From: UKRI Communications
To: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI
Cc: UKRI Communications; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: FW: Inappropriate tweet again
Date: 18 March 2022 10:28:57
Attachments: image003.jpg
Importance: High

Hi all

I understand that this email thread is in hand so no action to be taken from [redacted]

Thanks,

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 18 March 2022 08:28
To: UKRI Communications [redacted]; UKRI Social Media [redacted]
Subject: FW: Inappropriate tweet again
Importance: High

Hello

I'm currently acting as [redacted] of the Research Outcomes Management Board who manage UKRI's use of the Researchfish system. [redacted] However, last night a discussion emerged on twitter which needs a response.

The main point of contention is that Researchfish respond to offensive tweets with a standard answer which states "we have shared our concerns with your funder" – which on the few occasions it happens they do and we contact the PI concerned by email if necessary. There is even mention of a FOI request in there.

Please advise on what our response should be. Happy to discuss.

Thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

From: [redacted] [redacted]@interfolio.com>
Sent: 17 March 2022 23:08
To: [redacted] [redacted]@interfolio.com>
Cc: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Re: Inappropriate tweet again

All,

Just as an update, I just checked on Twitter, and this thread has completely blown up. Of course our concern with the original tweet is the fact the researcher calls Researchfish a joke, which is offensive and we have a zero tolerance policy on abuse as these comments do have a personal effect on the team. The follow on tweets have then gone on to accuse Researchfish of behaving in a threatening and bullying way.

The link to the original tweet is here [redacted]

There are various other ones that have started up too, including this one [redacted] we are of course doing as requested, we politely reply to the tweet and then flag with the funder. We have resisted saying this and have not responded to any further tweets.

kind regards,
[redacted]

[redacted]

Researchfish
Interfolio UK Ltd
[redacted]

www.researchfish.com
www.interfolio.com

On Thu, 17 Mar 2022 at 19:44, [redacted] [redacted]@interfolio.com> wrote:

> Hello [redacted] and [redacted]
>
> I'm sorry to report we've had another slightly offensive tweet, this time from a researcher funded by [redacted]. We will respond politely to the tweet but I really don't think it's ok for people to think they can be abusive to our staff who see these messages and get distressed.
>
> This tweet was in response to a thread of conversation around what researchfish is all about.
>
> [redacted]

Best wishes

[redacted]

--

[redacted]
Interfolio UK Ltd
[redacted]
www.researchfish.com
www.interfolio.com

Please note my email address has changed to [redacted] Please can you update your address book accordingly. My researchfish.com email address will continue to forward on to this address for the time being

Interfolio UK LTD is a private limited company registered in England and Wales company number 07820803, VAT registered number 125 9798 68. Registered office at Horningsea Road, Cambridge CB5 8SZ, UK

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From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: FW: Freedom of Information request - ResearchFish reputation management
Date: 24 March 2022 07:33:00
Attachments: [redacted]
image001.png
image002.png
image003.png

Further details attached. The document mentions an SLA as well as a contract. Please could you follow up with [redacted] to see if we can get a copy of both.

Thanks,
[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 23 March 2022 15:35
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: RE: Freedom of Information request - ResearchFish reputation management

Hi [redacted]

I've answered the questions as fully as possible. There is a lot of detail in the response to Q5, which I hope is what's required – ROMB colleagues and I should be able to provide the original emails as needed. There have been a total of six reports from Interfolio and it seems that three of these have led to a response from us in some form to the researcher/institution involved – there is a possibility that there has been a fourth response, but this needs confirmation from my ROMB colleague [redacted].

[redacted], but am happy to discuss further after that if that's OK?

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 23 March 2022 09:11
To: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Freedom of Information request - ResearchFish reputation management

Thanks [redacted]. The questions cover the areas that the ICO are likely to focus on if someone complains directly. Hopefully they won't but it will be good to have the information ready in case we need it, [redacted]

Best,
[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 22 March 2022 19:29
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Freedom of Information request - ResearchFish reputation management

Hi [redacted]

Apologies for late reply – I'm obviously aware of the importance of this, but am dealing with a lot of email traffic at the moment as I'm sure you can imagine.

I'll give your questions a more considered response tomorrow, [redacted]

Best wishes,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 22 March 2022 17:19
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Freedom of Information request - ResearchFish reputation management

Hi [redacted]

I'm aware the conversation has moved on since Friday. [redacted] Given the current high level of media and social media interest and potential interest from the Information Commissioner's Office, please could you provide further information for the points below.

1. How long has this process been in operation?
2. How was it agreed with Interfolio UK?
3. Has the process been risk assessed. If so, please could you provide copies of any assessments?
4. [redacted]
5. Please could you provide details of the times actions have been taken, including dates, individuals and any action taken?
6. You mention the Research Outcome Management Board. Has anything about the process or specific cases been included in the minutes?

Happy to discuss further.

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 18 March 2022 09:49
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Freedom of Information request - ResearchFish reputation management

Hi all

The line we've usually taken is that Interfolio (supplier of Researchfish) have been contracted to collect outcome data on behalf of UKRI and any offensive targeted tweets would be seen as inappropriate behaviour. [redacted] It is quite rare for us to take any action, but an email to the researcher concerned asking them to delete the tweet is the usual course of action, although it has been escalated within research organisations on a couple of occasions. These communications are usually handled at the council level, so I'd have to go to all council reps at the Research Outcome Management Board (ROMB – [redacted]).

Happy to join any discussion to determine our immediate response.

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 18 March 2022 09:28
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]

Subject: RE: Freedom of Information request - ResearchFish reputation management

Morning all

We're aware of this as we were tagged in some of the commentary and are going to discuss it at the comms huddle this morning. [redacted], our Research Fish lead is [redacted] who should have access to the emails requested in the FOI, but we'll need to talk to him to work out what our response on social media is going to be and also what our advice to RF is on how they should handle it, so is it better if we coordinate all that with the FOI aspects?

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted] | [redacted]
[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

Twitter: @UKRI_news | Instagram: @weareukri | YouTube | Facebook: @weareukri | ukri.org

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From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 18 March 2022 09:04
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Freedom of Information request - ResearchFish reputation management

Hi [redacted] – I'm not aware, but ccing [redacted] who may be able to advise

---

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 18 March 2022 08:19
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]

Subject: FW: Freedom of Information request - ResearchFish reputation management

Good morning to you both

We've received the below request via WhatDoTheyKnow in relation to a tweet from Research Fish yesterday which has been gaining some negative criticism on Twitter.

I would note that isn't an isolated incident as from checking their account this response has been used several times in recent weeks by Researchfish.

[redacted] - are you able to give any steering on the below?

Kind Regards,

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

---

1. **How long has this process been in operation?**

[redacted] Interfolio will alert us to any tweets which they consider offensive or inappropriate. [redacted]

[redacted] we are unable to identify any specific date from which it started. There is evidence that the issue of offensive and inappropriate tweets was raised at the Researchfish Steering Board meeting in March 2018, [redacted].

The first evidence of the [redacted] is when the first incident occurred in March 2019 (details below).

2. **How was it agreed with Interfolio UK?**

[redacted]

3. **Has the process been risk assessed. If so, please could you provide copies of any assessments?**

[redacted]

4. [redacted]

Some email exchanges between UKRI and Interfolio at the time of the relevant tweets [redacted] e.g. "As usual we keep an eye on twitter and commit to flagging anything inappropriate to the relevant funders".

5. **Please could you provide details of the times actions have been taken, including dates, individuals and any action taken?**

(1) [redacted] Interfolio (Researfish Ltd. at the time) emailed [redacted] ROMB) that they had noticed a tweet from [redacted], that they considered abusive. Interfolio had responded to [redacted] tweet and he apologised and deleted it.

Discussion between [redacted] and [redacted] ([redacted] and ROMB [redacted] at the time) concluded that the initial tweet merited more action from UKRI on the basis of our zero tolerance to bullying and harassment. [redacted], and after gaining approval at Director level in [redacted] and [redacted], [redacted] wrote to [redacted]

[redacted], to inform him that UKRI found the tweet offensive but that no more action would be taken due to the apology.

(2) [redacted] Interfolio emailed [redacted] ([redacted] and ROMB [redacted] at the time) that they had noticed a tweet from [redacted], [redacted], which they considered offensive.

Following discussion between [redacted] on ROMB), [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted], it was decided to follow the same process internally as the previous matter and an email was sent to [redacted]. After no response was received more advice was taken from [redacted] and [redacted] internally and a follow-up email was sent to the comms and PR email addresses at [redacted] on [redacted]

After a further period with no response, no further chasing was done. Discussion between [redacted] and [redacted] concluded that with the tweet well-buried in the timeline and having gained no further retweets or likes, there was little to be gained from pursuing it at that stage.

(3) [redacted] Interfolio emailed [redacted] ([redacted] ROMB [redacted]), [redacted], [redacted] ([redacted]. on ROMB) that they had seen a tweet which they regarded as inappropriate from [redacted], an [redacted] There was also a reply from [redacted], also [redacted]. Interfolio had replied to the tweet to the effect that they found it "harsh and inappropriate" and that "We have shared our concerns with your funders".

[redacted] replied to Interfolio that their initial reply was OK and that the matter would be discussed internally. [redacted] responded to Interfolio's tweet by deleting and apologising. For [redacted] it was decided that a direct email to the researcher from [redacted] would be more suitable than an escalated approach. [redacted] apologised by email in response and deleted the tweet.

(4) [redacted] Interfolio emailed [redacted] and [redacted] ([redacted] on ROMB) that they had seen a tweet which they regarded as inappropriate from [redacted], [redacted]. Interfolio replied to the tweet with the same response as the previous incident and [redacted] apologised and deleted.

There was a delay in picking up the email in UKRI and when [redacted] responded on [redacted] the tweet had already been deleted. Interfolio suggested we might like to follow up anyway (as we had before in the [redacted] case). [redacted] were going to discuss whether any further action was needed. [*As far as I know, nothing else was actioned, but [redacted] is currently on leave so I can't confirm*].

(5) [redacted] Interfolio emailed [redacted] and [redacted] ([redacted] on ROMB) that they had seen a tweet which they regarded as inappropriate from [redacted], [redacted]. Interfolio replied to the tweet with the same response as the other [redacted] tweets.

(6) Also [redacted] Interfolio emailed [redacted] and [redacted] that they had seen a tweet they regarded as inappropriate from [redacted], an [redacted]. Interfolio replied to the tweet with the same response as the other [redacted] tweets.

For both (5) and (6) incidents, the emails arrived with UKRI after working hours and [redacted]. Therefore they weren't picked up on until the morning of [redacted], at which stage the response on twitter demanded a more considered and wide-ranging response. As such, there has been no direct contact with either [redacted] or [redacted] on this matter.

6. **You mention the Research Outcome Management Board. Has anything about the process or specific cases been included in the minutes?**

I can find only one mention in the minutes which briefly refers to the 2021 tweet, but there is no mention of the process at all. Minutes from 2019 don't refer to that particular case.

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: Urgent - 1pm Deadline on Researchfish press query
Date: 25 March 2022 12:36:56
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png

Thanks [redacted] Last call for comments on the proposed line to Research Professional:

> We continue to have discussions with Researchfish over recent concerns expressed by researchers. As there have been queries raised about data handling, we are working carefully to establish details before commenting further.

Let me know any thoughts by 1pm please.

A quick update on our meeting with [redacted] We had a very reasonable discussion about Researchfish. [redacted] We've committed to sharing some more information with him subsequently and being open to further discussion about how the system works.

[redacted].

In summary, no major action or concerns from this meeting – it feels more like we might have established a good relationship that we can build on.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 25 March 2022 12:22
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]

Subject: RE: Urgent - 1pm Deadline on Researchfish press query

Hi

Just to say, happy with the proposed line back to ResearchFortnight and I think the points below look well crafted. Thanks everyone.

[redacted] will stay across this (we have been sharing it this week).

[redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 March 2022 11:49
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Urgent - 1pm Deadline on Researchfish press query

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for pulling this together (and thanks [redacted] for your helpful additions in the separate thread).

Re the Q&A below, I think this is probably fine for now as a holding line for our meeting with [redacted] at noon today. Obviously, we'll need to reach a more meaningful position on this quite soon, but as previously discussed, I don't think we need to say anything more detailed to [redacted] than we are saying elsewhere [redacted].

