

UKCRCEC/2016/15

Minutes of the 43rd meeting of the UK Computing Research Executive Committee on **Tuesday 1 November 2016 at 11:00** at the **IET, 2 Savoy Place, London, WC2R 0BL**

PRESENT

Ann Blandford (Chair)
Dave Robertson
Derek McAuley

Anthony Cohn
Martyn Thomas

Cliff Jones
Christopher Johnson

BY INVITATION

Paul Davies (IET)
Adam Luqmani (EPSRC)

Liam Blackwell (EPSRC)

Miriam Dowle (EPSRC)

IN ATTENDANCE

Maxine Leslie (BCS)

APOLOGIES

Jane Hillston
Iain Stewart
Bill Mitchell (BCS)

Tom Rodden

David Benyon
Edmund Robinson (CPHC)

1. WELCOME TO NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed new Members to the Executive Committee and apologies were received as above. Concern was expressed that no word had been received from Joe Winchester about his attendance and the Chair undertook to follow up with Joe on this.

ACTION: Chair

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 6 June were APPROVED for transfer to the UKCRC website.

ACTION: D Gladwin

2.1. Matters Arising

The Action List was reviewed and the following update, which would not be covered elsewhere on the agenda, was noted:

UKCRCEC meeting held on 6 June 2016

Item 6. Executive Committee election voting – where an existing member leaves mid-term or a new member takes up a position mid-term, it had been unclear whether this ‘partial’ term counted towards the total number of terms of office in the constitution. Tony Cohn had circulated a draft amendment to the section of the Constitution that addressed this. Members AGREED that this amendment should be made with one minor adjustment and posted on the UKCRC website for Members’ information.

ACTION: Secretariat

Although not in the actions, Tony Cohn had also circulated the Artificial Intelligence Robotics report via email to Committee Members prior to the meeting. This subject would be discussed further under item 7 Future UKCRC Activities.

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

Election to UKCRC Executive Committee – The Chair welcomed new and existing Executive Committee Members and thanked the outgoing Chair Dave Robertson, attending his last meeting.

Brexit – UKCRC will work with others to ensure that computing research is protected as well as possible. The Chair extended her thanks to Vladimiro Sassone and Edmund Robinson, who led the writing of a report to the Science and Technology Committee, focusing on the situation specifically for Computer Science research. The general consensus was that Brexit will affect all research and all university activity, so UKCRC will need to work with other organisations that have complementary missions. Liam Blackwell indicated that the figures were now public so it will be possible to start working out the impact, although it was still uncertain which areas would be most exposed. EPSRC would let UKCRC know where it can provide support. The government statement honouring existing commitments was a cause for cautious optimism.

ResearchFish – The Chair had been invited to contribute to the re-design, and it was hoped the open communication channels would ensure improvements were made for next time.

Suffrage Science Awards – Four members of UKCRC had been recognised in the first MRC Suffrage Science Awards covering computing and mathematics. They were Muffy Calder OBE, Leslie Ann Goldberg, Wendy Hall DBE and the Chair. This also links to the diversity agenda.

Network proposal – An EPSRC Network proposal had been submitted, as discussed at earlier meetings. The Chair informed Members that the proposal had been reviewed and will need to be revised and resubmitted. This would be covered further under items 5.1 EPSRC update and 7. Future Activities.

The Chair undertook to send out the key points from this Committee meeting to the Membership.

ACTION: Chair

4. CONSULTATIONS AND SUBMISSIONS

Martyn Thomas informed Members that he was disappointed that no UKCRC Members had volunteered to lead the response on driverless vehicles. He expressed concern about the absence of expert computer science input into what could be an ICT-based revolution in terms of its impact on society. Miriam Dowle reported that she was attending a networking meeting later in the week at the University of Liverpool campus in London at which she would try to make contact with Michael Fisher. Members agreed it would be important to stimulate discussion and expert input in this area.

One approach could be through the special adviser for this area and the provision of verbal evidence. Martyn agreed to find out who the special adviser is and pursue other routes into this arena. Paul Davies mentioned that he had a contact in the transport sector: Phil Blythe, who he could put Members in touch with.

Cliff Jones suggested contacting Kevin Jones as he was involved in work in this area with boats. Although it was possible that it was too late to contribute to this particular consultation, it was acknowledged that further calls were likely on driverless vehicles and it would be important to enlist the help of expertise in this area.

Chris Johnson was doing some work in this area and was about to attend a government briefing to give evidence and would look to raise the issue then.

ACTION: M Dowle/M Thomas/P Davies/C Jones/C Johnson

5. RESEARCH FUNDING AND POLICY

5.1 EPSRC Update

Liam Blackwell provided an update for Committee Members on what is happening in the following areas of EPSRC work:

- Update on Equality and Diversity
- Update on Responsible Research and Innovation
- Balancing Capability
- Changes in the landscape – UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) – under Dept of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
- ODA
- Early career workshops

In relation to the network proposal, EPSRC would be engaging with the PI and the UKCRC Chair about the outcomes and next steps. It could be that a proposal with a smaller scope would be achievable. This was further discussed under item 7. below.

