic outputs. Actively align functions and resources and coordinate people to deliver results, at a range of business levels, within and outside of your line management.



- Lead NERC's engagement with the science community, stakeholders, and the public, including addressing issues relating to reputational risk and responsible innovation, supporting UKRI policy and principles throughout.
- Lead NERC's actions in supporting environmental sustainability across UKRI and with business, finance and industrial partners.
- Ensure NERC has effective connections with research, innovation and commercialisation ideas and plans across UK Government science, devolved administrations, and government work concerned with environment, wellbeing, net zero, climate change and risk, business, environment etc.
- Working with the UKRI communications team and NERC Communications Business Partner lead activities to ensure effective communications across impact, funding, projects, infrastructure and ensure good coordination with NERC research centres and strategic delivery partners. Lead NERC communications response to reputation risks and advise on media visits e.g., ensuring good process around media visits to NERC research infrastructure such as ships, planes and projects and Antarctic media visits.
- With the NERC COO and across the Executive Team, ensure a sound relationship with NERC Centres and major projects, to assure the NERC Executive Chair that issues are understood and responded to effectively, sighting relevant stakeholders as needed.

Funding

- Working with the NERC COO, ensure that NERC science funding is properly aligned with the research infrastructures and capacity to deliver operationally in NERC and across UKRI to safeguard value for money and drive maximum research and innovation impact and positive outcomes.
- Working with UKRI's international champion, lead NERC's international partnerships and programmes to ensure they have global reach and impact and deliver returns on investment where feasible
- Working closely with the Director Research and Skills support the generation of ideas to inform innovative science programmes and excite community engagement.
- Working closely with the Director Strategy and Analysis, identify strategic science opportunities and challenges, establishing their scope, and developing rapid, evidence-based analysis and recommendations.
- Working with the Director for Strategic partnerships, create new partnerships with institutions that have a track record of bringing research and innovation breadth and depth together with business acumen and commercialisation potential.
- Lead NERC's funding of public dialogue and engagement to secure science impact and establish good practice in the environmental science community to inform NERC's role as a commissioner of environmental research, innovation, postgraduate training
- Lead NERC's funding approach to widening participation and steward the dedicated NERC Diversity and Inclusion funding line in accordance with Council oversight and ensure a



proactive programme of community engagement to inform our approach; ensure the D&I Action plan is informed by the funding outcomes

- Ensure NERC builds and communicates its impact and outcomes evidence to build trust, legitimacy & credibility with its communities and external stakeholders; ensure comprehensive understanding of the strength of the NERC community and share these insights to ensure HO operates effectively and can evidence how it advances environmental science in the round

Innovation and Commercial

- Lead business and industry engagement across NERC building coalitions and seeking external buy in to deliver environmental solutions to major economic and societal challenges.
- Working across the Executive Team, identify and nurture talent and grow science, innovation, and commercial leadership at all levels.
- Lead the alignment of science, innovation and commercialisation funding across NERC and shape research and innovation outcomes to the new Industrial strategy and DSIT R&D missions.
- Working with UKRI, develop mechanisms to increase NERC's visibility and effectiveness in environmental innovation and the commercialisation of environmental research.

Line Management

- You will ensure that the NERC Executive Team lead and manage NERC and its staff in the successful delivery of its scientific objectives through inclusive and effective leadership and ensuring that the NERC Executive and senior leadership team have the vision and capabilities needed to develop the quality, outputs and impacts of its research, skills and capital portfolio.
- Develop a clear understanding of the NERC science portfolio to become an effective line manager of the Director(s) Strategic Partnerships and Research & Skills [after an interim period].
- Line management of the Corporate Affairs and Strategic Advocacy, International/policy team, and colleagues leading NERC's cross-UKRI work on digital capabilities.
- Lead and inspire NERC staff and colleagues. In all areas, deliver high quality work which combines horizon scanning and strategic planning with the ability to react to urgent requirements. Provide an advisory and mentoring role across NERC Head Office.
- Working with the Director Strategy and Analysis, lead the coordination of NERC representation across strategic UKRI and Government fora.
- Ensure a generous approach by NERC to engaging with other Councils and across UKRI in supporting and delivering UKRI-led funding opportunities and activities.
- As an active member of the NERC Executive Team lead by example as a credible, empathetic, and effective leader, modelling the behaviours and values of UKRI.



Your skills and experience

We understand that individuals might hesitate to apply if they don't meet each of the criteria. If you're enthusiastic about joining our organisation and possess a majority of these skills or experience, we encourage you to proceed with an application. We recognise that a variety of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences enriches our work environment and therefore we actively welcome applications from a diverse range of candidates.

Candidates will be assessed against the following criteria throughout the recruitment process.