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 25 March 2022 11:32
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]

Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted] [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Urgent - 1pm Deadline on Researchfish press query
Importance: High

Dear All,

Just to follow up separately on the briefing for our discussion with [redacted] at noon today, I've incorporated the suggested changes from colleagues into the attached final draft. The one area that it would be useful to get any final views on is the point around UKRI's awareness of Researchfish's policy on reporting abuse. Following [redacted] comments, I have suggested the text below. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are happy with this.

- **Were you aware of Researchfish's policy / approach on abuse before this came to light last week?**
  UKRI's data protection team are investigating details, we'll be in a position to confirm details once they have completed their review.

Many thanks to everybody for their help with this.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 25 March 2022 11:05
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Urgent - 1pm Deadline on Researchfish press query

Looks factually accurate to me.

When do we think we will be in a position to comment more fully publicly? I recall we said we all wanted to avoid a Friday 4pm rush – given [redacted] talking to RF again today do we think something at the beginning of next week is plausible? And RF were going to share their internal FAQ with us, did that happen?

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 March 2022 10:15
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Urgent - 1pm Deadline on Researchfish press query

Thanks [redacted], much appreciated. Those look like good additions.

On a separate but related point, Research Professional have been in touch this morning to ask for an update on our discussions with Researchfish, details of their query below. They have a **deadline of 2pm today**. I think we need to say something but recognise the complexity of the situation, particularly as it relates to data (copying in [redacted] for a view).

Research Professional Query

[redacted]

Our previous statement on the situation was "We are aware of the concern that has been raised regarding tweets posted by Researchfish. We understand and acknowledge the serious issues raised by researchers and we will be discussing these with Researchfish as a matter of urgency."

[redacted]
We could therefore say something along the following lines:

> We continue to have discussions with Researchfish over recent concerns expressed by researchers. As there have been queries raised about data handling, we are working carefully to establish details before commenting further.

Please could you provide any **comments on this by 1pm today** so that we can respond to Research Professional.

Many thanks,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 March 2022 10:02
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Briefing for [redacted] Meeting

Hi [redacted]

Thanks, good idea, this is really helpful.

I've made some changes and added a question in green (I think we need to be prepared to say *how* we use the data).

[redacted]

Comments welcome.

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 25 March 2022 09:23
To: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Briefing for [redacted] Meeting

Thanks [redacted], that's very helpful. I'll tweak your explanation on the Researchfish communications point – it's a helpful distinction to make between what they say on our behalf and what they say themselves.

From: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 March 2022 09:18
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Briefing for [redacted] Meeting

[redacted] – I've commented on your red text (in blue), but copied in [redacted] – who in [redacted] absence is a member of ROMB – and so may be able to confirm the frequency of meetings with RF etc.

Regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

For diary queries and meeting requests please contact:

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 March 2022 09:00
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: Briefing for [redacted] Meeting
Importance: High

Dear All,

Following the useful discussion with Ottoline yesterday, and conscious of our meeting with [redacted] at noon today, I thought it would be useful to set out some brief lines I think we should agree in advance. This will help us to be consistent in our response and avoid any inadvertent misunderstandings. I'm conscious that there is work going into a separate briefing that captures the detail of UKRI's relationship with Researchfish / Interfolio, but we do need a short term briefing to support the meeting today.

I've prepared the lines below based on what I think will come up and what we've discussed, both with Ottoline and in response to the Daily Telegraph inquiry. Those responses in red are where I'm not aware of the situation, so any feedback on these points in particular would be helpful.

Could you let me know your feedback on this by 11.00 today, please?

Many thanks,

[redacted]

Researchfish Discussion with [redacted] – External Affairs Briefing

- **What is the nature of your relationship with Researchfish?**
  UKRI has a contract with Interfolio to deliver the Researchfish activity. Yes

- **How often does UKRI meet with Researchfish?**
  [redacted] There is a cross-council group (the Research Outcomes Management Board, ROMB) that manages the relationship with Researchfish, they meet with representatives from Researchfish regularly ([redacted] or another ROMB member may be able to advise concerning how often)

- **What input does UKRI have to Researchfish's interaction / communication with researchers?**
  We do not have any input to Researchfish communication. [redacted] UKRI will agree the wording and timing of communications to researchers about the annual submission period which are then sent via the Researchfish system. [redacted] – but we don't govern the way that Researchfish respond/communicate about their service, [redacted]

- **Were you aware of Researchfish's policy / approach on abuse before this came to light last week?**
  We understood that Researchfish had a policy of communicating with researchers if it believed that abusive or inappropriate comments were made and that this would be flagged with funders. We are investigating across UKRI what correspondence there has been historically.

- **What action have you taken since concerns were raised on social media?**
  We have been in contact with Interfolio to understand the action they have taken, the policies that have informed this and what action they will be taking to respond to researcher concerns. These are active conversations.

- **Why does UKRI use Researchfish?**
  It is critical that we gather data about the impact of the research we fund, to inform our funding decisions, refine our approach and be transparent about how public funding is used. In some cases, this is the only feedback we have on how investments are spent.

- **How does UKRI actually use the data obtained through Researchfish?**
  It supports in-house analysis to understand what research outputs and outcomes UKRI is helping to deliver. It is also frequently used as part of the many number of evaluations UKRI undertakes. There is a page on our website which provides some specific examples of how the Researchfish data has been used as part of analysis and evaluations, but to give just a few examples: we've used RF data in the recent evaluations of the Joint Global Health Trials initiative and the Health Systems Research Initiative as well as in our very large evaluation of translational research. We're also in the process of delivering a multi-year evaluation of UKRI's investments in the National Productivity Investment – worth several billion pounds – and these evaluations are relying heavily on the Researchfish data.

- **What are the alternatives?**
  In principle, there are alternatives to using Researchfish, but all of these options would involve changing the scope of data we collect on outputs and outcomes, so we would need to first establish and agree the case for changing our approach. Currently, Researchfish is the only solution that allows us to track a wide range of research outputs and outcomes across all research disciplines and link this to grants awarded by UKRI. [redacted].

- **What is the burden on those completing returns?**
  We have some anectodal evidence that completing the Researchfish survey can take on average 45 minutes of a researcher's time. However, we're aware that many researchers spend longer than this, and we don't rely on this evidence for the purposes of assessing burden. We are aware of the shortcomings of the platform and our CEO, as a researcher, has first-hand experience of the frustrations of submitting information. Researchfish has evolved over time to try to address these problems and we continue to look at any improvements that can be made, including, for example, improving guidance to support those completing returns and better communicating why we collect the data and how it is used. As part of our Simpler Better Funding programme, we have already streamlined the process by for example removing certain questions from the survey. We are continuously looking for opportunities to make Researchfish even more efficient.

- **Do they have to provide returns?**
  Yes – UKRI asks researchers who are principle investigators of awards made by one of the seven research councils within UKRI to report on the outcomes of the funded research projects, for the duration of the award and for up to five years after. The objective is to demonstrate the value of publicly funded research and training, and outcomes often follow a number of years after the research is completed.

- **How are you reviewing your relationship with Researchfish?**
  We had already begun a review process to set out what we need from a data reporting perspective when we go out to tender at the end of the current contract. We are having separate conversations with Researchfish to understand how they will address concerns raised by researchers.

[redacted]
[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI
Bcc: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: Researchfish CEO submission
Date: 27 April 2022 13:45:00
Attachments: image001.png
OFFICIAL SENSITIVE - UKRI CEO Submission - Researchfish Data Protection Issues(12008.1).docx

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Hello [redacted],

Following on from the advice prepared by me and [redacted] last week, we had a meeting with [redacted] on Monday to discuss the issues of concern. [redacted] requested that we prepare a briefing for the CEO to reflect what had been discussed, to be put to the CEO for her determination.

Please see attached the draft CEO submission. Please would you review this to ensure that you agree with this, or please let me know if you would like to discuss further. I plan to submit to the CEO in this week's weekend pack.

Many thanks
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022
Date: 29 March 2022 08:45:19
Attachments: image004.png
image001.png

[redacted]

[redacted]

Regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

For diary queries and meeting requests please contact:

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]

Sent: 28 March 2022 18:56
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Thanks [redacted].

This is helpful to see. I don't think there is a need for us to publish an updated statement until we're comfortable that we have the full picture. We haven't made any public commitment to comment further so we have time to agree when it would make sense to say something externally. Our previous statement was:

> "We are aware of the concern that has been raised regarding tweets posted by Researchfish. We understand and acknowledge the serious issues raised by researchers and we will be discussing these with Researchfish as a matter of urgency."

In the meantime, we have had two direct contacts through UKRI's Communications inbox – I have included details below, highlighting some of the points being addressed to UKRI. I don't know if the points on data governance are accurate, but the expectation is that we will be open about what we are doing as the result of any review.

We will need to reply to the correspondents involved, so suggest we send a holding statement along the lines you've suggested. [redacted]

On that basis, I suggest we reply to those contacting UKRI directly with the statement:

> We are currently reviewing the data protection implications to understand any actions that need to be taken. We are in contact with Researchfish to understand what action they are taking to review their processes and respond to the concerns raised.

Please let me know if you are happy with this or have any suggested changes.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

Inquiry 1

[redacted]

[redacted]

Inquiry 2

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 28 March 2022 17:31
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Thanks – no direct questions that I'm aware of, just anticipatory. I'm happy with your proposed advice on approach.

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>

Sent: 28 March 2022 17:14
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Hi [redacted]

Do we have any direct questions to answer such as [redacted]

[redacted].
I'll discuss with the Data Protection team and come back to you with a view.

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 28 March 2022 16:50
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Thank you [redacted], and [redacted].

[redacted],

Is there any other information we need to put out an updated public line? Did we get RF's updated internal lines last week and do we need a further catch up with them this week prior to/around any publication of further lines?

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 28 March 2022 14:53
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Hi [redacted]

As mentioned in my previous email, I'm sharing the notes of my initial data protection assessment and emerging conclusions for info (copy attached). Thanks to [redacted] for providing additional information, and to [redacted] for providing copies of the contract and the SLA.

The ICO may or may not investigate if someone complains but this is useful information to have to hand in case they ask us any questions. I will update my notes as things progress.

[redacted]

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: FW: ResearchFortnight on ResearchFish
Date: 11 April 2022 16:16:00
Attachments: image001.png

FYI

Further to our discussion this morning about seeking clarification on one of the Researchfish related requests, the article below has appeared in Research Professional News. The headline doesn't accurately describe the situation or take into account the response from the UKRI Comms team, as we are neither refusing or delaying disclosure. Looks like this story may run for some time.

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 11 April 2022 16:06
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFortnight on ResearchFish

Hi all,

Please see the Research Pro article as a result of this enquiry below:

https://www.researchprofessional.com/0/rr/news/uk/research-councils/2022/4/UKRI-avoids-disclosing-Twitter-comms-with-Researchfish.html

UKRI avoids disclosing Twitter discourse with Researchfish

Meanwhile, universities start revealing information they hold on academics in relation to impact tracker

Comment on this article

The national research funder UK Research and Innovation has said it cannot disclose its correspondence with Researchfish regarding social media comments made about the impact tracker.

Last month Researchfish landed in hot water after it said it had reported researchers to their funders for posting critical tweets about the service.

Following the uproar, Researchfish said it was "truly sorry" for how it responded to the negative posts, and that it understands it "caused concerns among researchers".

However, some researchers are still concerned about the service's use of researcher data, and some have tried to find out more about how funders and universities use its data.

'Cost too high'

On 18 March, Michael Veale, an associate professor in digital rights and regulation at University College London, submitted a freedom of information (FOI) request to UKRI requesting "all correspondence between Researchfish and UKRI from the last five years relating to Researchfish reporting on behaviour of researchers to UKRI based on their social media statements".

Veale told Research Professional News he sent the request to "understand more about the manner and scale at which Researchfish inappropriately reports academics to the public [funder], and to remind individuals that data rights can be a powerful tool for accountability in the public and private sector".

However, in its response to Veale, dated 7 April, UKRI said the cost of carrying out the request would be too high.

It said: "An initial search of correspondence between UKRI and Researchfish in relation to Twitter and social media over the last five years returned over 200,000 results for UKRI."

Veale said he now plans to narrow his request with examples of times when specific researchers have claimed their tweets were reported to Researchfish.

"This will at least give us an idea of how Researchfish reports these academics, and from there, another request might help us with the scale."

He added: "I think we won't know the extent of many more practices like this, by Researchfish and others, until academics become more aware of both data access and FOI rights, and integrate them into their critical questioning of the systems that surround them."