ACTION: L Blackwell/Chair

The outcomes of the latest stage of Balancing Capability were due to be published in 2017 and work was being undertaken on future cross-ICT priorities. Summaries of the cross-ICT priorities have been published at [EPSRC Cross-ICT Priorities 2017 - 2020 - EPSRC website](#). UKCRC would be able to look at the refreshed strategies for ICT research areas in terms of the rationales and strategic focus once these were published.

Adam Luqmani reported that EPSRC was to hold two ICT Theme Early Career Workshops aimed at first-rung academics and asked for help from UKCRC to publicise these to UKCRC Members and CPHC. There was an expression of interest form on the EPSRC website, accessible either by searching EPSRC ICT workshops 2017 or via the URL [Goo.gl/mFyeUu](#). Adam undertook to send information on the Workshops to the Chair for the email to Members and for CPHC. The closing date for expressions of interest was 24 November.

ACTION: A Luqmani/Chair

6. REPORTS

6.1 European Matters

Members NOTED the report

6.2 CPHC

Tony Cohn reported that he had been unable to attend the July and October meetings and Edmund Robinson was not in attendance to update Members. This item was therefore deferred to the next meeting in March 2017.

6.3 BCS Academy

Nothing to report.

6.4 IET

Paul Davies provided an update. The IET had published the IET Skills and Demand in Industry report 2016, in which 400 engineering and tech companies were surveyed about their skills shortages and skills gaps <http://www.theiet.org/factfiles/education/skills2016-page.cfm>

Also, a joint report from the engineering institutions on the impacts and opportunities of Brexit on engineering had been published <https://etfsite2016.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/raeng-etf-outside-the-eu-report.pdf>. The institutions will use the report over the coming months to influence government and their negotiation preparations.

The IET was planning to run a conference in 2017 about new skills. Paul undertook to distribute information on this to Members once available. **ACTION: P Davies**

7. FUTURE ACTIVITIES FOR UKCRC

The following possible future areas of activity were discussed by Members.

AI investment – Martyn Thomas reported that in the US, this had a high profile in government with discussions taking place at an advisory committee to the President. Historically it had also been the subject of high profile discussions in Japan. Funds had been made available for industrial research as well as academic research. It might be worth considering whether the time is right for getting a programme running to exploit AI technologies involving both industry and academia. Martyn agreed to circulate the report on this to Committee Members. There was concern that such developments in various industrial sectors were taking place with little expert computer science input and projects would be more likely to succeed based on sound foundations if there was more CS involvement. UKCRC could have a role here.

ACTION: M Thomas

Derek McAuley agreed and emphasised the importance of everyday objects being designed and built with an understanding of how they will be safe when adopted by society. This sort of research is needed to consider the ethical responsibility of engineers.

Chris Johnson indicated that it would be important to present a balanced message to government and industry to ensure that it is listened to. Regulation should be seen as an enabler not just a prohibitor. Chris was happy to help in writing a paper to address this issue.

It was noted that this area was similar to the EPSRC cross-ICT priorities, and would need funding. Members AGREED that Committee would consider how this area links into the network proposal and how it could be resourced, perhaps via workshop(s) and/or a US visit.

ACTION: M Thomas

Engaging with academics – Cliff Jones suggested that it could time to approach the Royal Academy of Engineering about areas of activity. Martyn Thomas agreed to contact Jim Norton about possible joint activity, such as workshops and Liam Blackwell suggested a possible partnership on a US visit and workshops. Liam agreed to set up a meeting between the Chair and John Baird at EPSRC to discuss further.

ACTION: M Thomas/L Blackwell

In addition, Derek McAuley undertook to contact Maurizio Pilu at Lloyds Register to help with this.

ACTION: D McAuley

The Chair had asked the wider Membership for ideas on future activities and had heard from two Members:

Muffy Calder on Computer Science Grand Challenges. The Chair undertook to review what was done originally (c.2002). Information could be found under [Archive](#) on the UKCRC website.

ACTION: Chair

Russell Beale on a post-REF analysis to ensure that system is more effective. This was widely regarded as controversial and it was agreed that UKCRC would respond to consultation for the next REF. In addition, work to influence TEF in order to reduce research time would sit better with the BCS Academy.

8. AOB

Tony Cohn informed Members that the Snowbird Conference had been very interesting and that he would provide a written report at the next meeting.

ACTION: T Cohn

It was noted that Miriam Dowle had been promoted within EPSRC and was moving away from the ICT area. The Chair thanked Miriam for her participation and wished her luck in her new role.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2017

Tuesday 14 March 2017 – IET Offices, London

Tuesday 6 June 2017 – BCS Offices, London

Tuesday 31 October 2017 – BCS Offices, London