Meeting minutes

Research Data Scotland Board Meeting

## 11 September 2023

Company number: SC677016

Charity No: SC051305

**RESEARCH DATA SCOTLAND** (the “**Company**”)

Minutes of a general meeting of Research Data Scotland (RDS) held via MS Teams on 11 September 2023 at 10.00.

1. **Quorum**
   1. It was noted that a quorum was present in accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company (the “Articles”).
   2. There was produced to the meeting a notice (“**Notice”**) convening the meeting and, with the consent of all members present, the Notice was taken as read.

## Attendance

### Present

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Position** |
| Paul Boyle | Chair |
| Roger Halliday | Director / Trustee |
| Scott Heald | Director / Trustee |
| Mark Parsons | Director / Trustee |
| Julie Fitzpatrick | Director / Trustee |
| Martin Sinclair | Director / Trustee |
| Jill Pell | Director / Trustee |
| Shannon Vallor | Board advisor |
| Neil Rawlins | Minute taker |

### Apologies

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Gillian Docherty | Board advisor |
| Andrew Morris | Board advisor |
| Giselle Cory | Board advisor |

1. **Items on the agenda**
   1. **Introduction and welcomes**

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June were approved by the Board.

1. **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

1. **Business updates**

Four papers covering business updates previously circulated were introduced. It was noted that KPIs now cover four rolling quarters.

* Last quarter finance update
* KPI update
* Top 10 Risk update
* Business Plan update

Two-minute presentations were provided to update the Board on developments since the last Board meeting from:

* Partnership and Strategy Director
* Digital Director
* Programmes and Data team data analyst
* Operations Director

Questions and comments were invited.

**KPI update:** It was noted that it was not clear that the quarters were rolling four quarters. There are plans to introduce the Researcher Access Service (RAS) in the New Year, and dependent on when the RAS is introduced, KPIs will improve. It was asked how much effort was going into training researchers into using the process, or was it dependent upon the RAS starting? It was noted that advice was consistently being updated as feedback is received and that work is ongoing. A Data Approvals Transformation lead will start in October and this will be part of their remit. It was noted there were a list of 36 datasets on offer on the webpages Work remains to be done on search engine optimisation and that there are a number of technical and content changes happening on the searchable catalogue. An update to the Board to be made at the next meeting.

**Business Plan update:** It was noted that the business model was in a good place as RDS are getting the service up and running, but an update would be bought to the next Board meeting. It was noted that on the model NSH developments were red, but there was nothing in the text to explain this. The item highlighted in red relates to commissioning and overseeing the delivery of developments to the National Safe Haven. It was pointed out that the individual Regional Safe Havens could be added to the RDS website as resources, as DataLoch already is.

**Finance update:** It had been decided the money would go via SG and the final stages of a MoU with SG is being drafted to transfer the money. RDS is looking at finance from funding councils and further details to be bought back at the next meeting.

1. **Substantive papers**
   1. **Accounts and Trustees Report 2022-23**

The external auditors were happy with the accounts and trustees report and had reported to the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) subcommittee. The FAR subcommittee were happy to approve the accounts and trustees report to the Board and ask the Chair and CEO to sign off. The FAR subcommittee further recommend the Letter of Representation is accepted by the Board and signed off by the Chair and CEO. The annual report noted RDS is meeting its responsibilities, but it is not an easy read for lay readers. It has been agreed work will be instigated on making the report more accessible before it is put on the webpages. Questions and comments were invited. It was noted that whilst the Board were happy with the report it required a more attractive text and ‘soundbites’ of RDS’s work would help the lay reader. The Chair noted that the Board were content to sign off the accounts, trustees report and Letter of Representation, but next year would like to see a major overhaul of presentation. The Board approved the signing off of the accounts, trustees report and Letter of Representation.

* 1. **Financial Sustainability**

It was noted that a more substantive paper will be bought back to the Board at the next meeting. The support of the Board was being sought to get the business case to ‘land’. The Board were asked what they would like to see in the December paper and for any questions on the paper being presented today. It was noted that funding promises made by SG are unlikely to be met and that the premise of one third of funding of future funding from business is potentially setting up RDS for a ‘fail’ and if this should be reflected upon now. It was noted that the commercial side would initially include academics using the service on an ad-hoc basis and expand to include business, the third and public sectors. To build up in the future requires careful marketing and that by defining external income more broadly the target would be hit. It was noted that the commercial component was crucial to delivering future confidence and in building future confidence in all three elements of this model, however, some hard-edged thinking was needed to tie down some targets and a route map to substantive income funding. The business case needed to demonstrate the link early on and clarity was needed as there were price increases in the services RDS is offering – the RDS value proposition statements need to be tightened up if RDS wish to sell to a wider commercial audience. It was highlighted that Public / Private partnerships are attractive to UKRI and the Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness has a focus on data and Public / Private Partnerships. It was noted that clinical trials and pharmaceutical companies could add value to RDS and it was asked if RDS could not apply for grants to UKRI or be part of bids along with partners. The Chair concluded that a detailed conversation on this matter would be required at the next Board meeting.

* 1. **RDS Approach to Engagement**

The Partnership and Strategy Director talked through a slide presentation and asked for comments and questions. Reference was made to the alignment with legacy organisations and how to brand legacy organisations as it might reinforce the message eg eDRIS supporting RDS and therefore make the change. It was agreed that for most users, if all entities aligned their branding it might help. It was noted that this approach to mapping out required further thinking. More work was required on the stakeholder map and supporters and detractors needed to be identified and then engaged with. Two points were then outlined. Firstly, the approach is a broad ‘waterfront’, necessary at the moment, but is there a danger of being spread too thin? Secondly, there is a need to identify within organisations their key movers and shakers. It is not clear who within SG who are the top decision makers as named individuals. In SG at Ministerial level who are RDS’s active supporters? It was noted that regarding political ‘players’ there was a bit of work to be done to get advocates and suggested asking Ministers to speak at events – a deeper and more strategic approach to Ministers was required. Other areas beyond Health within SG to explore included Economy with life sciences as an area of commercial interest. It was agreed there was a wider group of officials and Ministers who needed to be reached out to and RDS would pick up on a few people, officials and Ministers, who are supporters.

1. **AOB**

Giselle Cory is stepping down as a Board advisor.