

Letter to Partner Organisations

I wanted to write to you all as soon as possible after the announcement of my appointment as the Chief Executive Designate of UKRI. I feel very privileged that I will have the opportunity to lead this new organisation (subject to Parliament) and work with you all to build on the UK's world-class capabilities in research and innovation. I hope to meet as many of you as soon as possible in order to listen to your views about the opportunities and challenges the reforms represent, and I will circulate further information to you shortly on planned introductory 'town hall' meetings I will be having with staff. But I also wanted to set out some initial thoughts to you today.

Our research and innovation landscape and funding system is world-leading, and it is important that we preserve the ingredients that have made it so successful. In particular, we must ensure that we maintain the autonomy of individual Councils, including Innovate UK and Research England. I am personally committed to the vision for UKRI set out by Sir Paul Nurse and by the Government in the White Paper. I wholeheartedly share Sir John Kingman's belief that the centre of UKRI should be small and strategic.

There are several specific examples of this which I wanted to highlight: first, I see it as crucial that UKRI respects and empowers the nine individual Councils and their identities, and an important part of that is that they continue to attract and retain the best staff. Second, UKRI will delegate functions to its constituent Councils, ensuring that individual funding decisions are supported by outstanding expert review. Third, through UKRI, the Councils will continue to operate using their current names and brands. Fourth, our world-leading institutes, centres and units, and the specialist staff they employ who directly contribute to the research endeavour, will retain their autonomy and work directly with the relevant Councils.

So I am committed to ensure that we preserve these strengths. But if we have all the ingredients for an effective research and innovation system, what is the need for UKRI? The answer is that we need to continue to raise our game. We cannot sit on our laurels or even our Nobel prizes. UKRI will build on the UK's world-class capabilities in research and innovation. It is crucial to recognise the reasons for the creation of UKRI: pushing the frontiers of human knowledge through blue skies research; delivering impact for UK society, public services and for the economy through world class research and business-led innovation. UKRI will support the excellent work of the nine councils, but it will also challenge them to ensure that the whole is truly greater than the sum of the parts. It will work with you to ensure that proposals do not 'slip between the cracks' between the constituent parts of UKRI, that big and imaginative ideas can be supported in both research and innovation, that excellence will be supported wherever it is found and that UK researchers, scientists and innovators can work with collaborators around the world. UKRI will work with you to ensure that we collectively share an understanding of the landscape of research, science and innovation across the UK - and our place within the international research, science and innovation landscape.

Together in UKRI we will deliver a system that is more agile, flexible and able to respond strategically to future challenges, delivering national capability that drives

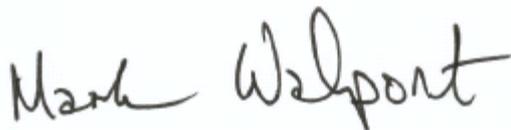
new discoveries and growth. I want to make it easier for us to work together to lead the way globally on interdisciplinary research, and enable us to act with a single voice for the research and innovation community. We should work together to develop efficient and effective corporate services to support you, whilst ensuring these services are flexible enough to respond to our different communities.

Now is an exciting time to be part of UKRI. By the end of 2020-21, the government will invest an additional £2 billion a year in research and innovation, including a new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) – which will be overseen by UKRI once it is established, and ensure that research and innovation are at the heart of the UK's Industrial Strategy. The government has put its money where its mouth is - this is the largest addition to research and innovation funding in decades. This is a great example of how UKRI has the potential to deliver outcomes for the research and innovation communities, and for the UK as a whole. I would like to thank all staff at the Research Councils, Innovate UK and HEFCE for their input to the development of the ISCF to date.

During what is also a period of great political change, we also have a responsibility as leaders in our communities to give confidence to others, and in the future for UK research and innovation. Our nation is rightly proud of our expertise in these areas. In working with you to establish UKRI I want to build on this and ensure future generations have the opportunity to work at the cutting edge of research and innovation, benefitting from the same privileges that our own hard work has enabled us to enjoy.

I look forward to working with you to ensure a successful transition to UKRI and a productive future for research and innovation in the UK.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Walport". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professor Sir Mark Walport