A spokesperson for UKRI said: "This FOI request was not rejected. We have responded back [sic] to the enquirer regarding the FOI request in question asking for further clarification on the request to help us focus the search results and provide a clear response. We are waiting for the response from the enquirer."

They added: "We continue to have discussions with Researchfish over recent concerns expressed by researchers. As there have been queries raised about data handling, we are working carefully to establish details before commenting further."

University links

Meanwhile, a number of universities have received FOI requests asking them to detail their relationships with the service.

Of the 76 universities academics contacted publicly, 14 have so far said they held information on academics or departments with regard to Researchfish.

For example, Kingston University said that before the annual February-March submission period to Researchfish, "records are downloaded from Researchfish to allow monitoring of compliance with funder reporting requirements, to ensure that support can be provided where needed".

This includes grant holders' names, project titles, start and end dates, whether a submission is expected, and whether academics have accessed their Researchfish account and completed their submission, it said.

And in its response, St George's University of London said data is downloaded from Researchfish to "monitor submissions to the system before and during the submission window", including funder ID, award reference number, award type, PI title, PI name, PI surname and a St George's email.

There was no suggestion that universities held information on academics' interactions with Researchfish on Twitter.
Researchfish did not respond to requests for comment.

Thanks
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 08 April 2022 13:29
To: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFortnight on ResearchFish

Thanks.

Press team, you are good to go with those lines to ResearchFortnight, thank you. I'll send a copy to Interfolio as a courtesy.

[redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 08 April 2022 12:08
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFortnight on ResearchFish

Hi all

As I think was made clear on the call just now (for those who were there), [redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 08 April 2022 10:43
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFortnight on ResearchFish

Hi [redacted]

I'm happy with the lines.

Regarding the highlighted issue in yellow, I think this most probably relates to the following statement that Interfolio sent to 10 people:

[redacted]

[redacted]

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 08 April 2022 10:35
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFortnight on ResearchFish

Hi [redacted]

I'm happy with these lines.

I'm afraid I don't know whether the highlighted bit is true or not as I've not been closely involved in this side of things.

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 08 April 2022 10:32
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: ResearchFortnight on ResearchFish

Good morning

We had contact yesterday afternoon from ResearchFortnight asking follow up questions about ResearchFish, below are their questions and the proposed lines for responding, based on our current lines. We have to reply by 3pm. Please let me know by midday if you have any concern with these or if you prefer, I can arrange a meeting for us.

I am joining [redacted] meeting with [redacted] at Interfolio this morning at 11.
[redacted]
I will use the holding line with him as well, but I think it adds weight to needing to be clear about what we did and what changes we are making as a result in our statement/lines.

Please see proposed responses in red to the enquiries questions below.

[redacted]

We continue to have discussions with Researchfish over recent concerns expressed by researchers. As there have been queries raised about data handling, we are working carefully to establish details before commenting further.

[redacted]

This FOI request was not rejected. We have responded back to the enquirer regarding the FOI request in question asking for further clarification on the request to help us focus the search results and provide a clear response. We are waiting for the response from the enquirer.

Thanks
[redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 07 April 2022 18:18
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; Press [redacted]
Subject: Fwd: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Hi [redacted],

As per my other email, could you draft a line in response to Research Fortnight's question to clarify that the FOI has not been refused? We may have wording we have used in the past.

Cheers,

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: Thursday, April 7, 2022 5:38 pm
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Hi [redacted],

This is a request for clarification to help focus the search results, rather than a refusal of the request.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 07 April 2022 17:15
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Hi

We've just heard from ResearchFish that we have gone back to /00096 refusing the request [redacted]

Is this correct or has there been some confusion here?

Thanks
[redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 06 April 2022 10:26
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Hi All

An update on progress and due dates for the FOIs is provided below:

FOI2022/00096 – Researchfish reputation management – due 19/04/2022 – [redacted]
[redacted]
FOI2022/00102 – Researchfish and bullying – due 19/04/2022 - [redacted]
[redacted]

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Regards

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 05 April 2022 18:53

To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Hi [redacted]

I attach an updated version of the assessment as requested. I don't have any immediate plans to update but may need to if there is further activity following release of the responses to the information rights requests.

[redacted]

[redacted] please could you provide an update on the two FOI requests, including when the responses are due.

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 05 April 2022 13:02
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Copying [redacted]

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for the initial assessment. Could you send the updated version with [redacted] amendment in it? Do you have further steps to take or this the 'end product' in your work?
[redacted] is going to pull together what you have found so far, with the info from [redacted] and the briefing he prepared so that we have a single 'current understanding' to plan comms next steps around.

It would be really helpful to know when responses are due out on the FOIs and the [redacted] as both of these are likely triggers for renewed interest.

Given that [redacted] and it is about to be Easter, we would like to have a draft update with this groups' input ready next week for [redacted] to consider, then send it to CEO office for agreement ahead of Easter. That way we can make any statement (or updated responsive lines if we choose to be reactive rather than proactive) after Easter, or expedite it based on the draft if this suddenly flares up.

Thanks
[redacted]

[redacted] UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 28 March 2022 14:53
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Hi [redacted],

As mentioned in my previous email, I'm sharing the notes of my initial data protection assessment and emerging conclusions for info (copy attached). Thanks to [redacted] for providing additional information, and to [redacted] for providing copies of the contract and the SLA.

The ICO may or may not investigate if someone complains but this is useful information to have to hand in case they ask us any questions. I will update my notes as things progress.

[redacted]

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022
Date: 20 April 2022 10:34:00
Attachments: image001.png
image003.png

Thanks [redacted].

We've also had two new FOI requests following yesterday's communication and a follow up [redacted] arising from Interfolio's response. I'm in meetings for most of this morning, so will get details sent out this afternoon.

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 20 April 2022 09:56
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: FW: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Previous line on the FOI below and the link to whatdothey know
[redacted]

[redacted] – [redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 08 April 2022 10:02
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Morning [redacted],

Please see proposed responses in red to the enquiries questions below.

[redacted]

[redacted]

We continue to have discussions with Researchfish over recent concerns expressed by researchers. As there have been queries raised about data handling, we are working carefully to establish details before commenting further.

[redacted]

This FOI request was not rejected. We have responded back to the enquirer regarding the FOI request in question asking for further clarification on the request to help us focus the search results and provide a clear response. We are waiting for the response from the enquirer.

Thanks

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

Follow UK Research and Innovation on Twitter, subscribe to our newsletter and read more on our website.

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 07 April 2022 18:18
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; Press [redacted]
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[redacted]

[redacted]

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]
FOI2022/00102 – Researchfish and bullying – due 19/04/2022 - [redacted]
[redacted]

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Regards

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

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Sent: 05 April 2022 18:53
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

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[redacted]

[redacted] – please could you provide an update on the two FOI requests, including when the responses are due.

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 05 April 2022 13:02
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

Copying [redacted]

Hi [redacted],

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It would be really helpful to know when responses are due out on the FOIs and the [redacted], as both of these are likely triggers for renewed interest.

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Thanks
[redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 28 March 2022 14:53
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Researchfish DP Assessment - Monday 28 March 2022

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[redacted]

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: Researchfish - Data Protection Issues
Date: 08 April 2022 15:05:00
Attachments: image001.png

Hi [redacted]

Many thanks for this update. [redacted] I am available next week to attend a meeting with their Counsel, but it would be helpful if we could catch up first so I am clear about the issues here.

Please send me an invite that is convenient for us to meet. I shall be [redacted] on Monday if you want to meet in person and that suits you, but no problem if that's no good. I'll wait to hear from you.

Many thanks
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 08 April 2022 14:58
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI
[redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish - Data Protection Issues

Hi [redacted]

I met with [redacted], Interfolio UK) [redacted]

[redacted]. [redacted] and [redacted] has suggested a meeting next week. Are you available to attend?

[redacted]

> As I think was made clear on the call just now (for those who were there), [redacted]
>
> [redacted]

I attach a copy of the contract and schedule 7 GDPR information. I also attach a copy of the latest version of my data protection assessment for info.

Are you available to attend a meeting with their Legal counsel next week? Would it be helpful to meet beforehand to discuss further?

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 30 March 2022 09:31
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Researchfish - Data Protection Issues

Hi [redacted]

Many thanks for the heads up here. I shall wait to hear from you further, if needed.

Kind regards
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 30 March 2022 09:27
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: Researchfish - Data Protection Issues

Hi [redacted],

For info only at this stage.

There's been quite a bit of social media activity recently following requests By Interfolio UK to funding recipients to remove Tweets about Researchfish that they consider to be offensive. [redacted]

There are wider issues and the UKRI response is being led by Data Analysis, Research Outcomes with support from Comms. I've been providing data protection input. I attach our ongoing data protection assessment and emerging conclusions for info.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

I will keep you updated on any further developments.

Best,

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: ResearchFish
Date: 04 April 2022 14:33:44
Attachments: Researchfish twitter briefing v3.docx
image001.png

Hi [redacted]

Thanks – I'll pass the standard response on.

In the immediate aftermath of the twitterstorm I put together the attached with [redacted] input, which looks like it may have in part informed the [redacted] briefing. There is far more detail of the correspondence between us and Interfolio in my brief to [redacted], which I can also share if needed. Other than that, I'm obviously happy to help with any specific questions you may have.

Best wishes,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 04 April 2022 12:09
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI
[redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: RE: ResearchFish

Hi [redacted],

Thanks for sharing. The current statement that we've been using to respond to emails from researchers is below. We're waiting for a definitive position to emerge on Researchfish once data colleagues and others are happy that we have a full picture.

One of the things we were hoping to have was a short briefing doc on our relationship with Researchfish and an overview of what's been happening since the twitter incidents emerged. Is this something that you're working on? I've attached the short briefing I put together with [redacted] and others to prepare for our meeting with [redacted]. Happy to chat if helpful.

I'm happy for the part of UKRI contacted to use the text below to respond, but it's useful for us to be kept informed so we can keep track of the scale of interest and the type of questions we're being asked.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

Statement

We are currently reviewing the data protection implications to understand any actions that need to be taken. We are in contact with Researchfish to understand what action they are taking to review their processes and respond to the concerns raised.

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 04 April 2022 09:45
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: FW: ResearchFish

Hi all

Another email re: Researchfish into yet another generic email account. Do we have an agreed holding response we can send out as yet? And is it OK if it comes from the [redacted] originally contacted, or should it come from somewhere more central?

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 04 April 2022 09:09
To: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: FW: ResearchFish

Morning [redacted],

We've received the email below. Are these emails being managed centrally or do we have approved wording to respond with?

Cheers,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Please print this email only if necessary

From: [redacted] >
Sent: 03 April 2022 22:14
To: [redacted]
Subject: ResearchFish

[redacted]

Background to relationship between UKRI and Researchfish

UKRI and the research councils need to demonstrate the value and impact of publicly funded research and training. To help us do this we require our funded researchers to feedback on the progress of their work and report any outputs, outcomes and impacts. We use the results to account for our funding; to answer questions from central government and the public; in UKRI-wide performance monitoring; and in UKRI's submission to spending reviews.

Since 2014 all research councils have collected this outcome data via the Researchfish system. The system was developed by Firmstep Ltd. following the design of MRC e-Val, a system initially used solely by the Medical Research Council. This led to the launch of a dedicated company (Researchfish Ltd.) which expanded the scope of the system to accommodate multiple funders. Following an open tender exercise in 2014 the seven research councils working as Research Councils UK chose Researchfish to support a harmonized approach to output gathering, and in parallel many other UK funders also chose to use it. A federated system was intended to make it easier for researchers to report in one-place, to the same questions, to all their funders using the system. In 2019, Researchfish Ltd. was acquired by Interfolio, a U.S.-based developer of higher education information systems.

UKRI continues to work with Interfolio on ensuring the system works as efficiently as possible. Alongside other funders and research organisations, UKRI representatives sit on the various advisory committees and operational sub-groups to help refine the question set and develop opportunities for interoperability with other systems. We also have regular service review meetings to ensure that the system, and the support around it, are working as they should. Additional to this UKRI has worked to refine the additional questions it asks of its researchers and a recent reduction in questions was estimated to have saved between 217 and 1083 hours of researcher time [redacted]

The UKRI's current contract with Interfolio has recently been extended until the end of April 2023 and BEIS-approved funding is in place for extension for a further year after that. The contract for the 2022/23 year is valued [redacted]. As part of our Reforming Our Business activities, and as a condition of the BEIS-funding, UKRI is conducting a full options appraisal of how we obtain research outcomes data; this is currently in the discovery phase which has involved a limited number of external interviews and internal workshops.

