

CoSeC External Advisory Board (EAB) Meeting Minutes

Friday 27 March 2026

Via MS Teams

Attendees:

Board:

James Kermode (University of Warwick, Chair)

Jane Winters (University of London)

Simon Hettrick (SSI)

Henning Hermjakob (EMBL)

Andrea Cavalli (CECAM Director)

Observers:

Barbara Montanari (Associate Director of Programmes & Strategy for Scientific Computing at STFC)

Stephen Longshaw (CoSeC Director)

Mark Savill (Cranfield University, Chair of CoSeC Community Forum)

Mai Hoang (CoSeC, Secretary)

Apologies:

Richard Gunn (UKRI DRI)

1. Welcome, review of minutes and actions from September 2025 – James Kermode, Chair

- The Chair commenced the meeting, and reintroductions were made including a welcome to the Director of CECAM.
- The minutes from September were approved.
- The Terms of Reference action has been completed, and CoSeC's response to the Board's recommendations will be formally presented during today's session.

2. CoSeC update and review of progress against recommendations from Sep-2025 – Stephen Longshaw, CoSeC Director

CoSeC update:

- CoSeC reported on its strategic progress, including announcements from the November Community Forum at Durham University: a new Fellows cohort in October, and an Impact Award winner, strengthened collaboration with the UKRI-DRI-funded CAKE project, which provides a top-level voice for the DRI programme plus the establishment of a CAKE-CoSeC EDI working group.
- Roundtable discussions at the Forum identified community priorities: maintaining flexible funding for networking and staffing, improving support for

large-scale compute and data infrastructure and increasing investment in training and industry partnerships.

- Technical achievements included CCP-NC's 10x speed up of CASTEP NMR on GPUs, CCP-WSI's AI-driven models for offshore wind, GPU acceleration of CHAPSIM2 and ONETEP codes with CCP-NTH and CCP9 respectively, CCP5's machine learning (ML) methods for materials and CCP-NC's FAIR-compliant NMR data schema.
- Cross-cutting projects feature energy efficient computing efforts including a September 2025 workshop with UK and international experts, upcoming recommendations in a white paper and a benchmarking tool developed with the SHAREing hub. The CoSeC catalogue was highlighted as a FAIR platform for sharing metadata on research outputs, originating from CCP-WSI data repository and expanding into a scalable resource that allows communities to build their own catalogue, ultimately forming a "catalogue of catalogues" with potential to incorporate AI-enhanced discovery, by enabling natural language search across catalogues.

Progress against recommendations:

CoSeC provided responses to all 9 recommendations from the previous meeting.

1. Visibility and promotion – As part of its impact strategy, CoSeC now maintains a new blog on its website and shares monthly software highlights via social media promoting key codes and their value to the community. Next month, a new annual report format will present an overview of curated case studies and its overall impact data.

2. Software metrics - CoSeC is exploring non-traditional approaches, including asking communities to identify their top 5 most impactful research outputs. This will be published in its upcoming annual report. The CoSeC catalogue is also expected to generate new insights through its metadata. A proposal was made to expand its scope to include software developed outside of CoSeC communities. It was also noted that SSI will launch its Software Research Excellence Framework (REF) this year and is open to sharing feedback with CoSeC to refine useful software metrics.

3. Unique value – CoSeC's technical activities are inherently diverse due to the 25 communities and this will be developed in the next phase with guidance from the Board. CoSeC noted that recommendations 3, 4, 6 and 9 are closely tied to advancing its strategic agenda. DRI funding has enabled a stronger leadership role moving beyond previous technical evaluations while collaborative projects

such as DRIIMB in bio-communities show progress toward reducing fragmentation. The Board emphasized that cross-cutting initiatives like GPU optimisation, AI and Data efforts align well with this strategic approach and advised tracking progress at future meetings. CoSeC also noted broader access to expertise through STFC's transformation project.

4. Core capabilities – CoSeC discussed handling its core capabilities listing at the wider STFC level, with the Board noting and supporting this approach as part of the broader organisational changes.

5. Cross-site collaboration - CoSeC noted that it already works across these sites effectively, with a cross-site departmental structure that supports flexible working and treats location as no real obstacle. If this view is still widely held, then CoSeC will take steps to enhance collaboration where needed.

