University of
Reading

COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE (CRI)
26 October 21

Present: Carol Wagstaff (CW) Chair, Guy Baxter (GB), Luke Bell (LB), Steven Bosworth (SBo), Stuart Brown (SB), Anastasia Christakou (AC), Robert Darby (RD), Aanisah Ehsan (AE), Jon Gibbins (JG), Karen Henderson (KH), Gunter Kuhlne (GK), Jenny Mcgrother (JMcG), Janis Pich (JP), Phil Newton (PN), Kirsty Withers (KW) and Dawn Cobbold (Secretary)

21/18 **Welcome and apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Eugene McSorley.

21/19 **Governance**
21/19/01 **Disclosure of Interests**
There were no disclosures of interests to report.

21/19/02 **UoR Corporate Risk Register**
The UoR Corporate Risk Register was presented for consideration. There was a discussion about specialist technical support as a single point of failure and the resultant risk of loss of skills; not currently reflected in the risk register. The importance of including people in resource discussions more generally was highlighted. It was proposed that CRI should be added to the "list of committees responsible for monitoring" at Risk 1 (Research and Innovation – Reputation) and, for balance, at Risk 11 (Academic Planning and Resource – Estates), alongside SILT. Following discussion, it was agreed to request:

- An additional clause to the bullet in Risk 1 to make the point about failure to cover specialist person expertise.
- CRI to be added to the list of committees responsible for monitoring at Risk 1 and at Risk 11.

Actions:
- o **CW to draft additional clause to bullet in Risk 1 around failure to cover specialist person expertise**
- o **DC to request governance to include additional clause to bullet point in Risk 1 and the inclusion of CRI in the final column "list of committees responsible for monitoring" of Risk 1 - Research and Innovation - Reputation and Risk 11 - Academic Planning and Resource - Estates**

21/19/03 **Terms of Reference**
The CRI Terms of Reference were presented for consideration and the following changes to the membership were requested:
- Head of Research Services to be updated to Director of Research Services or representative
- Representative of REDCap to be updated to Research Data Manager

Following a discussion it was agreed for clarification, to ensure sustainability and service continuity to add a key objective focussed on people. CW would draft wording to circulate to CRI for agreement ahead of the next meeting.

Actions:
- o **CW to draft key objective focussed on people, ensuring sustainability and service continuity to circulate to CRI for agreement ahead of the next meeting.**
- o **DC to update ToR membership as per discussion**

21/20   **Minutes of the last meeting held on 17 May 2021**

      21/12   20/04/02: With regard to updated rates for CAF facilities, KW requested that the reference be updated to **TRAC (Transparent Approach to Costing) rates** (not track rates), which was the national approach used for all facilities rates.

With the above exception, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 May 21 were approved as a true record.

21/21   **Matters arising from the minutes (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)**

      19/12/03   CW reported that the preparation of an annual cycle of business, to be hosted on Microsoft Teams, was on hold until clarity about the internal infrastructure fund was received (anticipated after the 22/23 planning round).

      19/15   The RDOP proforma 21/22 included guidance on infrastructure which would inform a priority list for receipt of funding to spend on short timescales. CW noted that cross cutting opportunities had not yet been identified so would need further consideration.

The proposed paper outlining the process to canvas projects, along with an ECR equipment scheme, was on hold until receipt of research infrastructure funds. If / when funding was received a portion would be reserved for a scheme aimed at ECRs.

      20/04/01   Following a discussion with DTS about data storage issues, GB would be preparing a paper to inform the University wide digital strategy. The CRI highlighted the need for interim issues and challenges to be addressed. After discussion it was agreed to convene a working group to unlock the issue of data storage by exploring the problems, developing practical answers, and analysing the long-term data needs. PN proposed to ask Research Deans to identify computing related issues from the RDOPs which would be brought into the discussion. The working group, to be led by GB, would prepare a draft paper to go to CRI for wider discussion.

PN/RD would be feeding information into the delayed digital strategy consultation about the emerging digital strategy and the need for cheap storage for large data sets.

      Actions:
- **GB to convene a working group to explore data storage issues and prepare a draft paper for wider discussion at CRI**
- **PN to ask Research Deans to identify computing related issues from the RDOPs**
- **PN/RD to inform the digital strategy work about the emerging digital strategy and the need for cheap storage for large data sets.**

      20/04/02   There was a discussion about commercial pricing and the impact on research. CW noted that SCFP had recently developed a transparent system for commercial pricing. KW highlighted the balance between losing business and covering costs, noting that commercial partners were paying for expertise and intellectual knowledge not offered by a contract research organisation. As a next step KW proposed to co-ordinate a meeting of the platform leads with KW, AE, Marie Misselbrook and Anne-Marie van Dodeweerd to discuss options around a common pricing method for platforms for external users.