Twitter controversy

[redacted]

As far as we can ascertain there have been a total of six reports to UKRI from Interfolio of inappropriate tweets:

1) A tweet [redacted] with offensive language. This was followed up by UKRI with an email to the researcher and their institution and the tweet was deleted.

2) A tweet in [redacted] with offensive language. This was followed up by UKRI with an email to the researcher and their institution, but further escalated contacts were met with no response.
3) A tweet on [redacted], and a response to it, alluded to the situation in Ukraine and were considered inappropriate by Interfolio staff. A UKRI email to the researcher resulted in its deletion. Although Interfolio have never sought approval for the wording they have used in responding to inappropriate tweets this year, they did give us sight of it as part of the email discussion around this particular tweet.
4) A tweet on [redacted] also alluded to Ukraine. The Interfolio response to it resulted in its deletion before any UKRI contact was made.
5) and 6) Two tweets on the [redacted] both using offensive language. There was no UKRI response to these as the controversy had escalated heavily in response and a more considered and wide-ranging response was required.

From: [redacted] UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: FW: Wednesday Webinar question (2002) - please review draft response by cop on Monday 25 April 2022
Date: 17 May 2022 15:30:26
Attachments: image001.png

Hi [redacted]

I've drafted the response below. Let me know if you think it serves our purposes here, or if edits are needed.

Thanks,
[redacted]

_____

_____

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 10 May 2022 14:58
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI
[redacted]

Cc: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002) - please review draft response by cop on Monday 25 April 2022

Hi [redacted],
Thank you for coming back – yes of course, no rush at all. Apologies for it coming to you late.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 10 May 2022 14:56
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002) - please review draft response by cop on Monday 25 April 2022

Thanks [redacted]. Can this wait til after 16th when a colleague will be back?

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 10 May 2022 12:09
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002) - please review draft response by cop on Monday 25 April 2022

Hi [redacted]/team,
Thanks again for your prior response – a colleague has let me know we have received another ResearchFish-related question which I've copied below. I'm not sure if it would fall under your remit, do let me know if not. It's quite wide ranging, so if there are elements you're happy to answer but not others, that is fine also.

[redacted]

Best wishes,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>

Sent: 09 May 2022 10:43
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002) - please review draft response by cop on Monday 25 April 2022

Hi [redacted]

Please see proposed response to the follow up question below:

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 28 April 2022 16:06
To: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002) - please review draft response by cop on Monday 25 April 2022

Hi [redacted]
That would be brilliant, thank you for your help. We don't normally upload answers until just
th

before the next webinar (11 May) so we have lots of time from that point of view.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

From: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]
Sent: 28 April 2022 16:05
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002) - please review draft response by cop on Monday 25 April 2022

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your email.

Before we can supply an answer to this question there are some items still to be clarified in terms of legal responsibilities, therefore I would anticipate getting an answer to you at the end of next week.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 27 April 2022 15:37
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002) - please review draft response by cop on Monday 25 April 2022

Hi [redacted]
We had a follow up question on ResearchFish today:

[redacted]

[redacted]

Are you able to provide a response?

Best wishes,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 25 April 2022 20:41
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002) - please review draft response by cop on Monday 25 April 2022

Hi [redacted]

Please see suggested answer to the question.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 13 April 2022 15:41
To: UKRI Data Protection [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002)

Hi [redacted]
Many thanks – [redacted] but we don't normally provide responses until the 26th of April, so I should be back in time to publish an update.

If you have an issues or queries in my absence, my colleague [redacted] will be around to assist.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

From: UKRI Data Protection [redacted] >
Sent: 13 April 2022 15:39
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; UKRI Data Protection [redacted]
Subject: RE: Wednesday Webinar question (2002)

Dear [redacted],

Thank you for your email.

I believe that we will be able to answer this question.

As you are no doubt aware, there is heightened interest in ResearchFish at the moment and therefore we will need to thoroughly investigate our current relationship and history with them before giving you our response. Some of that work is already underway as a result of recent events and we would hope to give you an answer by the end of next week.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >
Sent: 13 April 2022 12:57
To: UKRI Data Protection [redacted] >
Subject: Wednesday Webinar question

Hello,
We've had a question at the Wednesday Webinar which I'm hoping someone in the team can answer:

[redacted]

Please let me know if you're happy to provide a response, or if not would you be willing to point me in the right direction?

Best wishes,

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI; UKRI CEO
Cc: Exec Director Jobshare - Strategy UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: For CEO APPROVAL - Statement on ResearchFish for Tuesday
Date: 19 April 2022 15:45:24
Attachments: ResearchFishStatement-approved.docx
image001.png

Hi [redacted]

Here is the text to send round.

Thanks
[redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 19 April 2022 12:16
To: UKRI CEO [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: Exec Director Jobshare - Strategy UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: For CEO APPROVAL - Statement on ResearchFish for Tuesday

Understood, thanks [redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation

[redacted]
[redacted]

Polaris House
North Star Avenue,
Swindon,
Wiltshire
SN2 1FL

From: UKRI CEO [redacted]
Sent: 19 April 2022 12:14
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: Exec Director Jobshare - Strategy UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; UKRI CEO [redacted]
Subject: RE: For CEO APPROVAL - Statement on ResearchFish for Tuesday

Many thanks, [redacted] I will leave [redacted] to co-ordinate with you on distribution. I don't think it needs to come 'from' Ottoline, it could just say (as we did last time) that Ottoline has flagged as an update to our comms on the issue.

Best wishes,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 19 April 2022 08:16
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; UKRI CEO [redacted]
Cc: Exec Director Jobshare - Strategy UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: For CEO APPROVAL - Statement on ResearchFish for Tuesday

Morning all,

If you could just send me the final text then that would be fantastic and I can get the email out…assuming it coming from Ottoline as she's approved it and also assuming that it's OK for BEIS colleagues to have this email [redacted] for Board and [redacted] for ExCo)?

If you want this to go further than Board and ExCo then please let me know and I can ensure it goes out to them.

Thanks, have a lovely (email catching up) morning.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation

[redacted]

Polaris House
North Star Avenue,
Swindon,
Wiltshire
SN2 1FL

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 14 April 2022 13:50
To: UKRI CEO [redacted]>
Cc: Exec Director Jobshare - Strategy UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; Board Secretariat [redacted]; UKRI CEO [redacted]
Subject: Re: For CEO APPROVAL - Statement on ResearchFish for Tuesday

Hi [redacted]

Marvellous thank you. Looking at it, we could probably remove that one sentence about policies as it is answering a point that is now addressed elsewhere (is the compliant with GDPR etc). This wouldn't change the meaning of anything.

[redacted]

Good point about the Board, we will ensure we do that too.
Have a great Easter,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: UKRI CEO [redacted]g>
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2022 1:41:50 PM
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: Exec Director Jobshare - Strategy UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; Board Secretariat [redacted]; UKRI CEO [redacted]
Subject: RE: For CEO APPROVAL - Statement on ResearchFish for Tuesday
Hi [redacted]

Quicker than I expected: Ottoline thinks this is good. She didn't understand one sentence which is flagged in the attached.
She realises that the data use issues are still under review, but wonders whether it is worth mentioning that information about all our grant awards and awardees is in the public domain?
Given the interest it this, she thinks we should let Board and others know. **Board Sec** (cc'd) can help you with that on Tuesday.
Many thanks,

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: UKRI CEO [redacted]>
Sent: 14 April 2022 12:59
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: Exec Director Jobshare - Strategy UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; UKRI CEO [redacted]
Subject: RE: For CEO APPROVAL - Statement on ResearchFish for Tuesday

Many thanks, [redacted] – I've flagged to Ottoline and will keep you updated.
Best wishes,

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 14 April 2022 11:39
To: UKRI CEO [redacted]
Cc: Exec Director Jobshare - Strategy UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI <[redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: For CEO APPROVAL - Statement on ResearchFish for Tuesday

Hi [redacted],
Please find attached the draft statement on ResearchFish for Ottoline's approval. We want to publish this on Tuesday after the Easter break, as that is when the response to various data requests will go out and we expected renewed interest. (Note – nothing of concern in those data releases).
The statement has been agreed by [redacted] for ResearchFish and she mentioned it to Ottoline when they met yesterday, so should be expected. It has also been checked by colleagues for data protection and legal implications.
Any questions, give me a shout.

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]
Graphical user interface, application□ □ Description automatically generated

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: UKRI CEO
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: ResearchFish DP / Legal advice
Date: 19 April 2022 10:00:25
Attachments: Researchfish DP Assessment - Mon (as PDF).pdf
ResearchFishStatement-approved.docx
image003.jpg

Hi [redacted],

You just mentioned on Zoom chat that Ottoline is taking another look at the statement this morning and asked for the DP / legal advice.

Attached is the DP report [redacted] provided. [redacted]

[redacted].

[redacted].

[redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted].

Graphical user interface, application Description automatically generated

From: [redacted] UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: Research Professional enquiry (deadline 5pm today) and article on ResearchFish
Date: 27 June 2022 18:33:00

Thanks [redacted] – that all makes sense to me (and I'm very happy to be able to think about things non-Researchfish). The webinar question I think should serve our purposes here.

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >
Sent: 27 June 2022 17:48
To: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Research Professional enquiry (deadline 5pm today) and article on ResearchFish

Hi [redacted]

I don't know of any further planned statements. I assume we'll release if asked, but not pre-emptively (except to those individuals concerned, who we've already sent the relevant info to). I think everyone's so busy that being proactive on one more release isn't as high up the priority list [redacted]

Re your [redacted], I recall there was a Wednesday webinar answer drafted that might answer their q? [redacted] would know what the status of the DPIA is.

[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 27 June 2022 14:27
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Research Professional enquiry (deadline 5pm today) and article on ResearchFish

Hi [redacted]

Definitely agree with this approach – [redacted]

But, I did want to ask whether you are anticipating any more public statements, particularly in relation to the April statement: "Our assessment of the data protection considerations is ongoing and is expected to be concluded shortly." I've had a note that a [redacted] asked about this recently, [redacted], I'd

imagine there could be others with similar questions (beyond the usual twitter suspects).

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 23 June 2022 09:01
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: UKRI CEO [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Research Professional enquiry (deadline 5pm today) and article on ResearchFish

We have nothing to add. There have been a couple of FOIs or similar released since (e.g. "what's ROMB?") but nothing that, to my eye, changes our 19 April statement.

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 23 June 2022 08:24
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI CEO [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Research Professional enquiry (deadline 5pm today) and article on ResearchFish

Hi [redacted],

Research Professional have asked for a further update on ResearchFish (deadline 5pm today, Thurs 23 June) and published the below article. There is no substantive update provided in the piece and appears to be Research Professional attempting to keep the story running.

Is there any further update on this which we should be aware of with providing a response to them? If not then we can refer them back to the published statement.

Many thanks

[redacted]

Researchfish maintains radio silence on Twitter after row

Impact-tracking service has not tweeted since it apologised for reporting academics for critical tweets

Comment on this article

Researchfish, which has been embroiled in controversy over its handling of Twitter criticism, has maintained radio silence on the social media platform since the row erupted in March.

The impact-tracking service was accused of bullying, intimidation and a possible breach of data-protection laws after it reported a handful of researchers to their funder, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), for their critical posts about the service.

Responding to a handful of individual comments, Researchfish's Twitter account posted messages saying: "We understand that you're not keen on reporting on your funding through Researchfish but this seems quite harsh and inappropriate. We have shared our concerns with your funder."

It later emerged that UKRI had agreed with Researchfish that the service's staff should flag "abusive, threatening or offensive tweets" to the funder.

Email correspondence between Researchfish and UKRI published in response to a freedom of information request revealed that Researchfish flagged a number of tweets made by academics to the funder, with UKRI agreeing that its tweets in response "set the correct tone".

Three months after the story broke, Researchfish's Twitter account has remained inactive.

The latest tweet, posted on 20 March, was an apology from the service—accompanied by a link to a full statement—and read: "We are truly sorry for how we responded to the negative posts last week and understand that we caused concerns among researchers."

A spokesperson for Researchfish, which is now owned by Elsevier, told Research Professional News: "Researchfish has publicly and wholeheartedly apologised for the concerns it recently caused the research community.

