Meeting minutes

General meeting of Research Data Scotland  
5 December 2022

# Attendees

## Present:

Paul Boyle Chair

Roger Halliday Director, Trustee

Scott Heald Director, Trustee

Mark Parsons Director, Trustee

Jill Pell Director, Trustee

Julie Fitzpatrick Director, Trustee

Gillian Docherty Board advisor

Andrew Morris Board advisor

Giselle Cory Board advisor

Shannon Vallor Board advisor

Neil Rawlins Minute taker

## Apologies:

None

# Agenda

## 1. Introduction and welcomes

The Chair welcomed Julie Fitzpatrick as the new member to the Board.

## 2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2022 and previously circulated were approved by the Board without further amendment.

## 3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

## 4. Papers and Reports

### 4.1.Finance Report for the six months to September 2022

Scottish Government (SG) would be asked to carry over any underspend. Business planning was taking place to produce a proactive budget in January 2023.

* It was confirmed that SG were happy to carry forward underspend from last year. A proactive budget in January would help.
* There had been a delay in the Data Sourcing Programme due to ensuring IG needs were met. There was a lack of capacity within teams beyond day-to-day work.
* The addition of resources to help the data provider teams would be covered in a later paper.
* It was asked if VAT was still a live issue. It was noted that at a point in the future RDS would generate an income, but currently work is being undertaken to understand what the financial implications are. A commitment has been made to HMRC to move to a revenue generating model.
* It was noted that the UK government had committed to increased spending through UKRI and would that have any affect by growing demand further.

### 4.2 Key Performance Indicators Report Q2 (July-September) 2022-23

The KPI paper circulated previously was discussed

* RH noted that the focus was on reducing the time to access data.
* eDRIS has moved from Covid work to tackling backlog work, increasing lead times, however, there would be an expected improvement over the next six months.
* The first change would involve the time taken to get approvals, however other changes to be implemented would affect data in the second half of the year.
* Covid had delayed submissions for non-Covid projects but they were now appearing.
* It was asked if the target conversion rate of 35 per cent was realistic or ambitious. It was confirmed that the 35 per cent is for the current financial year but RDS is confident that it would be in a different place in one to two years’ time.
* It was asked if a report would stratify this by showing a timeline over a year. It was noted that Covid would explain the delay if projects were restarting post Covid. It was further noted that there were a lot of caveats and there was a need to get through the backlog and improve times.
* It was agreed to hold an offline meeting to refocus indicators to demonstrate the backlog versus new enquiries and use other measures to demonstrate the progress being made.

### 4.3 Progress Report

The progress report previously circulated was discussed.

* A digital agency had been appointed and were working on the RDS website, technology review and the metadata catalogue.
* There was a focus on synthetic data with health as a priority.
* Governance - the two subcommittees had been set up and were running.
* It was reiterated the support for public engagement and keeping things joined up and targeted with PHS. It was noted that the Youth Parliament and Turing Institute would be useful for public engagement.
* It was asked if more information could be provided on the offering and charging model. It was agreed to bring to the next Board meeting a paper updating the offering, charging, and pricing structure.
* It was asked about staff turnover and whether it was a challenge to find the right people. Several contractors had left, but permanent staff had been recruited. Recruiting technical staff was an issue, but there was no underlying problem with retention.

### 4.4 Risk Report – Top 10 risks facing RDS (Standing Item)

It was noted the highest scoring risks were financial, collaboration with partners and technical risks. The mitigations for risks D3 and IT1 were queried and why the scoring had not reduced. It was noted that the mitigation column still had a lot of items within it to be implemented and that would reduce future scoring.

### 4.5 IG Paper

The IG paper circulated previously was discussed.

* It was noted that the IG approach was a positive thing, but the reality was that a lot of it could be automated. It was further noted that a digital end to end service would be much quicker than is currently available. Currently half the projects are standard and half complex, but the situation would evolve.
* It was asked if this approach would speed up complex projects. It was noted that the Covid model of working should be retained and regarding linkage problems, the model allows the user to look at the data. It was further noted that the PHS legal team do not see any legal issues and is supportive of approval.
* It was asked if this approach follows the DEA, how does RDS fast track but not break the rules of the Act. It was noted that the ‘5 Safes’ model is followed, and transparency is key.
* It was noted that this is at the heart of RDS’s work but are government researchers being treated differently to academic researchers. It was noted that the approach is neutral. It was suggested there may be fewer researchers within SG compared to UKG and that some Directorates / Divisions underuse R&D and associated data.
* It was noted that an action for a later meeting would be to understand how much government is using data, how RDS can provide access more quickly and to bring case studies

### 4.6 Public Engagement Report

The Public Engagement report previously circulated was discussed.

* It was noted that constant public engagement was required in conjunction with partners and that it should all be joined up.
* It was noted that RDS and eDRIS were working closely on public engagement.
* It was noted that the development of a ‘crisis comms’ strategy needed to be developed with eDRIS and PHS for any possible negative comms.

### 4.7 ADR-S Update

The ADR-S update previously circulated was introduced by the RDS Programmes and Data Acquisition Director, who talked through a slide presentation outlining the latest position. Questions and comments were invited.

* It was noted that the ADR model and RDS model were different and were any problems merging the two envisaged. It was stated that this was not happening in isolation, but would make the process fairer and quicker, and although there would be a shift, it is not throwing one model out. The challenge is system operations / transformation work, of which ADR is supportive.
* It was suggested that this was an opportunity, however RDS needs to be clear on deliverables and outcomes and align with RDS’s strategy.
* It was confirmed that the ADR data strategy is completely and deliberately aligned to the RDS strategy.
* It was suggested that should this proposal proceed, Emma Gordon sit as an observer on the Board.
* It was asked what kind and scope of data aligns with RDS. A data example would include the LEO dataset and that the education datasets would need to be refreshed.
* It was noted that a discussion was required as to whether the ADR safe haven be separate or within the National Safe Haven – currently the ADR safe haven is settled within the National Safe Haven and all accreditations are in place.

The Chair noted that the Board needed to agree, and;

* Governance was essential
* Who would join the Board
* Who would be responsible for performance
* KPI’s – do they clash
* More information about safe haven work required, who provides accreditation
* Is the existing safe haven continued to be used
* Consistency of funding
* Whilst supportive, the Board still needs to consider the proposal

It was agreed that this is an exciting opportunity and good sign that RDS was considered, however, more information needs to be brought back to the Board. It was agreed to bring back to the Board a single set of arrangements which work best for both organisations.

## 5. AoB

It was asked if there were any updates on DARE UK (Data and Analytics Research Environments UK) which aims to deliver a coordinated and trustworthy national data research infrastructure to support cross-domain research for public good. It was noted there was a phased period between now and March 2024, where data will be viewed by the Treasury as infrastructure scalable architecture. It was noted that bids were being co-ordinated across Scotland. The Chair asked that DARE update the Board at future meeting.

**Date of the next meeting: Tuesday March 14 2023 at 10am**

**There being no further business, the chair declared the meeting closed.**