      Action:
- **KW to convene a meeting of platform leads with KW, AE, Marie Misselbrook and Anne-Marie van Dodeweerd to discuss options around a common pricing method for platforms for external users.**

      21/13/01   It was noted that both HLS and the CAF lab moves to JJT were delayed. JP observed that the construction market was suffering considerable supply chain issues but commented that steps had been taken to improve communications with the stakeholders.

21/22   **Strategy**

      21/22/01   **Updates from:**
- ❖   **CAF (GK)**

GK highlighted the big issue of limited, especially remote access to data. GK would be meeting with the IT business partner to discuss a resolution. One option under investigation was LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System) which could incorporate all the platforms. CW suggested looking at other resources such as Diamond or exploring with NERC to find out what they do.

LB updated the CRI on a BBSRC alert application that he was working on regarding capabilities. The application linked to the modernisation of the CAF portfolio and would act as a stimulus for debate around aligning the costing for different machines. LB noted the current disparity between the Flavour Centre and CAF around equipment charging rates. The importance of promoting and publicising the CAF equipment was highlighted. Noting that the current model was not sustainable, GK stated that the CAF was not currently recuperating all costs. AE stated that research projects were recharged based on the recording in CAF. GK commented that this was problematic. It was noted that grants were charged at directly incurred costs. AC/GK would continue this discussion offline to be clear about the benefits of CAF by thinking strategically about how CAF fitted with teaching and training.

❖ **CINN - RFIF (AC)**

AC highlighted the need to make a repair to a stimulator device in the TMS lab. An opportunity had subsequently arisen to purchase a new replacement device from a local company at a significant 25% discount. There was a discussion during which AC noted that the current kit would need to be shipped for assessment before the repair costs were known. AC noted that the main motivation for purchasing the new device would be to change vendors and to work with the support of a local research orientated company. PN stated that under normal circumstances, should an exceptional cost arise which was disrupting research and the school did not feel it appropriate to pay, then it could be considered against the CRI budget. As there was currently no CRI budget, it was suggested to trigger a discussion with the appropriate Research Dean, in this case CW, to put the case to RETF for funding.
Action:
  o **AC / CW to discuss purchase of TMS Lab Stimulator**

❖ **Estates (JP)**

JP commented that an ECMWF update was expected following the ECMWF Council meeting in December.

❖ **Technical Services (KH)**

There were no items for discussion or decision.

❖ **Digital Technology Services (SB)**

SB reported on the development of the digital strategy. The core values and principles had been agreed and ideas were taking shape around the road map and costings. The strategy would be in place for 5 years to 2026. There was a discussion around how the CRI would feed into the strategy. It was agreed to broaden the remit of the CRI data storage working group to feed into the digital strategy.

❖ **UMASCS (GB)**

GB highlighted the critical issues with the WordPress website, which had been resolved by DTS. Highlighting the importance of research engagement tools, GB noted that loading speeds on the MERL website remained poor and, although not historically a part of research sites, required a similar solution. CW suggested including MERL in the work of the CRI data storage working group.

Preparatory work for the move of the Herbarium and Cole Archive was nearing completion. Noting that different areas of the project were moving at different speeds, JP confirmed that discussions would be enabled with SBS to progress with the move.

❖ **Biological Safety and Radiation Safety (JMcG)**

JMcG requested people to get in touch if they required laser safety training.

21/23   Projects and programmes portfolio

21/23/01   BESS (SBo)

SBo noted that the initial 1-year licence for the locker management system had expired. The majority of BESS activity over the past year had been devoted to supporting schools. SBo stated that the return of funded research activity would justify the payment of the licence fee, which would be approved via SPEIR.

21/23/02   REDCap Service (RD)

RD advised that REDCap was operating as business as usual. REDCap was funded to 2025, beyond which point it was hoped to deploy a sustainable model. An introduction to recovery of costs from external grants would begin in August 22.

21/23/03   Capital Equipment Fund

PN stated that, once the decision on funding had been made, it would be helpful to have a note of the spending window.
Action:
  o **CW to find out from DZ details of Capital Equipment Fund spending window.**

21/23/04   Building an open hardware community

Al Edwards (AE) joined the meeting for this item.

