

Infrastructure Advisory Committee Minutes – 10th March 2025

Location: Park Plaza Waterloo, London
Date: 10th March 2025
Time: 10:30 – 16:15

IAC Members	
Professor Michele Dougherty	IAC Chair
Professor Malcolm Skingle	Deputy Chair, Independent
Professor Ewan Birney	BBSRC nomination
Dr Claire Devereux	UKRI Infrastructure Fund Programme Director
Professor Rory Fitzgerald	ESRC nomination
Professor Andrew Harrison	Independent (online)
Professor Sir John Iredale	MRC nomination (online)
Professor Paola Lettieri	Independent
Tunde Olanrewaju	Innovate UK nomination
Professor Graeme Reid	Research England nomination
Professor John Remedios	NERC nomination
Dr Dame Frances Saunders	FSAG Chair
Professor Mark Spearing	EPSRC nomination
Dr Allan Sudlow	AHRC nomination
Susheel Varma	Independent (online)
Professor Carsten Welsch	STFC nomination (online)
Dr Astrid Wissenburg	Independent
Observers	
Dr Richard Gunn	UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure Programme Director
Dr Shabana Haque	Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT)
Siobhan Peters	UKRI CFO (online, morning)
Dr Adam Staines	UKRI Infrastructure Portfolio Director
Guests/Speakers	
Project Teams – online for agenda items	



[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
UKRI Attendees	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

DRAFT

1. Welcome & Aims

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all members to the eleventh meeting of the Infrastructure Advisory Committee (IAC). The Chair introduced herself and her role as the Executive Chair of STFC, UKRI Infrastructure Champion and IAC Chair. She thanked members for joining in-person and online and reminded the Committee that the meeting was being recorded for the purposes of producing Minutes.

2. October 2024 IAC Meeting Minutes

- 2.1 The Committee reviewed and approved the Minutes of the October 2024 meeting.

Decision: The Committee approved the October 2024 IAC meeting Minutes.

3. Strategic Updates

- 3.1 The Chair thanked outgoing members Professor Malcolm Skingle (Deputy Chair, externally recruited), Professor Mark Spearing (EPSRC nomination), Dr Allan Sudlow (AHRC nomination), Tunde Olanrewaju (IUK nomination), and Dr Dame Frances Saunders (FSAG chair), who were rotating off the committee.

- 3.2 [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- 3.5 The Chair invited suggestions from the Committee for the necessary skills and expertise required when recruiting new Members. The Committee made the following recommendations that would further strengthen the Committee membership:

- Maintaining skills of departing Members.
- An international perspective and an understanding of where UK infrastructure capability sits within a broader context.
- A working understanding of how infrastructures function, particularly in the context of current financial constraints.
- Experience from outside of UKRI, research councils and higher education.

- Expertise in strategic topics such as AI, net zero, quantum manufacturing, defence and security.
- Developing an IAC skills matrix to identify skills gaps ahead of recruitment of new Members.

Action 0325-02: IAC secretariat to develop skills matrix for IAC to identify skills gaps

4. Portfolio Updates

- 4.1 CD introduced Infrastructure Fund progress update. CD highlighted that the Infrastructure Fund now has 42 projects in its portfolio, the majority of which are now running, with several Preliminary Activities having finished. Five full infrastructure projects are yet to start. All five have either begun their approvals journey or plan to in the current months.
- 4.2 CD summarised the newly implemented delegation limit from HM Treasury and informed the Committee of ongoing work by UKRI to evolve the internal business case approval process accordingly.
- 4.3 CD informed the Committee of plans to develop a more formal close-out report for completed Infrastructure Fund projects to show impact and provide assurance that the necessary due diligence is being done. CD invited suggestions from the Committee as to the content of these reports by correspondence.

Action 0325-03 UKRI team to share a template for the close-out report with the committee for comment by correspondence.

- 4.4 The Chair welcomed [REDACTED], who updated the Committee on progress in implementing the Government Internal Audit Agency recommendations for strengthening Infrastructure Fund governance, reporting and assurance processes:
- The Infrastructure Fund Portfolio Management Framework, which consolidates processes into a single document has been published.
 - The independent review form is being incorporated into the Wave 4 proposals.
 - The benefits management strategy and establishment of clear reporting requirements for forecasting and tracking benefits across the portfolio are in progress.
- 4.5 In discussion, the Committee made the following points:
- Given the long timescales over which benefits will be tracked, it is important to ensure consistency between processes and how benefits will be realised, as well as compatibility with infrastructures' existing frameworks.
 - There is a need to avoid duplication of work and re-purpose existing processes where appropriate.