"We continue to work with our customers to understand their concerns better so we can bring improvements to processes and user experience as needed. We will make sure our customers are comfortable with any developments and kept informed."

[redacted]

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

[redacted]

www.ukri.org
Follow UK Research and Innovation on Twitter, subscribe to our newsletter and read more on our website.

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: Researchfish statement
Date: 19 April 2022 10:24:06
Attachments: ResearchFishStatement-approved.docx
image002.png

Ottoline has just paused it – so please wait for an update before posting, but for planning at this stage!

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 19 April 2022 09:55
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: Researchfish statement

Hi [redacted],

Hope you had a good Easter break.

Can I trouble you for a copy of the Researchfish web statement please to start preparing a tweet? I've seen a version but am quite sure it's been updated since.

Many thanks!

Warm regards,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI
Subject: FW: Approved statement on ResearchFish
Date: 20 April 2022 13:10:11
Attachments: image001.png
image002.jpg
Re Update on last week"s even[redacted] - [redacted]

Hi [redacted]

Do we know where the ROMB minutes from 2018 are stored – I can't find these on the SharePoint folder?

Best wishes,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >
Sent: 20 April 2022 13:03
To: UKRI CEO [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish

You don't often get email from [redacted]. Learn why this is important

Hi [redacted]

Regarding request 2, I wasn't involved in the original discussions with Interfolio in 2019 and don't have access to the ROMB minutes. I'm including [redacted] RMOB) and [redacted] as they will be better placed to advise.

I am attaching a recent email exchange I had with [redacted], Interfolio UK [redacted], about their GDPR statement released in late March. [redacted] when we met on Friday 8th March and stated [redacted]. [redacted] and I will be meeting with their Legal Counsel tomorrow afternoon.

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: UKRI CEO [redacted] >
Sent: 20 April 2022 11:32
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; UKRI CEO [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish

Hi all,

Thanks for your help with this. I have 2 requests from Ottoline, putting both on this chain to keep it simple:

1. [redacted] – Ottoline has asked for some core lines on Researchfish covering this latest update which everyone can use. Please could you pick this up?
2. [redacted] –

Many thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >
Sent: 19 April 2022 14:04
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI CEO [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish

Thanks [redacted] – appreciated

Can you let me know timings and we'll alert sector press proactively

Thanks

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >
Sent: 19 April 2022 12:47
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI CEO [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Approved statement on ResearchFish

Hi all,

This is the version we are going with.

[redacted] – can you share it with ROMB members?
Do you want to share it with any other funders?

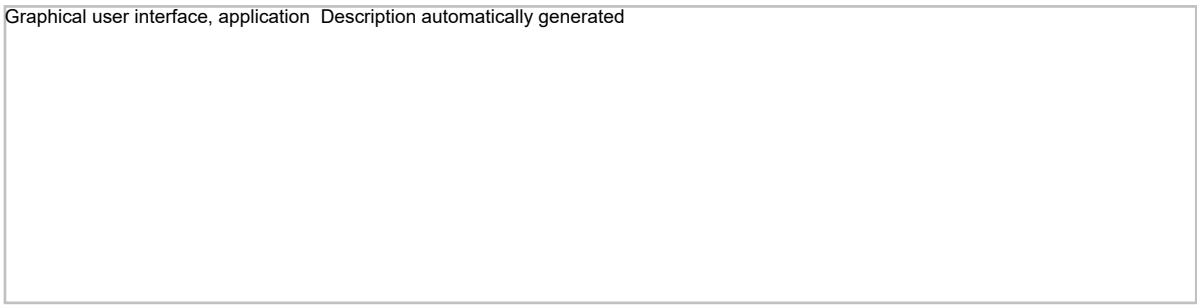
I will liaise with the web team, social media, internal comms and board secretariat.
I will also share it with [redacted], copy you, indicating a likely web publication time.

Thanks everyone for you time on this,

[redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]



From: [redacted] UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; UKRI CEO; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] UKRI
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish
Date: 20 April 2022 14:06:26
Attachments: image001.png
image002.jpg

Dear [redacted]
My understanding regarding request 2 is [redacted].
[redacted]
The original agreement with researchfish was likely managed through the Research Outcomes Support Team (ROST), with the support of ROMB. I don't have access to any correspondence between ROST and researchfish – but this would have come from the ROST e-mail address or potentially [redacted] (who led the ROST team at the time). [redacted].
I have reviewed the ROMB minutes from 2019 and cannot find a reference to responding to offensive tweets within these. I believe that this was handled via e-mail correspondence between ROMB members, and then an approach agreed with Executive Directors from [redacted] (as the funder of the tweet's author) and [redacted] (given my role [redacted] ROMB at the time).
This was a one-off incident in 2019 and was dealt with as such. Our approach has likely 'evolved' over time [redacted] as similar tweets emerged in subsequent submission periods, and we followed previous precedent in responding.
Very happy to discuss further if helpful.
Best wishes,
[redacted]
[redacted] | www.ukri.org | @UKRI_News

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 20 April 2022 13:03
To: UKRI CEO [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] UKR [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted] >
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish

> You don't often get email from david.hyett@ukri.org. Learn why this is important

Hi [redacted]
Regarding request 2, I wasn't involved in the original discussions with Interfolio in 2019 and don't have access to the ROMB minutes. I'm including [redacted] RMOB) and [redacted] as they will be better placed to advise.
I am attaching a recent email exchange I had with [redacted], Interfolio UK [redacted] about their GDPR statement released in late March. [redacted] when we met on Friday 8th March and stated [redacted]. [redacted] and I will be meeting with their Legal Counsel tomorrow afternoon.
Best,
[redacted]

From: UKRI CEO [redacted] >
Sent: 20 April 2022 11:32
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; UKRI CEO [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish
Hi all,
Thanks for your help with this. I have 2 requests from Ottoline, putting both on this chain to keep it simple:

1. [redacted] – Ottoline has asked for some core lines on Researchfish covering this latest update which everyone can use. Please could you pick this up?
2. [redacted] – [redacted]

Many thanks,
[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >
Sent: 19 April 2022 14:04
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI

[redacted] > [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI CEO [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish
Thanks [redacted] – appreciated
Can you let me know timings and we'll alert sector press proactively
Thanks
[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 19 April 2022 12:47
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI CEO [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Approved statement on ResearchFish
Hi all,
This is the version we are going with.
[redacted] – can you share it with ROMB members?
Do you want to share it with any other funders?
I will liaise with the web team, social media, internal comms and board secretariat.
I will also share it with [redacted], copy you, indicating a likely web publication time.
Thanks everyone for you time on this,
[redacted], UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]
Graphical user interface, application Description automatically generated

From: UKRI CEO
To: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish
Date: 21 April 2022 17:23:59
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png
image003.jpg
RE Approved statement on ResearchFish.msg
FW Abusive Tweet from a [redacted] grantholder.msg
Re Update on last week's even[redacted] - [redacted]

Hi all,

The comms elements around core lines appear to be well in hand, so I'm going back and splitting off this part of the chain to dig into point 2 more: the emails and records that we hold on this. Comms colleagues have been moved to bcc to save your inboxes – please shout if you'd like to be added back in.

To summarise what I've seen on this chain so far:

- Confirmation from [redacted] that the 2019 ROMB minutes don't mention anything about offensive / abusive tweets.
- An email exchange between [redacted], and [redacted] following ResearchFish reporting the first abusive tweet.
- The text of that first abusive Tweet (below).
- A recent exchange with [redacted] at ResearchFish after this had all blown up on Twitter.

What I'd still like us to track down please is:

- Any information that we've collated for any previous FOIs on this (if any, and covering both internally gathered information as well as anything released).
- Any correspondence from the [redacted] email address or [redacted] with ResearchFish around any abusive tweets or handling such issues in general.
- Then email exchanges mentioned in [redacted] email for the initial tweet ("*I believe that this was handled via e-mail correspondence between ROMB members, and then an approach agreed with…*").
- The email(s) mentioned as being sent to that grant holders' institution about their behaviour.
- Any similar email exchanges regarding the subsequent abusive tweets (including with ResearchFish, internally within UKRI, and any emails we sent to the grant holders' institutions).
- Any more recent emails with ResearchFish on this, beyond the attached [redacted] email.

I'm looking to build a clearer picture of what we know regarding what was said, to whom, and when. At the moment the picture is quite muddy from my perspective. **Who's the most appropriate person to collate all of the above into one file –** [redacted]?

We should also keep track of nil returns please: it's helpful to know if we've looked and can't find anything.

From what I can tell so far, ResearchFish reported the initial abusive tweet to us on [redacted] There were internal discussions within UKRI about how to handle this which seem to have focused on treating it as bullying/harassment by a UKRI grant fundee towards a third party (which in this case we've contracted to work on our behalf). The decision was for UKRI to contact his intuition. [redacted]
Those further cases were presumably all looked at in a similar way (i.e. as bullying/harassment towards a third party. This came to a head with the cases on [redacted] which generated a lot of Twitter reaction criticising the appropriateness of the approach and questioning GDPR compliance. ResearchFish have stopped replying to abusive tweets in this manner.

[redacted]

Best,

[redacted] | UK Research and Innovation |

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 20 April 2022 15:01
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; UKRI CEO [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for the additional information in the attached message relating to the original 2019 request and the Tweet that you provided for context below. I'm including [redacted] in on my response for info.

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 20 April 2022 14:50
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish

Dear [redacted]

FYI – I think the original 2019 request to address an offensive tweet from researchfish went directly to a [redacted] representative (please see attached e-mail chain, original message is at the bottom).

Best wishes,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 20 April 2022 13:03
To: UKRI CEO [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]

Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish

You don't often get email from [redacted]. Learn why this is important

Hi [redacted]

Regarding request 2, I wasn't involved in the original discussions with Interfolio in 2019 and don't have access to the ROMB minutes. I'm including [redacted] ([redacted] RMOB) and [redacted] as they will be better placed to advise.

I am attaching a recent email exchange I had with [redacted], Interfolio UK[redacted], about their GDPR statement released in late March. [redacted] when we met on Friday 8th March and stated [redacted] and I will be meeting with their Legal Counsel tomorrow afternoon.

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: UKRI CEO [redacted]>
Sent: 20 April 2022 11:32
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; UKRI CEO [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish

Hi all,

Thanks for your help with this. I have 2 requests from Ottoline, putting both on this chain to keep it simple:

1. [redacted] – Ottoline has asked for some core lines on Researchfish covering this latest update which everyone can use. Please could you pick this up?
2. [redacted] –

Many thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 19 April 2022 14:04
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: UKRI CEO [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Approved statement on ResearchFish

Thanks [redacted] – appreciated

Can you let me know timings and we'll alert sector press proactively

Thanks

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 19 April 2022 12:47
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: UKRI CEO [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Approved statement on ResearchFish

Hi all,

This is the version we are going with.

[redacted] – can you share it with ROMB members?
Do you want to share it with any other funders?

I will liaise with the web team, social media, internal comms and board secretariat.
I will also share it with [redacted], copy you, indicating a likely web publication time.

Thanks everyone for you time on this,

[redacted]

[redacted], UK Research and Innovation

[redacted]

Graphical user interface, application Description automatically generated

From: Board Secretariat
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: UKRI update on ResearchFish - a message from Ottoline Leyser
Date: 19 April 2022 15:53:34
Attachments: image001.png

Dear Executive Committee members,

Ottoline has asked for me to pass on the below information with regards to ResearchFish.

Many thanks, [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation

[redacted]

Polaris House
North Star Avenue,
Swindon,
Wiltshire
SN2 1FL

UKRI update on ResearchFish

Last month (March 2022) a number of people raised concerns about tweets posted by ResearchFish, owned by Interfolio and we have been establishing the facts behind these.

What happened?

Following some abusive tweets in 2018, UKRI and ResearchFish staff discussed sharing abusive, threatening or offensive tweets so that UKRI could suggest the senders reconsider their

language. This was intended to protect colleagues who were impacted by abuse. At no point was this ever intended, or used, to affect current or future grants from UKRI.

How many people were impacted?

Our searches have identified six incidents of tweets being flagged to UKRI over four years. In three of those UKRI contacted either the host University or the individual directly. In two cases the individuals deleted their tweets and in the third, no response was received and no further action was taken. In the other three cases, UKRI took no action. The tweets were not used in connection with any other processes in UKRI.

We were wrong

We have stopped this approach with immediate effect and recognise that it was the wrong thing to do. We understand that this has raised questions around personal data. We take data protection very seriously. Our assessment of the data protection considerations is ongoing and is expected to be concluded shortly.

