



19 March 2026

NRO to UKRI: Working Together to Make Research Matter for the Nation

Dear Ian

We are writing to you following the recent workshop UKRI ran for the Institutes and Centres it funds and at which the National Research Organisations (NRO) Group played a role in both organising and delivery.

As you know the new NRO group brings together approximately 40 UK science agencies and institutes that are funded by the Government, or other public sources, to deliver unique and critical national research capabilities. Our mission is to ensure research and associated capabilities are internationally outstanding and are fully utilised to support growth, ensure security and resilience and improve people's lives. Our members include many UKRI-sponsored institutes, Government-funded science agencies and Scottish Government funded institutes and the list of organisations wishing to join us is growing rapidly.

We deliver world class science and enable science to intensify; we undertake applied research in order to solve Government, UK and global challenges or priorities; our work underpins and informs Government policies and operations; we ensure and boost national security and resilience; we ensure future economic growth across sectors and across the UK through scientific and technological progress, and ultimately, our key aim is to improve people's lives.

The NRO Group welcomes and supports UKRI's new strategy and the four priority buckets. The world is changing with major challenges across livelihoods, health, the environment and security. It is right our investment in science (one of the UK's main strengths) is fully utilised to deliver great discovery science, support government priorities and spur economic growth.

As is always the case, implementing such a strategy at scale is challenging. As we do so, the following need to be built into the implementation of the strategy:

1. The setting of strategic science priorities needs to involve UKRI, HMG, industry, NROs, universities and - above all - world-leading scientists at all levels.



2. As the strategy implementation matures, we would support greater visibility of, and focus on, outcomes for people, society, the nation and economy. We also strongly support UKRI's intent to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy.
3. Sustainable, system-wide change that unlocks the full value of the UK's world-leading science is needed, including through agile funding decisions and stronger translational research pathways. To enable this, funding regimes with straightforward co-funding between UKRI, HMG and industry, would support government research needs and commercialisation, and spur collaboration across partners and sectors.
4. The funding of national capabilities and long-term innovation must be sustainable while supporting strong outcomes and flexibility, enabling NROs to deliver effectively for UKRI while remaining coherent across wider missions.

Science is one of the UK's genuine strengths. There are huge potentials for enhanced UK influence and economic gains through harnessing the international partnerships and activities of NROs.

Change is always challenging including on this scale. Our members possess a range of expert skills which many are willing to offer in the coming months to support you in implementing your vision and priorities. The NRO group stands ready to support UKRI, working in partnership for the benefit of the UK science system.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Stuart Wainwright, OBE

CEO UKCEH and Group Director National Research Organisations.

