



UKRI Digital Research infrastructure (DRI) Programme Update, October 2025

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Summary

This paper provides an update on the UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) Programme since the last IAC meeting held in March 2025. Key highlights are outlined below.

IAC is asked to:

- **Note** the updates included in the paper

1. **Compute Roadmap**

- 1.1. The UK Compute Roadmap was published on 17 July 2025 as a joint DSIT & UKRI document: [UK Compute Roadmap - GOV.UK](#). The document was previously referred to as the 'compute strategy' and referenced in the Future of Compute Review and AI Opportunities Action Plan.
 - 1.2. The headlines are:
 - Up to £2bn for new compute investments, including 20x AI Research Resource (AIRR) expansion and the next national supercomputing service to be hosted in Edinburgh.
 - The formation of National Supercomputing Centres to develop hosting capabilities and support users.
 - Continued investment in diverse compute, software and support for DRI professionals.
- ### 2. **AI Research Resource (AIRR)**
- 2.1. The Isambard-AI service in Bristol was successfully launched by Peter Kyle in July 2025 and has passed its final testing phase. It is now fully operational and available for research projects, alongside the Dawn service based in Cambridge. Further information on AIRR can be found on the Government website: [AIRR advanced supercomputers for the UK - GOV.UK](#).
 - 2.2. Access to both AIRR services is now available through two open routes, run by UKRI:
 - [Access to Isambard-AI and Dawn AIRR supercomputers: Gateway route – UKRI](#), open to UK-based researchers from academia, industry, and other organisations.
 - [Isambard-AI and Dawn AIRR supercomputers: Rapid Access route – UKRI](#), open to researchers at UK-registered micro, small and medium businesses.
 - 2.3. To date, 29 projects have already been awarded through these routes, across both services. Further routes are being considered by DSIT, in line with government strategic priorities and the upcoming AI for Science Programme.



3. National Compute Resources (NCRs) Funding Opportunity

- 3.1. As part of the UK Compute Roadmap, UKRI has launched a new funding opportunity seeking potential hosting entities for the first phase of UKRI investment in NCRs: [Application form for host sites for the Phase One of UKRI National Compute Resources \(NCRs\)](#). It is expected that the 2025/2026 UKRI investment in NCRs will fund at least one CPU-based system and at least one heterogeneous or accelerated system. These services will support research across the whole UKRI remit.
- 3.2. Currently it is anticipated that up to £9.5 million will be available per NCR and at least two NCRs will be supported in this round. Further funds (up to £2 million p.a.) will be provided for each NCR from 2026-2031 to cover NCR service provision, power and other directly relevant costs necessary for user support.
- 3.3. UKRI has also launched an Expression of Interest process for future Phase 2 of the NCRs: [Expression of Interest for the Phase Two of UKRI National Compute Resources \(NCRs\)](#). A second NCR hosting competition is expected to launch in early 2026.

4. A Statement of Community Engagement and Needs for Digital Research Infrastructure (ASCEND)

- 4.1. The 'community statement of requirements' process (ASCEND) has been successfully launched in order to enable the UK's research and innovation communities to directly inform UKRI of their DRI needs. Responses will be reviewed by an independent panel of DRI experts.
- 4.2. Input received through ASCEND will help shape the DRI Programme's future actions. For example, by providing additional evidence of unmet requirements or new opportunities that could be addressed through funding or policy initiatives. Further information can be found on the UKRI website: [ASCEND Process - UKRI](#)

5. UKRI Research Data Policy

- 5.1. UKRI is developing a new research data policy, which will update and streamline our expectations for sharing and managing research data and other research-relevant digital objects, including algorithms, software code and workflows, arising from UKRI-funded research. This activity is led by the UKRI Open Research team, who is working with representatives across all the research councils in UKRI.
- 5.2. The draft research data policy was open to public consultation from April to August 2025 and can be found here: [Developing UKRI's research data policy](#). Further consultation and revision of the policy are underway.

6. UKRI DRI Congress 2025 and Community Engagement

- 6.1. The UKRI DRI Congress successfully took place on 21 and 22 October 2025 at the Met Hotel, Leeds with over 150 delegates in-person. The congress brought together stakeholders from across the UK's research and innovation ecosystem to strengthen connections in the UK's DRI community, share progress, and collaboratively shape the future of the national DRI ecosystem. There were opportunities to explore and discuss the progress, opportunities, and challenges in building a national DRI that meets the diverse needs of researchers and innovators. The congress featured keynote presentations, plenary discussions, and parallel sessions delivered by both the UKRI DRI Programme



team, DSIT representatives, and UKRI-funded DRI projects. The parallel sessions aligned with the four UKRI DRI priorities: Human DRI, Sustainable DRI, Interconnected DRI, and FAIR DRI.

- 6.2. Further engagement highlights include Isambard-AI launch event, RSECon25, and the upcoming CIUK and SC25 conferences.