AE gave an interesting presentation to CRI about open-sourced hardware. The idea being that rather than buying kit, to self build using publicly available designs published under open licences. This allowed all information known about the system to be available in a free and open way culminating in a community developed system. AE highlighted an initiative at University of Reading to build an open-sourced hardware community. This would offer opportunities for a broad range of diverse disciplines to use core hardware approaches with significant cuts to development costs and no requirement for a large capital investment. Plans for a hackathon at the end of the year were underway. JMcG urged caution around the safety aspect, in particular compliance with UK Health and Safety Legislation and Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations. JMcG noted the need for systems to be built in a considered way thinking through the emergent hazards and putting steps in place to appropriately assess and control risks. AE concurred that health and safety was a very important consideration noting that safety consideration was part of the publication process. AE asked the CRI for help to ensure connections with the right people within the right framework. AC noted the amazing possibilities to use current instruments in innovative ways and invited AE to talk to further with CINN. RD commented on the massive potential for open hardware with lots of global activity and agreed to speak to AE offline about how the University might support the development of open research and whether there might be a requirement for some physical facility/provision of equipment to support the managed development of open hardware. CW thanked AE for enabling an interesting conversation.

21/24   Policy

There were no items to discuss.

21/25   Any other Business

21/25/01   CRI budget spending priorities

PN noted that, should CRI receive a budget, then spending should be organised in a structured manner and suggested that a measured approach to identifying priorities

should be scheduled into future agendas. A wish list could be generated based on RDOP priorities and from those running large facilities. People should be encouraged to think about building cases. PN proposed that the process should be agreed offline, as a committee.

Action:
- o **All to agree a spending process, prior to receipt of budget**

21/26   Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 26 January 2022.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1.00pm.

Item	Action	Owner	Completion date	Status
19/12/03	To prepare an annual cycle of business to be hosted on Microsoft Teams Update Jan 21: To be actioned on the reinstatement of regular funding calls	CW	Mar 22	pending
19/15	When reviewing the RDOP proforma 2020/2021, UCRI to be asked to include guidance on infrastructure needs and to explicitly direct people to explore cross cutting opportunities Update Jan 21: To be addressed in the RDOP Proforma 2021/2022	AW	June 2021	complete
	To prepare a paper outlining the process to canvas projects and proposing an ECR equipment open fund to form part of the annual research infrastructure Update Jan 20: On receipt of funding information, to develop an action plan and circulate a draft funding proposal to CRI	CW	Mar 22	pending
20/04/01	To arrange a meeting with SB to discuss the broad needs of digital storage Update 26 Oct 21: GB to convene a working group to explore data storage issues and prepare a draft paper for wider discussion at CRI and PN to ask Research Deans to identify computing related issues from the RDOPs	GB /PN	asap	ongoing
	To inform the digital strategy work about the emerging digital strategy and the need for cheap storage for large data sets.	PN/RD	asap	ongoing
20/04/02	To convene a meeting of platform leads with KW, AE, Marie Misselbrook and Anne-Marie van Dodeweerd to discuss options around a common pricing method for platforms for external users.	KW	asap	ongoing
20/13/01	To investigate building an AI rounded community	AW	asap	complete
20/14/03	Invite RD to BESS user group to introduce REDCap functionality	EMcS/ SBo	asap	ongoing
21/04/01	To communicate information about the atomic force microscope to all themes	LH	asap	complete
21/04/01	To discuss with UCRI methods of drawing the strategy work together	AW	asap	complete
21/04/01	To confirm whether the PRUP controlled plant unit at Sonning was installed and functioning	KH	asap	complete
21/04/01	To copy RG into future UMASCS reports for CRI	GB	May 21	complete
21/05/03	To generate a rolling list of departmental research equipment requirements by including some overt questions in the RDOPs	AW	Jun 21	complete

21/13/01	To provide HLS stakeholders with an update on timescales for the building handover	JP	May 21	complete
21/13/01	To provide an update on the timescale for the move from Harborne to JJT	JP	May 21	complete
21/19/02	UoR Risk Register: To draft additional clause to bullet in Risk 1 around failure to cover specialist person expertise	CW	Nov 21	ongoing
	UoR Risk Register: To request governance to include additional clause to bullet point in Risk 1 and to include CRI to the final column "list of committees responsible for monitoring" of Risk 1 - Research and Innovation - Reputation and Risk 11 - Academic Planning and Resource - Estates	DC	Nov 21	ongoing
21/19/03	ToR: To draft key objective focussed on people, ensuring sustainability and service continuity to circulate to CRI for agreement ahead of the next meeting.	CW	Nov 21	ongoing
	ToR: To update ToR membership as per discussion	DC	Nov 21	ongoing
21/22/01	To discuss purchase of TMS Lab Stimulator	AC/CW	asap	ongoing
21/23/03	To find out from DZ details of Capital Equipment Fund spending window	CW	asap	ongoing
21/25/01	To agree a spending process, prior to receipt of budget	CW / all	asap	ongoing