4.6 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- 4.8 In response to a query from the Committee on the impact of inflation on long running projects, CD explained that the Infrastructure Fund cannot provide top up funding, but instead projects have financial contingency and options for value engineering or descoping to manage this risk.
- 4.9 CD summarised the Infrastructure Fund financial forward look and reported that 60% of funding to date has supported upgrading existing infrastructure to maintain our national capabilities.
- 4.10 In discussion, the Committee made the following points:
- The opportunity of celebrating the sunsetting of projects at end of life, demonstrating lifecycle management.
 - The agility required to respond rapidly to immediate infrastructure needs in fast-moving sectors such as defence and innovation. Clarification was provided that highlighted the wildcard process for proposals that are outside of the normal Infrastructure Fund cycle.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6. Assessment of Preliminary Activity Proposal and Environmental Sustainability Proposal

6.1 [REDACTED]

6.2 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

7. Feedback on Environmental Sustainability Activity Proposal Format

7.1 Following assessment of the first proposal to use the Environmental Sustainability Activity route, the Committee were asked to provide feedback on the format of the proposal and assessment. In discussion, the Committee made the following points:

- Simple benchmarking would be helpful to allow better understanding of significance of sustainability improvements in a wider context.
- The importance of understanding the contribution of the project to improving total lifecycle and running costs, for example a saving of 35% operational carbon emissions and 50% of operational costs rather than just providing absolute reductions for one part of the system.

8. Infrastructure Roadmap Refresh Update

8.1 CD updated the Committee on staffing changes in the Infrastructure Team, and revised timelines, [REDACTED]

8.2 The Chair welcomed [REDACTED] who reported on the proposed structure of the Infrastructure Roadmap Refresh, comprised of three pillars: progress, impact and opportunities, within which cross-cutting themes will be highlighted. Some results from the Infrastructure Landscape Survey were highlighted.

8.3 CD updated the Committee on the thematic opportunities identified for each sector and invited Committee feedback on areas of opportunity in the UK and potential priorities.

8.4 The Chair noted the broad scope of the current sector themes and invited the Committee to discuss whether a smaller number of more targeted and strategic themes would be more appropriate.

8.5 In discussion, the Committee made the following points:

- More targeted and strategic sector themes would be beneficial.
- It is important to understand the interplay between digital and physical infrastructure, as well as timeliness of opportunities.
- Leverage of council specific areas is required to provide a top-down scope of the infrastructure landscape.
- The importance of cross-cutting themes, especially considering that many infrastructures do not fit within a single sector or theme. An international perspective should also be considered to demonstrate understanding of UK infrastructures in an international context.
- Consideration of co-investment and innovation beyond UKRI.

8.6 [REDACTED] informed the Committee of upcoming community engagement workshops on world-leading capability and secure and trusted research as part of the UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap Refresh programme. Further engagement to replay messages to the community would be planned for Summer 2025. UKRI welcome attendance by the Committee and recommendations for further invitees.

8.7 In discussion, the Committee made the following points:

- Refinement of sector themes to ensure consistency.
- Related work being done by DSIT should be joined-up.