We have discussed with ResearchFish that any tweets of concern to them can be dealt with through the mechanisms provided by the platform, such as the Twitter reporting function.

We apologise for our approach and actions on this issue and the concern this has caused. We believe that all staff have the right to work free from abuse, bullying or threat. We recognise the right of people to criticise an organisation or system without fear of reprisal.

The future

Collecting data about research impacts is important for us to demonstrate the outcomes from the work we fund, and we make significant use of this data. We are exploring the most effective ways for us to gather this data in the future. At present, Interfolio Inc. supplies and supports the Researchfish system for us and we will continue discussions with them to ensure that interactions with the research community are of a high standard and adhere to good practice.

How do we use Researchfish data?

Data and evidence, including Researchfish data, help us achieve our objectives by learning what works and informing our investment and policy decisions, and by demonstrating the rationale for further investment and demonstrating our impact to stakeholders.

Researchfish data are used across UKRI to understand the research outputs, outcomes and impacts we are helping to deliver. For example, from the data we know that:

- UKRI-funded researchers are collaborating widely within the UK and internationally. For example, awards starting from 2016-2020 have reported 23,714 new collaborations across 176 countries. [source: UKRI Annual Report and Accounts]
- UKRI-funded researchers engage with a wide variety of audiences and stakeholders to communicate research outcomes, disseminate knowledge, stimulate public awareness, and encourage public engagement and dialogue. For example, approximately two thirds of awards report carrying out engagement activities. [source: Researchfish dashboard]
- UKRI-funded research is being translated and commercialised to deliver wider benefit to the UK. For example, 3% of awards report an outcome of a new instance of Intellectual Property. [source: UKRI Annual Report and Accounts]
- UKRI-funded research is generating exciting new ideas that are leading to further investment in research and innovation. For example, 50% of awards go on to attract further funding, with funding received from 81 countries [source: ARA]

The data are also used extensively within evaluations to understand the overall outcomes from a

programme and how successful it has been at achieving its aims and objectives. For example, Researchfish data are being used within the multi-year evaluation of UKRI's investments in the National Productivity Investment Funds to understand the impact of these funds on multi-disciplinarity, or the types of collaboration the funds are leading to.

Within the MRC evaluation of translational research, Researchfish data were used to understand how outcomes (e.g. further funding, spin outs, licensing agreements) differ between a specific portfolio of translational research, other translational research funding by MRC, and broader MRC grants.

The data are also used to develop case studies, illustrating the impact of research locally, nationally and internationally, and are published on Gateway to Research, so that anyone can see and understand the outcomes from research.

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: [redacted] - Monday 25 April 2022
Date: 25 April 2022 15:31:26
Attachments: image001.png

Thanks [redacted] – these are good points. [redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 25 April 2022 15:02
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: [redacted] - Monday 25 April 2022

Hi [redacted]

Many thanks for this. It is really helpful.

I've added a couple of minor thoughts below, which may or may not be helpful!

Kind regards
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 24 April 2022 14:04
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: [redacted] - Monday 25 April 2022

Hi [redacted],

I've made some brief notes for our meeting with [redacted] below.

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted] - Monday 25 April 2022

22 April 2022
15:33

On the GDPR questions, that's helpful extra information. I want to dig into this a bit further though please, so have some further follow ups. I'm happy to talk this through at some point over the next few days if that's easier.

[redacted]

My view at the outset:
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Action taken

	Details	**Action taken**
1.	[redacted] - [redacted], [redacted]	[redacted] deleted and apologised after Interfolio responded. UKRI wrote to [redacted], [redacted].
2.	[redacted] - [redacted], [redacted], [redacted]	Interfolio alerted ROMB [redacted] of Tweet from [redacted], [redacted]. UKRI emailed [redacted], [redacted]. [redacted] did not acknowledge complaint

		and Tweet remains live to this day.
3.	[redacted] - [redacted], [redacted] and reply from [redacted], [redacted] Both based at [redacted]	Interfolio responded to the Tweet and alerted ROMB members. [redacted] apologised and deleted Tweet. [redacted] apologised and deleted Tweet following email from [redacted]. Dealt with by direct correspondence rather than referred to [redacted].
4.	[redacted] - [redacted], [redacted], [redacted]	Interfolio responded to Tweet and alerted ROMB members. No UKRI action taken.
5.	[redacted] - [redacted], [redacted]	Interfolio responded to Tweet and alerted ROMB members. No UKRI action taken. [redacted] is quotes in [redacted]
6.	[redacted] - [redacted], [redacted], [redacted]	Interfolio responded to Tweet and alerted ROMB members. No UKRI action taken.

[redacted]

Nature and purposes of the processing set out in Schedule 7 GDPR Information of the contract.

[redacted]

From

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: Draft CEO Submission on Researchfish Data Protection Issues for Review
Date: 25 April 2022 20:05:37
Attachments: OFFICIAL SENSITIVE - UKRI CEO Submission - Researchfish Data Protection Issues.docx

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Hi [redacted],

I've sent [redacted] a Zoom chat message providing some background on today's meeting with [redacted] from the CEO Office, have included you in the message.

I attach the first draft of the CEO submission for review and amendment. I've suggested that [redacted] should sign off as [redacted].

While I'm not planning to take my work mobile with me, I'm happy to be contacted using my personal number and personal email if needed – [redacted], [redacted]

Hope the next two days goes OK.

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted]


[redacted] UKRI
2
Messages older than 2 years have been removed
Apr 25, 2022
[redacted] Apr 25, 2022, 19:57
Hi [redacted] - I'm going to need your help with a Researchfish issue while I'm away for the next two days. [redacted] and I met with Interfolio's Legal Counsel last week and produced an options paper, which [redacted] and a meeting today between me, [redacted] and [redacted] to discuss DP issues [redacted] I've drafted a CEO submission for this Thursday's weekend pack deadline, which [redacted] will review and amend tomorrow. [redacted] It will then need to go to [redacted] for sign off as [redacted] and copied to the people listed in the submission for info. Please could you work with [redacted] on this as required for the next two days. Thanks
Collapse All
[redacted] Apr 25, 2022, 20:02
ok
[redacted] Apr 25, 2022, 20:03
[redacted]
[redacted] Apr 25, 2022, 20:03 (Edited)
I'll copy you into the email I'm about to send to [redacted] now
1
[redacted] Apr 25, 2022, 20:04
[redacted]
[redacted] Apr 25, 2022, 20:06
enjoy your break
[redacted] Apr 25, 2022, 20:07
Thanks, I think I need it!
Message [redacted] - UKRI
GIF

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: FW: Interfolio - briefing note
Date: 27 April 2022 12:37:46
Attachments: image001.png
OFFICIAL SENSITIVE - UKRI CEO Submission - Researchfish Data Protection Issues (2).docx

---

Hi [redacted],

This looks good and reflects the points we discussed yesterday. [redacted]

[redacted]

Best wishes,

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 27 April 2022 11:59
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: RE: Interfolio - briefing note

Hi [redacted]

Many thanks for reviewing this and for our discussion yesterday.

I have made some amendments which I hope incorporates what we discussed. Please would you let me know what you think?

Kind regards
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 26 April 2022 16:52
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: FW: Interfolio - briefing note

Hi [redacted],

Some minor comments in the attached. [redacted]

Best wishes,

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 26 April 2022 15:31
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: Interfolio - briefing note

Hi [redacted]

I have reviewed [redacted] draft briefing note. I know you have been thrown in at the deep end a bit with this, but would you mind just checking that what I am saying makes sense before I send to [redacted].

Please make any amendments you like, and call me if you would like to discuss this.

Many thanks
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Researchfish Discussion with [redacted] – External Affairs Briefing

- **What is the nature of your relationship with Researchfish?**
  UKRI has a contract with Interfolio to deliver the Researchfish activity.

- **How often does UKRI meet with Researchfish?**
  There is a cross-council group (the Research Outcomes Management Board, ROMB) that manages the relationship with Researchfish, they meet with representatives from Researchfish regularly ([redacted] or another ROMB member may be able to advise concerning how often)

- **What input does UKRI have to Researchfish's interaction / communication with researchers?**
  UKRI will agree the wording and timing of communications to researchers about the annual submission period which are then sent via the Researchfish system. UKRI does not govern the way that Researchfish respond/communicate about their service.

- **Were you aware of Researchfish's policy / approach on abuse before this came to light last week?**
  UKRI's data protection team are investigating details, we'll be in a position to confirm details once they have completed their review.

- **What action have you taken since concerns were raised on social media?**
  We have been in contact with Interfolio to understand the action they have taken, the policies that have informed this and what action they will be taking to respond to researcher concerns. These are active conversations.

- **Why does UKRI use Researchfish?**
  It is critical that we gather data about the impact of the research we fund, to inform our funding decisions, refine our approach and be transparent about how public funding is used. In some cases, this is the only feedback we have on how investments are spent.

- **How does UKRI actually use the data obtained through Researchfish?**
  It supports in-house analysis to understand what research outputs and outcomes UKRI is helping to deliver. It is also frequently used as part of the many number of evaluation reviews UKRI undertakes. There is a page on our website which provides some specific examples of how the Researchfish data has been used as part of analysis and evaluations, but examples include:

  - we've used RF data in the recent evaluations of the Joint Global Health Trials initiative and the Health Systems Research Initiative as well as in our very large evaluation of translational research.

  - We're also in the process of delivering a multi-year evaluation of UKRI's investments in the National Productivity Investment – worth several billion pounds – and these evaluations are relying heavily on the Researchfish data.

- **What are the alternatives?**

In principle, there are alternatives to using Researchfish, but all of these options would involve changing the scope of data we collect on outputs and outcomes, so we would need to first establish and agree the case for changing our approach. Currently, Researchfish is the only solution that allows us to track a wide range of research outputs and outcomes across all research disciplines and link this to grants awarded by UKRI. [redacted]

- **What is the burden on those completing returns?**
  Data from Researchfish system logins indicate that completing the Researchfish survey can take on average 45 minutes of a researcher's time. However, we're aware that many researchers spend longer than this, and we don't rely on this evidence for the purposes of assessing burden. We are aware of the shortcomings of the platform and our CEO, as a researcher, has first-hand experience of the frustrations of submitting information. Researchfish has evolved over time to try to address these problems and we continue to look at any improvements that can be made, including, for example, improving guidance to support those completing returns, enhancing interoperability and automated harvesting of outcomes data, and better communicating why we collect the data and how it is used. As part of our Simpler Better Funding programme, we have already streamlined the process by for example removing certain questions from the survey. We are continuously looking for opportunities to make Researchfish even more efficient.

- **Do they have to provide returns?**
  Yes – UKRI asks researchers who are principle investigators of awards made by one of the seven research councils within UKRI to report on the outcomes of the funded research projects, for the duration of the award and for up to five years after. The objective is to demonstrate the value of publicly funded research and training, and outcomes often follow a number of years after the research is completed.

- **How are you reviewing your relationship with Researchfish?**
  We had already begun a review process to set out what we need from a data reporting perspective when we go out to tender at the end of the current contract. We are having separate conversations with Researchfish to understand how they will address concerns raised by researchers.

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI; [redacted] UKRI
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board
Date: 25 May 2022 15:57:57
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png
image003.png

Thanks. Hold fire on it for now, [redacted] thought your email was already v good

---

From: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 May 2022 14:55
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board

Hi [redacted]

Not quite sure what's needed for the Q&A. I'm thinking a longer document with more information on the following Qs:

What is Researchfish?
Who uses Researchfish?
How long has UKRI used Researchfish?
How do we use the data collected through Researchfish? (answer from the web statement)

Maybe others questions? I don't expect they want more detail on the tweets or related incidents [redacted]

I'll start pulling this together, but let me know if your interpretation is different.

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 May 2022 13:58
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board

Thanks both. I was going to offer it to you [redacted] to send to CEO etc [redacted] but for the sake of expediency I can do it now.

I just noticed they asked for Q&A too. Please can you pull together any of those too, including the Wednesday webinar questions we prepared answers to?

[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted] >
Sent: 25 May 2022 13:54
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board

Looks good from my point of view – Private office can always ask for more details/updates.

Regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

For diary queries and meeting requests please contact:

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 25 May 2022 12:58
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: FW: ResearchFish: update to Board

Without going overboard, how about:

We have a contract for the use of Researchfish for another two years, but with a duty to fully consider our requirements and investigate potential alternative systems and suppliers, we had already started a project which will explore the most effective ways for us to gather this data in the future. As part of this we will work with other stakeholders (funders, research organisations, researchers) to identify where sharing systems and data will help reduce

bureaucracy in research. Widespread use of Researchfish across UK funders has seen us make significant progress in this area, and it important that any future developments build on this progress.

[redacted]

From: [redacted] UKRI [redacted] >
Sent: 25 May 2022 12:34
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board

[redacted]

On the future – can we add some of the top-lines from our discussion with [redacted] – e.g. (not worded well) the collaboration between funders is very much aligned with the system working to reduce bureaucracy, and presents great opportunities (explain), the current concerns about the Researchfish approach risks damaging this (how), we need to try to bring as many of these other stakeholders with us as possible – as we establish/re-define our requirements, and think about potential procurement (further discussion needed, including involving research organisations).

Regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

For diary queries and meeting requests please contact:

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 May 2022 12:23
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board

Hi [redacted]

Starter for ten below. Not sure quite where to aim for "a medium amount of detail". Not sure who else needs to sign off on this as it's mostly drawn from already agreed lines anyway.

[redacted]

Researchfish twitter incident

In March 2022 a number of people raised concerns on twitter about Researchfish, which is used by UKRI to gather information on the research outcomes of funding. Researchfish, owned by Interfolio, were posting replies which were seen as "bullying" of those critical of the system by threatening to report them to their funders, and potentially in breach of GDPR regulations. The controversy was reported by Research Professional and Time Higher Education and we received several FOI requests concerning our relationship with Interfolio.

Following an investigation to gather all the facts, we responded with a public statement on 16 April which reported that UKRI and Researchfish staff had discussed sharing abusive, threatening or offensive tweets so that UKRI could suggest the senders reconsider their language. This was intended to protect colleagues who were impacted by abuse.

In total, six incidents of tweets had been flagged to us over four years by Researchfish. In three of those UKRI contacted either the host university or the individual directly. In two cases the individuals deleted their tweets and in the third, no response was received and no further action was taken. In the other three cases, UKRI took no action. The tweets were not used in connection with any other processes in UKRI.

The public statement made clear that this was the wrong thing to do and apologized for our actions. We have stopped this approach with immediate effect.

GDPR considerations

[redacted]

[redacted].

[redacted],

At the current time these findings have not been made public.

The future

Collecting data about research impacts is important for us to demonstrate the outcomes from the work we fund, and we make significant use of this data.

We have a contract for the use of Researchfish for another two years, but with a duty to fully consider our requirements and investigate potential alternative systems and suppliers, we had already started a project which will explore the most effective ways for us to gather this data in the future. As part of this we will work with other stakeholders (funders, research organisations, researchers) to identify where sharing systems and data will help reduce bureaucracy in research. Widespread use of Researchfish across UK funders has seen us make significant progress in this area, and it important that any future developments build on this progress

In the meantime, we will continue discussions with Interfolio to ensure that interactions with the research community are of a high standard and adhere to good practice.

On the future – can we add some of the top-lines from our discussion with [redacted] – e.g. (not worded well) the collaboration between funders is very much aligned with the system working to reduce bureaucracy, and presents great opportunities (explain), the current concerns about the Researchfish approach risks damaging this (how), we need to try to bring as many of these other stakeholders with us as possible – as we establish/re-define our requirements, and think about potential procurement (further discussion needed, including involving research organisations).

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 May 2022 09:03
To: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board

Hi [redacted]

I'm sorry this is continuing to take your time – I really do appreciate the support you've been providing on this. Would you mind drafting something for the Board?

I'd hoped to speak to [redacted] in Ottoline's office in case he'd already drafted some briefing for her, but he's away so I think the best starting point giving an overview is a combination of the legal/data note to Ottoline and our public lines.

[redacted]

From: UKRI CEO [redacted]>
Sent: 23 May 2022 12:13
To: UKRI CEO [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; Board Secretariat [redacted]; UKRI Chair [redacted]
Subject: ResearchFish: update to Board

Dear all,

Ottoline has signed off on a number of ResearchFish related communications recently (FOI responses, Parliamentary Question answer etc). As it is reasonable to assume that it is likely to result in negative press, she would like an email update to be sent to the Board.

Please could someone on this chain draft an email which provides a summary of the situation (with a medium amount of detail and [redacted]). She would also like a Q&A to accompany the email.

With Ottoline [redacted] in a few days, getting sign off is likely to be a challenge. There is a chance I may be able to put a draft in front of Ottoline early Wednesday afternoon, but I don't know if that gives you enough time to pull everything together? If having something ready by Wednesday lunchtime isn't going to be possible, I propose that we make a decision about sign off when a draft is available.

Please let me know if you have any questions/concerns.

Best wishes,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: UKRI CEO
Sent: 03 May 2022 11:09
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: CEO Submission - for inclusion in weekend pack

Morning [redacted]

Thanks to you, [redacted], and all involved in pulling this together.

Having reviewed the submissions, Ottoline agrees [redacted]

On the proposed statement, I've copied below a starting version that captures the approach Ottoline would prefer to take to any statement. We may need to go further in simplifying this for the target audiences, but I'll defer to comms for their thoughts:

- *Following our initial statement on actions relating to tweets about Researchfish, we have conducted an internal assessment of the data protection concerns raised. Our assessment has found that there was a lawful basis for the processing by UKRI of the data received from Researchfish. As set out in our previous statement we fully accept, however, that this was not the right way to handle the situation and we apologise to those affected.* [redacted]

[redacted]

Best,

[redacted]

-
[redacted] |
UK Research and Innovation | [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 28 April 2022 11:49
To: UKRI CEO [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: CEO Submission - for inclusion in weekend pack

Good morning [redacted]

Please find attached the CEO Submission for inclusion in the weekend pack.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: UKRI CEO
To: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; UKRI CEO
Cc: [redacted] UKRI; [redacted] UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] UKRI Chair; [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board
Date: 08 June 2022 17:48:51
Attachments: Researchfish twitter incident - an email from Ottoline Leyser.msg
image001.png

Dear all,

Thank you very much for drafting this so quickly.
Ottoline signed it off without comment and it was circulated to board members yesterday (attached for info)

Best wishes,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 25 May 2022 17:02
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; UKRI CEO [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; Board Secretariat [redacted]; UKRI Chair [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board

Hi [redacted]

I've added some revised text for the GDPR considerations section below in blue text.

Best,
[redacted]

[redacted]
UKRI
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 25 May 2022 15:56
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; UKRI CEO [redacted]

Cc: [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; Board Secretariat [redacted]; UKRI Chair [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board

Hi [redacted]

Apologies, I've been at an away day until now. The only point that we should add is that BEIS asked us to respond to a PQ that Chi Onwurah MP asked, other than that parliamentary interest has been limited to one query from [redacted], which we handled through a meeting. I've added a bit in red below.

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 25 May 2022 14:07
To: UKRI CEO [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; Board Secretariat [redacted]>; UKRI Chair [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: ResearchFish: update to Board

Dear all

[redacted] has kindly prepared the text below for an email to the Board and we're pulling together an accompanying Q&A including the detail on how we use Researchfish data.

If copyees have comments please let us know asap.

Thanks
[redacted]

Researchfish twitter incident

In March 2022 a number of people raised concerns on twitter about Researchfish, which is used by UKRI to gather information on the research outcomes of funding. Researchfish, owned by Interfolio, were posting replies which were seen as bullying of those critical of the system by threatening to report them to their funders, and potentially in breach of GDPR regulations. The controversy was reported by Research Professional and Time Higher Education and we received several FOI requests concerning our relationship with Interfolio. UKRI also supported BEIS responding to a Parliamentary Question raised by Chi Onwurah MP on the GDPR implications of

the Researchfish twitter activity. The only other parliamentary interest was a meeting with [redacted], where we set out UKRI's position.

Following an investigation to gather all the facts, we responded with a public statement on 16 April which reported that UKRI and Researchfish staff had discussed sharing abusive, threatening or offensive tweets so that UKRI could suggest the senders reconsider their language. This was intended to protect colleagues who were impacted by abuse.

In total, six incidents of tweets had been flagged to us over four years by Researchfish. In three of those UKRI contacted either the host university or the individual directly. In two cases the individuals deleted their tweets and in the third, no response was received and no further action was taken. In the other three cases, UKRI took no action. The tweets were not used in connection with any other processes in UKRI including consideration of ongoing or future funding, nor was this ever the intention.

The public statement made clear that this was the wrong thing to do and apologised for our actions. We stopped this approach with immediate effect.

GDPR considerations

[redacted]

At the current time these findings have not been made public.

The future

Collecting data about research impacts is important for us to demonstrate the outcomes from the work we fund, and we make significant use of this data.

We have a contract for the use of Researchfish for up to another two years, and have a duty to fully consider our requirements and investigate potential alternative systems and suppliers. We had already started a project exploring what data we and the community most need and looking into the most effective ways to gather this data in the future. As part of this we will work with other stakeholders (funders, research organisations, researchers) to identify where sharing systems and data will help reduce bureaucracy in research. Widespread use of Researchfish across UK funders has seen us make significant progress in this area in terms of bringing

consistency and consolidation to the questions asked and platform used, and it is important that any future developments build on this concept of reducing bureaucracy.

In the meantime, we will continue discussions with Interfolio to ensure that interactions with the research community are of a high standard and adhere to good practice.

From: UKRI CEO [redacted]
Sent: 23 May 2022 12:13
To: UKRI CEO [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKR [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; Board Secretariat [redacted]; UKRI Chair [redacted]
Subject: ResearchFish: update to Board

Dear all,

Ottoline has signed off on a number of ResearchFish related communications recently (FOI responses, Parliamentary Question answer etc). As it is reasonable to assume that it is likely to result in negative press, she would like an email update to be sent to the Board.

Please could someone on this chain draft an email which provides a summary of the situation (with a medium amount of detail and includes the issues [redacted]). She would also like a Q&A to accompany the email.

With Ottoline [redacted] in a few days, getting sign off is likely to be a challenge. There is a chance I may be able to put a draft in front of Ottoline early Wednesday afternoon, but I don't know if that gives you enough time to pull everything together? If having something ready by Wednesday lunchtime isn't going to be possible, I propose that we make a decision about sign off when a draft is available.

Please let me know if you have any questions/concerns.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: UKRI CEO

Sent: 03 May 2022 11:09
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: CEO Submission - for inclusion in weekend pack

Morning [redacted],

Thanks to you, [redacted], and all involved in pulling this together.

Having reviewed the submissions, Ottoline agrees [redacted]

On the proposed statement, I've copied below a starting version that captures the approach Ottoline would prefer to take to any statement. We may need to go further in simplifying this for the target audiences, but I'll defer to comms for their thoughts:

- *Following our initial statement on actions relating to tweets about Researchfish, we have conducted an internal assessment of the data protection concerns raised. Our assessment has found that there was a lawful basis for the processing by UKRI of the data received from Researchfish. As set out in our previous statement we fully accept, however, that this was not the right way to handle the situation and we apologise to those affected.* [redacted]

[redacted]

Best,

[redacted]

-
[redacted] | [redacted] | UK Research and Innovation | [redacted] | [redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 28 April 2022 11:49
To: UKRI CEO [redacted]

Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - [redacted] UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]

Subject: CEO Submission - for inclusion in weekend pack

Good morning [redacted],

Please find attached the CEO Submission for inclusion in the weekend pack.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

UK Research and Innovation

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Board Secretariat
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Researchfish twitter incident - an email from Ottoline Leyser
Date: 07 June 2022 16:20:22
Attachments: image001.png

Dear Colleagues,

In March 2022 a number of people raised concerns on twitter about Researchfish, which is used by UKRI to gather information on the research outcomes of funding. Researchfish, owned by Interfolio, were posting replies which were seen as bullying of those critical of the system by threatening to report them to their funders, and potentially in breach of GDPR regulations. The controversy was reported by Research Professional and Time Higher Education and we received several FOI requests concerning our relationship with Interfolio. UKRI also supported BEIS responding to a Parliamentary Question raised by Chi Onwurah MP on the GDPR implications of the Researchfish twitter activity. The only other parliamentary interest was a meeting with [redacted], where we set out UKRI's position.

Following an investigation to gather all the facts, we responded with a public statement on 16 April which reported that UKRI and Researchfish staff had discussed sharing abusive, threatening or offensive tweets so that UKRI could suggest the senders reconsider their language. This was intended to protect colleagues who were impacted by abuse.

