

News story: Sir Mark Walport will lead UK Research and Innovation

In this role Sir Mark will lead the establishment of UKRI and ensure it plays a central role at the heart of the Industrial Strategy.

Subject to the passage of the [Higher Education and Research Bill](#) through parliament, UKRI will be established as a single, strategic body that will bring together the 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and the research and knowledge exchange functions of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation Jo Johnson said:

I am delighted that Mark has agreed to take on this pivotal role. With his experience of running a large scale research organisation, collaboration with businesses in all sectors and his work at the heart of government, Mark is uniquely placed to lead the establishment of UKRI and ensure the organisation becomes a major voice for UK research and innovation.

Following his appointment Mark will now work closely with the UKRI Chair Sir John Kingman and the research and innovation communities across the UK to shape the new organisation over the coming months, delivering on the Industrial Strategy proposals for investing in science, research and innovation in the UK.

UKRI Chief Executive Designate Prof Sir Mark Walport said:

I am honoured to be appointed as the first Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). My ambition is to make UKRI the world's leading research and innovation public funding agency.

I look forward to working closely with the Research Councils, Innovate UK and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as we work together to create UKRI. I also look forward to working closely with all of our research and innovation communities to provide a strong and coherent voice for UK science and innovation.

UKRI Non-Executive Chair Sir John Kingman said:

I have worked closely with Mark over many years; he is a superb scientific leader who believes passionately in the potential for

great science and innovation to make a profound difference to society and to the economy. He is the ideal first leader for UKRI.

Science, research and innovation are key strengths of the UK; vital underpinning elements of our economy and national wellbeing. The UK research and innovation system is world-leading, but there is an opportunity to make it even more effective.

The purpose of Part 3 of the Higher Education and Research Bill is to put in place the legal powers and safeguards that will enable government to protect the UK's status as a full-spectrum scientific power in the future. The proposals before parliament are to create UKRI, a strong, agile and joined up funder of research and innovation for the UK.

Through UKRI, we are implementing the recommendations of Nobel Prize winning scientist Sir Paul Nurse, who the government asked to lead a review of the UK's research landscape. In his report, published in November 2015, Sir Paul called on government to "support the Research Councils to collectively make up more than the sum of their parts", and develop a "smoother pathway to more applied research".

Subject to the passage of the Higher Education and Research Bill through parliament, UKRI will include the 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and the research and knowledge exchange functions of HEFCE. This will create a single strategic research and innovation funding body, which will build on and protect the strengths and values of the current system.

UKRI will deliver a strengthened strategic approach to future challenges and a maximisation of the value and benefit from government's investment of over £6 billion per annum in research and innovation. It will provide a greater focus on cross-cutting issues that are outside the core remits of the current funding bodies, such as multi- and inter-disciplinary research, enabling the system to respond rapidly and effectively to current and future challenges. It will be a strengthened, unified voice for the UK's research and innovation funding system, facilitating the dialogue with government and partners on the global stage. Furthermore, it will create a smoother pathway for innovation, enabling improved collaboration between businesses and researchers and better alignment of research outputs with business needs.