9. Update from Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT)

9.1

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

10. Infrastructure Fund Project Updates

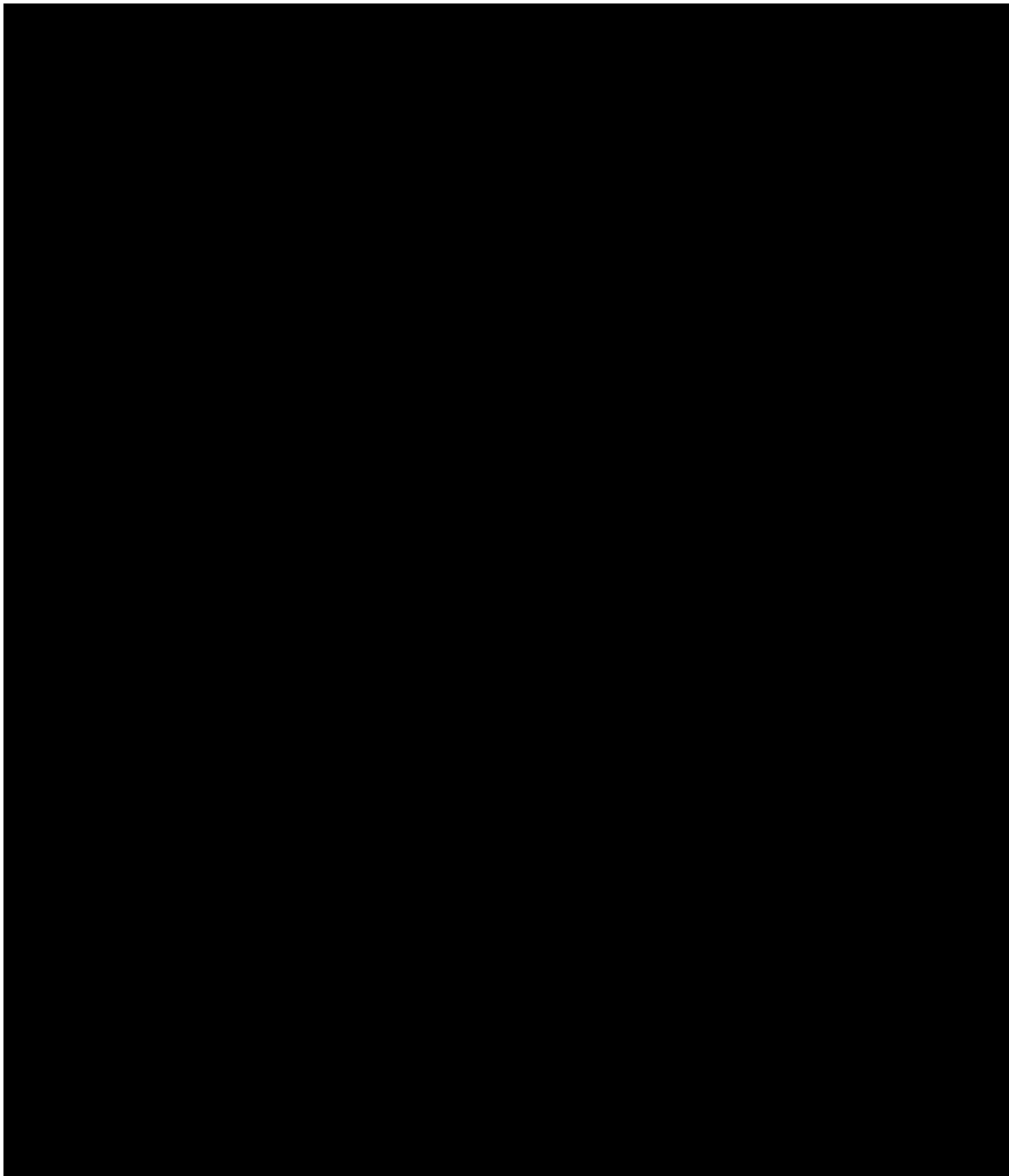
10.1 [REDACTED] infrastructure funded projects provided a progress update to the committee.