In total, six incidents of tweets had been flagged to us over four years by Researchfish. In three of those UKRI contacted either the host university or the individual directly. In two cases the individuals deleted their tweets and in the third, no response was received and no further action was taken. In the other three cases, UKRI took no action. The tweets were not used in connection with any other processes in UKRI including consideration of ongoing or future funding, nor was this ever the intention.

The public statement made clear that this was the wrong thing to do and apologised for our actions. We stopped this approach with immediate effect.

GDPR considerations

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

At the current time these findings have not been made public.

The future

Collecting data about research impacts is important for us to demonstrate the outcomes from the work we fund, and we make significant use of this data.

We have a contract for the use of Researchfish for up to another two years, and have a duty to fully consider our requirements and investigate potential alternative systems and suppliers. We had already started a project exploring what data we and the community most need and looking into the most effective ways to gather this data in the future. As part of this we will work with other stakeholders (funders, research organisations, researchers) to identify where sharing systems and data will help reduce bureaucracy in research. Widespread use of Researchfish across UK funders has seen us make significant progress in this area in terms of bringing consistency and consolidation to the questions asked and platform used, and it is important that any future developments build on this concept of reducing bureaucracy.

In the meantime, we will continue discussions with Interfolio to ensure that interactions with the research community are of a high standard and adhere to good practice.

Best wishes,
Ottoline

Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser
Chief Executive
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI
To: [redacted] - UKRI; [redacted] - UKRI
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight
Date: 23 June 2022 08:22:00
Attachments: image001.png
image004.png
image005.png
image006.png
image007.png

No problem [redacted], I'll email [redacted] now.

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
[redacted]
www.ukri.org
Follow UK Research and Innovation on Twitter, subscribe to our newsletter and read more on our website.

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 22 June 2022 17:18
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

On reflection, I think we minimise even further and just seek [redacted] input on whether anything has changed and cc CEO for awareness stating that if there is no update we'll confirm that with RF and refer back to April statement

So don't need the lines as I think that just walks us into a story when there isn't one

Thanks

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 22 June 2022 16:44
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

Will do [redacted] – do you want me to swap the top line to the bottom? I can then share with them, for info only.

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
[redacted]
www.ukri.org
Follow UK Research and Innovation on Twitter, subscribe to our newsletter and read more on our website.

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 22 June 2022 16:43
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

Yes – just for info unless there is actually an update

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 22 June 2022 16:40
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

Hi [redacted] – no I haven't flagged yet, but happy to (perhaps CCing CEO Office for info?). What is [redacted] surname?

Thanks

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
[redacted]
www.ukri.org
Follow UK Research and Innovation on Twitter, subscribe to our newsletter and read more on our website.

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 22 June 2022 16:38
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

Have we flagged to [redacted]? Worth them being aware (and maybe CEO Office too given OL's interest in the issue).

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 22 June 2022 16:08
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

Thanks [redacted] – here's my statement drafted along the lines you suggested. To confirm, am I providing this by way of update or providing it with additional info that there is no update (do we

expect any?)

"As previously outlined, we recognise that this was the wrong approach to take and we apologise for this. We have stopped this approach with immediate effect.
"Collecting data about research impacts is important for us to demonstrate the outcomes from the work we fund, and we make significant use of this data. We are exploring the most effective ways for us to gather this data in the future.
"At present, Interfolio Inc supplies and supports the Researchfish system for us and we will continue discussions with them to ensure that interactions with the research community are of a high standard and adhere to good practice."

Full statement on ResearchFish

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
[redacted]
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Follow UK Research and Innovation on Twitter, subscribe to our newsletter and read more on our website.

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >
Sent: 22 June 2022 15:54
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted] >; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

Hi all

This is a story Research Fortnight ran today – essentially running a line that ResearchFish have been quiet on Twitter on an article that recaps the whole issue. There is no community comment or new development that I can see

[redacted] – happy to look at our response before it goes over

Thanks

[redacted]

Researchfish maintains radio silence on Twitter after row

Impact-tracking service has not tweeted since it apologised for reporting academics for critical tweets

Comment on this article

Researchfish, which has been embroiled in controversy over its handling of Twitter criticism, has maintained radio silence on the social media platform since the row erupted in March.

The impact-tracking service was accused of bullying, intimidation and a possible breach of data-protection laws after it reported a handful of researchers to their funder, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), for their critical posts about the service.

Responding to a handful of individual comments, Researchfish's Twitter account posted messages saying: "We understand that you're not keen on reporting on your funding through Researchfish but this seems quite harsh and inappropriate. We have shared our concerns with your funder."

It later emerged that UKRI had agreed with Researchfish that the service's staff should flag "abusive, threatening or offensive tweets" to the funder.

Email correspondence between Researchfish and UKRI published in response to a freedom of information request revealed that Researchfish flagged a number of tweets made by academics to the funder, with UKRI agreeing that its tweets in response "set the correct tone".

Three months after the story broke, Researchfish's Twitter account has remained inactive.

The latest tweet, posted on 20 March, was an apology from the service—accompanied by a link to a full statement—and read: "We are truly sorry for how we responded to the negative posts last week and understand that we caused concerns among researchers."

A spokesperson for Researchfish, which is now owned by Elsevier, told Research Professional News: "Researchfish has publicly and wholeheartedly apologised for the concerns it recently caused the research community.

"We continue to work with our customers to understand their concerns better so we can bring improvements to processes and user experience as needed. We will make sure our customers are comfortable with any developments and kept informed."

'Researchfishgate' as it happened:

Researchfish accused of 'intimidating' academics

Researchfish apologises again as online backlash grows

Funders question Researchfish over controversial tweets

Universities remain silent amid Researchfish uproar

Further concerns raised over Researchfish's use of data

UKRI avoids disclosing Twitter discourse with Researchfish

Universities reveal relationships with Researchfish

UKRI admits role in Researchfish Twitter controversy

Calls mount for UKRI to 'cut ties' with Researchfish

UKRI had told Researchfish its tweets 'set the correct tone'

UKRI chased universities to act over Researchfish tweets

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI
Sent: 22 June 2022 15:05
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

[redacted]

Suggest that we formulate a very brief response (an "as we said….") that reiterates key points of the statement and then refers to them to the full piece – purpose is to demonstrate that we have already answered these questions

Key bits for me are – apology, underlining what we have stopped and the bit under "The Future"

Happy to look over

Thanks

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Sent: 22 June 2022 14:25
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

I don't think there is a significant update beyond the UKRI update that Chris has sent through. We are continuing to respond to FOI requests but these have slowed down and I'm unaware of significant Twitter activity.

[redacted]

From: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Sent: 22 June 2022 13:24
To: [redacted] [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: RE: Comment for Research Fortnight

[redacted] is the comms lead and [redacted] team own the relationship – so you could ask [redacted] if there is an update but in the basis that if there isn't, there isn't

UKRI update on Researchfish – UKRI
This statement covers most of it, including apology, actions (we are stopping this practice) and the future, plus full disclosure on what happened and why we need to collect impact data, - so suggest we refer RF back to it and draw out the relevant sections

Thanks

[redacted]

[redacted]
UK Research and Innovation
[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@ukri.org>
Sent: 22 June 2022 12:34
To: [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>; [redacted] - UKRI [redacted]>
Subject: Fwd: Comment for Research Fortnight

Hi both, see request from Research Pro (deadline 5pm tomorrow) for an update on ResearchFish. Is anyone leading on this/is there any update at this point?

Thanks

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]>
Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2022 12:23:02 PM
To: [redacted]@ukri.org>
Subject: Comment for Research Fortnight

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

19/04/2022

UKRI update on ResearchFish

Last month (March 2022) a number of people raised concerns about tweets posted by ResearchFish, owned by Interfolio and we have been establishing the facts behind these.

What happened?

Following some abusive tweets in 2018, UKRI and ResearchFish staff discussed sharing abusive, threatening or offensive tweets so that UKRI could suggest the senders reconsider their language. This was intended to protect colleagues who were impacted by abuse. At no point was this ever intended, or used, to affect current or future grants from UKRI.

How many people were impacted?

Our searches have identified six incidents of tweets being flagged to UKRI over four years. In three of those UKRI contacted either the host University or the individual directly. In two cases the individuals deleted their tweets and in the third, no response was received and no further action was taken. In the other three cases, UKRI took no action. The tweets were not used in connection with any other processes in UKRI.

We were wrong

We have stopped this approach with immediate effect and recognise that it was the wrong thing to do. We understand that this has raised questions around personal data. We take data protection very seriously. Our assessment of the data protection considerations is ongoing and is expected to be concluded shortly.

We have discussed with ResearchFish that any tweets of concern to them can be dealt with through the mechanisms provided by the platform, such as the Twitter reporting function.

We apologise for our approach and actions on this issue and the concern this has caused. We believe that all staff have the right to work free from abuse, bullying or threat. We recognise the right of people to criticise an organisation or system without fear of reprisal.

The future

Collecting data about research impacts is important for us to demonstrate the outcomes from the work we fund, and we make significant use of this data. We are exploring the most effective ways for us to gather this data in the future. At present, Interfolio Inc. supplies and supports the Researchfish system for us and we will continue discussions with them to ensure that interactions with the research community are of a high standard and adhere to good practice.

How do we use Researchfish data?

Data and evidence, including Researchfish data, help us achieve our objectives by learning what works and informing our investment and policy decisions, and by demonstrating the rationale for further investment and demonstrating our impact to stakeholders.

Researchfish data are used across UKRI to understand the research outputs, outcomes and impacts we are helping to deliver. For example, from the data we know that:

- UKRI-funded researchers are collaborating widely within the UK and internationally. For example, awards starting from 2016-2020 have reported 23,714 new collaborations across 176 countries. [source: UKRI Annual Report and Accounts]
- UKRI-funded researchers engage with a wide variety of audiences and stakeholders to communicate research outcomes, disseminate knowledge, stimulate public awareness, and encourage public engagement and dialogue. For example, approximately two thirds of awards report carrying out engagement activities. [source: Researchfish dashboard]
- UKRI-funded research is being translated and commercialised to deliver wider benefit to the UK. For example, 3% of awards report an outcome of a new instance of Intellectual Property. [source: UKRI Annual Report and Accounts]
- UKRI-funded research is generating exciting new ideas that are leading to further investment in research and innovation. For example, 50% of awards go on to attract further funding, with funding received from 81 countries [source: ARA]

The data are also used extensively within evaluations to understand the overall outcomes from a programme and how successful it has been at achieving its aims and objectives. For example, Researchfish data are being used within the multi-year evaluation of UKRI's investments in the National Productivity Investment Funds to understand the impact of these funds on multi-disciplinarity, or the types of collaboration the funds are leading to.

Within the MRC evaluation of translational research, Researchfish data were used to understand how outcomes (e.g. further funding, spin outs, licensing agreements) differ between a specific portfolio of translational research, other translational research funding by MRC, and broader MRC grants.

The data are also used to develop case studies, illustrating the impact of research locally, nationally and internationally, and are published on Gateway to Research, so that anyone can see and understand the outcomes from research.

<Ends>

Research Outcomes Management Board (ROMB) Meeting
Tuesday 26th April (14:00 to 16:00)

2	**Update on Researchfish Twitter issue**
	[redacted] sent an email on 20/04/2022 to the group sharing the updated UKRI message that has been published on our Website. [redacted] asked whether there is any guidance on how queries should be responded to. [redacted] suggested that we refer people to the UKRI statement [redacted] pointed out that this issue was not on our risk register. [redacted] made reference to the recent announcement that Interfolio has been acquired by Elsevier. At the moment this doesn't affect our relationship or our current contract.

Research Outcomes Management Board (ROMB) Meeting
Tuesday 24th May (14:00 to 16:00)

3	**Update on Researchfish Twitter issue**
	ROMB discussed continuing elements of the RF twitter incident, including UKRI's response to FOIs and [redacted].
	[redacted] asked for as much notice as possible in relation to sending comms.

Research Outcomes Management Board (ROMB) Meeting
Tuesday 22nd March (14:00 to 16:00)

There was discussion of the recent twitter-based complaints about Researchfish, [redacted] and how UKRI was planning to respond to the issue.

Outcomes Support Group (OSG) Meeting
Tuesday 3rd May 2022 (10:00 to 11:30)

A UKRI Statement on the researchfish twitter storm has been published and should be referred to if councils receive correspondence.