Essential Criteria:

1. A sustained first-class track record of senior roles relevant to the environmental sciences as key partners of NERC at the level of Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dean of Science or Director of a Research Institute / Centre with senior management experience including research budgets; innovation and commercialisation.
2. Holding or having externally recognised professorial status in their field of expertise with substantial and diverse experience of working across the UK science funding landscape.
3. A deep understanding of environmental science and its applications relevant to NERC's mission.
4. Demonstrably leading understanding of the research funding system in the UK, including knowledge of the activities and priorities of the other UK Research Councils and Innovate UK.
5. PhD qualified or equivalent experience with a personal record of scientific achievement in research sufficient to gain the confidence of the scientific community.
6. Specific expertise in environmental data science and analysis with understanding of the opportunities for environmental science in AI and compute.
7. Experience of leading major science initiatives that have transformed indicators of performance in research (e.g., of a department, institute, centre, faculty, or larger unit).
8. A developed understanding of environmental observation, monitoring and modelling interests, and innovation and commercialisation potential in delivering UK strategic environmental health and economic objectives.
9. Strong emotional intelligence, excellent listening skills; good relationship and influencing skills and the ability to reach out and build consensus and trust. Excellent interpersonal, communication and leadership skills, with demonstrable ability in managing the competing demands of a diverse range of activities.
10. An ability to act as an effective backstop to the Executive Chair by taking responsibility for all science funding and engagement activity across NERC, troubleshooting problems and resolving issues as they emerge, anticipating problems and staying ahead of emerging risks.
11. An ability to make decisions in a transparent, objective, and impartial basis with proven strategic and analytical skills and the ability to make sense of complex and conflicting information to devise strategies to deliver outcomes and priorities.



Terms of Appointment

Appointment Term: Due to the nature of the role, we can accommodate several flexible options based around the successful candidates' preferences and current professional commitments, including fixed-term, secondment, and permanent contract.

The minimum commitment duration is 36 months and minimum hours required is 0.8 FTE (Full FTE 37 hours) per week. Whilst hybrid working is possible on occasion, there is an expectation for the Deputy Executive Chair to have a strong presence in the office across both Swindon, London and other locations as required.

Remuneration: £92,000 - £99,000 per annum (depending on skills and experience)

Base Location: Swindon or London with regular travel to both

Timescales and Selection

The selection process will consist of a panel interview, which may include a presentation.

Interviews will be held in person at UKRI's London head office.

Please note, dates and details are subject to change.

Process	Date
Closing date	Wednesday 23 rd October 2024 (23:59)
Shortlisting date	w/c 4 th November 2024
Panel interviews	Wednesday 20 th and Thursday 21 st November 2024
Candidates notified of outcomes	w/c 25 th November 2024

How to Apply

Please submit your application via the [UKRI Careers Portal](#) by **23:59 on Wednesday 23rd October 2024**.

You will need to supply:

- A curriculum vitae (up to two pages)
- A statement of suitability (up to two pages pages)

Your Statement of Suitability should provide specific information about why you believe you would be suitable for this role. Think about your knowledge, skills, experience, personal attributes, and vision for the organisation, and take full advantage of the space available. Use practical examples where possible and ensure you refer directly to the essential criteria.

Please note, failure to provide a statement of suitability or failure to address the above points may result in your application not being considered.



You will only be assessed on the content of your CV and statement of suitability, not the 'experience' section of your application on the Careers Portal.

To apply via the UKRI Careers Portal you will receive a notification confirming your profile has successfully been created (if you have not previously set up an account) and a second notification confirming your application for this role has been submitted. If you do not receive the second notification confirming your application for this role has been submitted or experience issues applying, please contact seniorrecruitment@ukri.org, so we can ensure your application has been received.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

UKRI believes that everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be provided with equal opportunities to flourish and succeed within an ethical and trusted working environment that is attractive and accessible to everyone who is interested in developing their career with us.



We are committed to increasing the diversity of our board and executive positions and bringing in talent, regardless of its origins. We encourage applications from all candidates regardless of ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity. We also value diversity of thought and experience and are committed to creating systems that value difference so that everyone can feel welcomed, included and nurtured throughout their time with us.

As a Disability Confident Leader, UKRI will offer interviews to disabled candidates who meet the published minimum requirements for a job or role. Whether you choose to apply under the Disability Confident scheme or not, you can still ask us to make particular adjustments for you when attending an interview.

We know actions speak louder than words. For further information, please visit the UKRI web page: '[How we support EDI in the workforce](#)'

Pre-employment screening

To enable us to hire the very best people and to safeguard our people and our assets, we will conduct comprehensive pre-employment screening on successful applicants as part of the recruitment process.

UKRI supports research in areas that include animal health, agriculture and food security, and bioscience for health which includes research on animals, genetic modification, and stem cell research. Whilst you may not have direct involvement in this type of research, you should consider



how this aligns with your personal values or beliefs. Our pre-employment requirements include a security check and an extreme organisation's affiliation check.

The role holder will be required to have the appropriate level of security screening/vetting required for the role. UKRI reserves the right to run or re-run security clearance as required during employment.

In addition, and as part of the overall recruitment process, the successful candidate will also be required to register their [Declarations of Interest](#).

Standards

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way.

Consistent with the Commissioner's Code of Practice, applicants will be assessed on merit, and all candidates will need to uphold the standards of the [UKRI Code of Conduct](#) and conduct set out in the Seven Principles of Public Life, which are:

Selflessness

Holders of Public Office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

Carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.



Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Complaints Procedure

If you feel you have reason to complain, you should direct your concerns in the first instance to the Senior Appointments team (SeniorRecruitment@ukri.org) who will make every effort to deal with this and respond to you within 48 hours.

If your complaint is not dealt with satisfactorily, you can find information about the steps you can take under [UKRI Complaints Procedure](#).