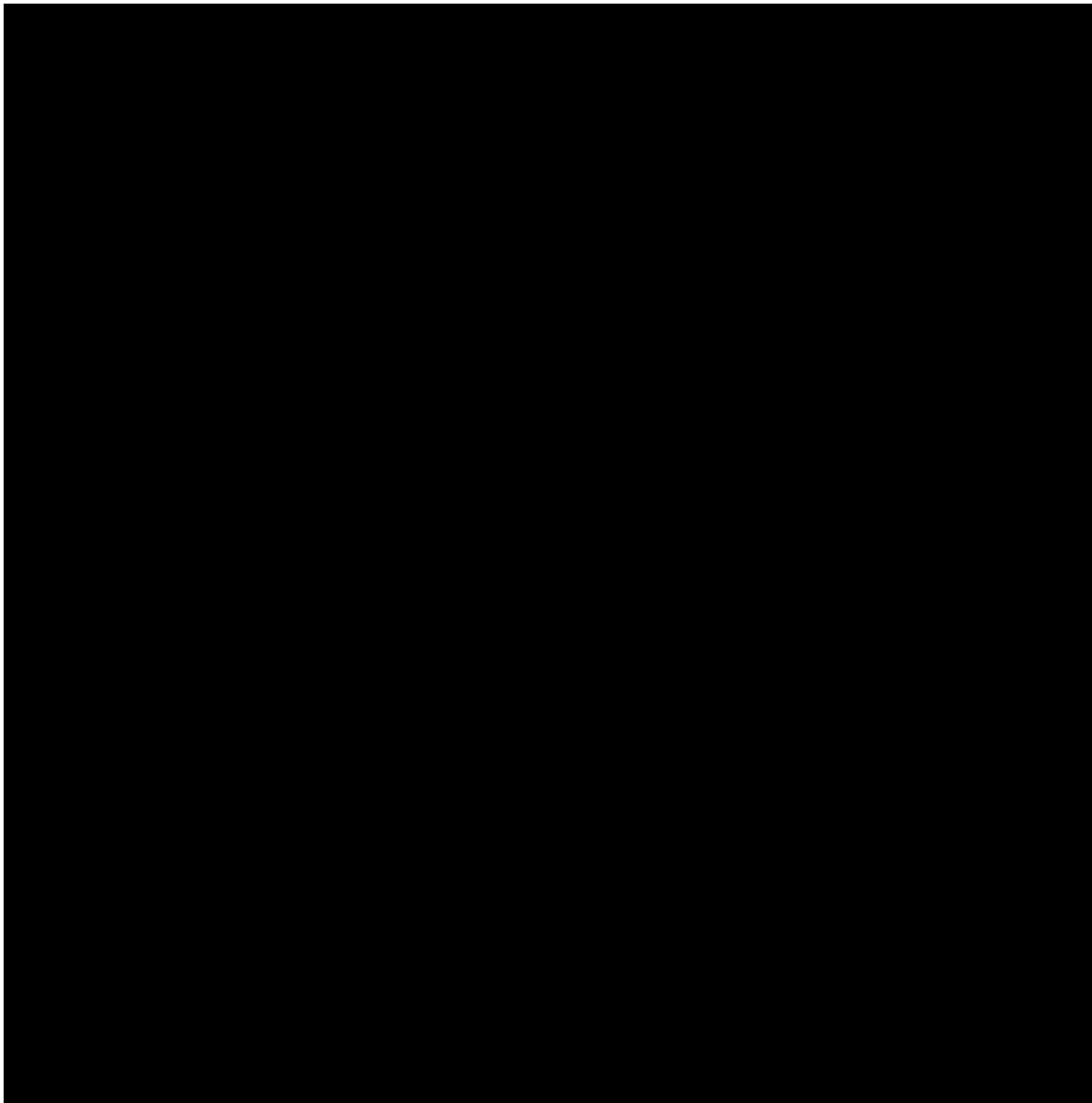
10.2

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]





11. Digital Research Infrastructure Programme Update

- 11.1 The Chair welcomed Dr Richard Gunn (RG), UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) Programme Director, who updated on progress and activities within the DRI programme since October 2024. This included launch of a new DRI programme priority framework, launch of the AIRR Expression of Interest

(EoI) call, development of the new Statement of Community Engagement and Needs for Digital Research Infrastructure (ASCEND) process, and development of a 'living library' for open-source compute benchmarking.

- 11.2 RG summarised the DRI programme's new priority areas: Interconnected DRI to ensure assets are usable by the majority of user communities; Human DRI, to recognise and support the needs of technical professionals; FAIR DRI to ensure FAIR principles are incorporated into DRI investments; and Sustainable DRI, to support digital infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

12. Review of Feedback for Proposal Leads

- 12.1 The Chair summarised the Committee's discussion and recommendations regarding the Preliminary Activity and Environmental Sustainability Activity Proposals. The Chair requested the Committee refrain from discussing the outcomes of the meeting with others, including councils, until after a decision on the IAC's recommendations was made by UKRI Executive Committee in April 2025.
- 12.2 The Committee was unanimous in reaching consensus regarding the wording of the feedback for each project.

Action 0325-04: UKRI Infrastructure Team to provide feedback to relevant councils regarding each proposal.

13. AOB

- 13.2 The Chair reminded the Committee that the next IAC meeting would take place on 20th and 21st November 2025 and invited suggestions for meeting venues and discussion topics.
- 13.3 The Chair thanked the outgoing IAC members again and thanked the Committee for their valuable contributions over the course of the meeting and throughout the winter assessment exercise.

Meeting close

Date of next meeting: **20th and 21st November 2025**

Venue TBC