Meeting minutes

Research Data Scotland Board Meeting

## 12 June 2023

Company number: SC677016

Charity No: SC051305

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

Minutes of a general meeting of Research Data Scotland (RDS) held at the Bayes Centre on 12 June 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 (via MS Teams) |
| Martin Sinclair | Director / Trustee |
| Gillian Docherty | Board advisor |
| Andrew Morris | Board advisor |
| Neil Rawlins | Minute taker |

### Apologies

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Jill Pell | Director / Trustee |
| Shannon Vallor | Board advisor |

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

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. Apologies were received.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 and previously circulated were approved by the Board without further amendment.

1. **Matters arising**

Updates on actions from the previous Board meeting on 14 March 2023 were provided. All actions are either complete or in hand. There were no matters arising

1. **Papers and Reports**
   1. **Business Plan Update – Corporate Management Group**

The RDS Business Plan as revised following previous Board comments was circulated for information only. The RDS Corporate Management Group (CMG) gave short verbal updates on the Business Plan covering progress in the last quarter. The Strategy and Partnership Director gave an update on communications work, the Programmes and Data Acquisition Director outlined two risks identified with ADR work: a hold up with the ESRC legal team over funding; and Scottish Government (SG) are yet to release data. The Chief Information Officer presented slides of the new website. A question was asked about interoperability and the user base – is RDS sufficiently connected to, for example, the ONS. It was noted that there is liaison with organisations such as HDR UK, ONS and SAIL and progress is being made in this area. RDS should borrow from others e.g. HDR UK and where there are emerging UK standards RDS should try to adopt.

* 1. **Quarter Four KPIs**

There are a number of KPIs not meeting targets as they were being affected by the Covid backlog and complex projects which were delayed due to Covid, but are now complete. The impact is expected over the coming years, but needs to be investigated. It has been agreed with eDRIS to measure projects through the fast track system which will be put in place by the start on 2024.

KPI 1c required further development and it was asked if RDS had developed a definition of ‘research outputs’ in this context and an ‘attribution’ policy and would RDS-derived data sets be licensed or subject to copyrights to require a citation. It was asked if all the KPIs under section 2 refer to enquiries made directly to RDS or eDRIS as a service managed by RDS.

It was asked if the figure of 55 in KPI 2a were 55 new enquiries in that quarter, or an average over two quarters. It was noted that the conversion figure from initial enquiry to project delivery on a quarterly basis could be very variable and therefore a rolling quarterly average was a better indicator of where RDS are heading to. Covid would have squeezed these figures, but they will improve over time. Finally it was noted the KPI 3a is deep red, a major priority and RDS should seek to get down to days, although it was appreciated that some delays could be caused by the researcher, not RDS.

* 1. **Finance Paper for y/e 2023**

The RDS Finance Manager introduced the Finance Paper for year-end 2023.

The Board approved the action.

* 1. **Top Operational Risks**
  2. **Revised Finance, Audit and Risk subcommittee Terms of Reference and Risk Appetite**

The FAR subcommittee’s revised ToR was introduced and is now aligned with the three strands of the subcommittee, finance, audit and risk. The Board were asked to approve for the subcommittee to oversee finance papers, give the lead on accounts and external auditors and report back to the Board on a regular basis.

The Board agreed to this proposal.

A discussion on Risk Appetite took place, noting the desire to translate risk appetite across Strategic Risk and Strategic Themes, with column five on Paper 2.6 indicating the risk appetite for each theme. The themes are to be enduring (years) and to give overall guidance to the CMG as to where the Board is happy to take differing views in risk appetite. The framework is for management and the Board to track. The challenge is to the CMG to ensure that the classification and scoring is correct. It was noted that there should be a risk around staff retention and should be teased out in People and Organisational Development and that a service delivery risk should be added.

1. **Budget Planning 2024-25**
2. **Financial Sustainability**

The Board were asked for guidance and feedback on the direction of travel and on the specific issues. A wedge diagram of where funding came from in the past would be useful and that impact stories are important i.e. not being able to do things if RDS stops.

RDS should also be thinking about consolidating its core mission and services as something to help researchers find data, support the data access journey and help them decide whether a dataset could be useful for their research. The signposting, providing a common entry point for researchers and education activities would in themselves bring substantial improvements and pace to data access. Regarding different levels of charges, academic, commercial etc., what is an acceptable level of cost to the researcher. Regarding commercial contracts, work should be undertaken to see what competitors charge and are there any comparators with other UK regions or overseas and discussion with NI and Wales regarding core funding. It was suggested that this should form part of the paper.