6. Convening role - CoSeC already demonstrates this through its bi-annual community forum, annual conferences and Town Hall meetings with the Grand Challenges project providing a clear example of mapping the complex landscape of its communities. CoSeC intends to make this convening role more explicit in its next strategic phase.

7. Oversight diagram - CoSeC has made changes to the diagram and has published this on its website. The Board conveyed its concern about the lack of DRI engagement at meetings and intends to raise this constructively. CoSeC proposed widening UKRI representation to include DRI representatives from EPSRC and welcomed the Board to discuss the scope of representation going forward.

8. Community Forum - The next community forum will take place on 3-4 June 2026 at Warwick Conferences, adopting a new two-day format. The Board is invited to attend.

9. Guiding principles and partnerships - CoSeC already has strong links within the UKRI DRI landscape working closely with key partners such as UKNR, SHAREing, CAKE and SSI which share similar strategic alignments. CoSeC intends to articulate these principles and partnerships more explicitly in its next phase.

ACTION: The Chair will contact Richard Gunn regarding DRI representation at EAB meetings.

ACTION: CoSeC will explore how best to engage DRI contacts across UKRI and its council, in particular EPSRC, and provide the Board with a list of people for future invitations.

CoSeC's Evolution and Future

- CoSeC has evolved strategically since DRI investment, shifting from community-specific support to leading cross-cutting themes and partnerships.
- The Grand Challenges document offers a high-level view of community challenges aligned with UKRI and government priorities.
- UKRI has shifted to mission-driven funding, prioritising projects that advance knowledge, improve lives, and drive growth through cross-council collaboration, with CoSeC well positioned to work across these boundaries.
- The Board suggested re-framing CoSeC's grand challenges around societal issues, such as energy security (e.g. via CCP5), aging (e.g. via CCPBioSim) and drug discovery (e.g. via CCP4) to better influence policymakers. CoSeC will make this connection more explicit in its future plans.

3. Closed discussion – Board members only plus Mark Savill, Chair of Community Forum.

The Board held a closed session, focusing on the presented updates and recommendations. No minutes were taken during this time.

4. Feedback to CoSeC and discussion – All

The Board thanked CoSeC for fully addressing the September '25 recommendations and conveyed their satisfaction with the responses.

Board recommendations (following the closed session):

1. The next 6 months are critical as key decisions are being made and CoSeC needs to engage actively with UKRI and government during this window.
2. The upcoming community forum is a good opportunity to test-run CoSeC's strategic messaging with the communities. The Board suggested distilling its strategy into 3-4 key clear bullet points to see how the message lands.
3. The Board recommended that CoSeC draw out its common themes across its communities to strengthen its strategic narrative. They highlighted several interconnected topics: green computing, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), GPUs, optimisation and sustainability (economy, environment etc.).

4. The Board noted that the benefits of bringing communities together can be difficult to quantify but encouraged CoSeC to continue collaborating with similar organisations like SSI, the Society of RSE, and BioFAIR, to share insights and strengthen its convening role.

Discussion highlights following the Board's recommendations:

- CoSeC could explore ways to attribute credit for non-traditional contributions via the catalogue, potentially integrating ORCID.
- CoSeC was encouraged to participate more in bilateral exchanges. For example, CoSeC representation at SSI's Collaboration Workshop 2026 in April and the CaSDaR Data Stewardship Conference in October.
- The Board emphasized aligning CoSeC's Grand Challenges with the language of funders and framing them around broader national priorities rather than technical goals.
- The Board suggested that CoSeC provide regular updates on its strategy during Board meetings to demonstrate ongoing progress.

ACTION: CoSeC to provide an update to the Board's March '26 recommendations at the next EAB meeting.

5. Any other business and next steps – All

The next in-person meeting may be co-located with RSECon26 in Sheffield, which will take place on 11–12 September 2026. The meeting is provisionally planned for the morning of Tuesday 8 September 2026.

ACTION: CoSeC will arrange the next in-person EAB meeting, potentially at RSECon26, in Sheffield on 8 September 2026.