ISIS User Committee Meeting

4 December 2020, 10.30 – 12.00 via Zoom

Present:

IUG1	Crystallography	
		Karen Johnston (Durham)
		Michael Hayward (Oxford)
IUG2	Disordered Materials	
		Emma Barney (Nottingham)
		Malgorzata (Gosia) Swadzba-Kwasny (Queen's Belfast)
IUG4	Excitations	
		Chris Stock (Edinburgh)
		David Boldrin (Glasgow)
IUG5	Molecular Spectroscopy	
		Alexander O'Malley (Bath)
IUG 6	Muons	
		Joseph Wright (UEA)
IUG7	Engineering	
		Catrin Davies (Imperial)
		Richard Moat (Open University)
IUG8	Small angle scattering	
		Wuge Brisco (Bristol)

Robert McGreevy – Director, ISIS
Sean Langridge – ISIS Diffraction & Materials Division Head
Philip King – ISIS Spectroscopy & Support Division Head
Zoe Bowden – Head of ISIS Operations
Steve Wakefield – Experimental Operations Division Head
Andrew Kaye – User Programme Manager
Hannah Griffin – Computing Division Head
Matt North – Instrumentation Division Head

Apologies:

IUG5	Molecular Spectroscopy	
		Roberto Senesi (Rome)
IUG6	Muons	
		Lucy Clark (Birmingham)

1. Minutes from December 2019 IUC Meeting

These were approved with no comments

2. Actions from previous meetings

Action from previous meeting and status	Status	Responsible	Meeting action added
Consider review of archaeometry proposal assessment.	*A small group has been set up to review archaeometry proposal reviewing – this will report back in Spring 2021 in time for the next FAP meetings. We will provide an update at the next IUC meeting.* ***Ongoing.***	Philip King	Dec 2018

Update the IUC at the next meeting on staff being able to load cash onto their cards.	*A process has been defined to enable staff to do this.* **Completed.**	Andrew Kaye	Dec 2018
Enable reps for SANS and reflectometry for next IUC meeting	*SANS reps now present; Reflectometry ones will be in place for the next IUC meeting.* **Complete.**	Philip King	June 2019
Consider online template, examples of good proposals and additional information in the proposal system to encourage improvement in proposal writing	*Template is available as Word doc and as a web page. Example proposals to be done.* **Complete.**	Philip King	June 2019
Explore whether the OSNS session on proposal writing could be videoed.	*Videoing the OSNS session is probably not possible. But session on proposal-writing to students will be considered for future student days.* **Complete.**	Sean Langridge / Philip King	June 2019
Philip King to invite Lamar and/or new Scientific Programme Manager to next IUC to update on software strategy.	*Toby to give an update at the next IUC meeting.* **Ongoing.**	Philip King	June 2019
Consider characterisation of deuterated samples produced by D-Lab.	*Characterisation is possible – requires the experimental group to work with D-lab staff as early as possible in the process.* **Complete.**	Steve Wakefield	Dec 2019
Look at ISIS Compute issues	*ISIS Compute issues have been looked at; however, ISIS Compute is being phased out in favour of ISIS Data Analysis as a Service (IDaaaS), which is now in operation across the instrument suite with performance continuing to improve.* **Complete.**	Hannah Griffin	Dec 2019
Check on sample can requests for Tosca, Vesuvio	*We believe these are up-to-date. Please discuss with an ISIS scientist if you believe this isn't the case.* **Complete.**	Steve Wakefield	Dec 2019
Discussion with instrument scientists on engineering furnace calibration data and whether storage with environmental control is a more general need.	*Catrin has looked at the comments and will respond regarding the specifics.* **Complete.**	Catrin Davies	Dec 2019
Check on image database external visibility	*Image database isn't visible externally, but the 'Things to help you talk about ISIS' page on the ISIS website has been updated with new content.* **Complete.**	Philip King	Dec 2019
Check on availability of SLAC MCR news for users	*SLAC is currently available internally. It (or something similar) could be put in place to give users MCR news alerts. The IUC felt this was a nice-to-have rather than essential, to be done only if resources allowed.* **Complete.**	Hannah Griffin	Dec 2019
Check on current system for collecting metadata for ISIS experiments and how metadata can be accessed subsequently	*Metadata can be added to runs and restored from ICAT. The ICAT interface is due to be replaced to make data access easier. IUC to be given a chance to see*	Hannah Griffin	Dec 2019

	the new 'data gateway' and comment before it's rolled out. **New action.**		

3. ISIS Status Update – Robert McGreevy

- Robert outlined the rapid shut-down of ISIS in March 2020 due to Covid, followed by several months of re-establishing working on site and operations under Covid working practices. This resulted in a successful run cycle in Sept-Oct 2020, largely with users remote, but with around 275 successful experiments completed. The current run cycle is progressing well, also still largely with users remote.
- Work on the two big long shutdown projects, TS1 refurbishment and Linac Tank 4 replacement, has continued albeit delayed due to Covid.
- The UK Strategic Neutron Review was updated by an expert panel earlier this year, with confirmation of conclusions from the earlier report and with ISIS as the core of neutron and muon provision for the UK.
- International partners: a new 5-year agreement has just been signed with Sweden; ISIS also has an agreement to provide beamtime for a programme of work funded by the Lazio (Rome) region of Italy; the ISIS-India agreement was extended for 1 year due to the effects of Covid on the programme, and discussions are underway for a new agreement.
- Large, future projects were described: ISIS-2 to conduct a feasibility study with the aim of replacing ISIS on the 10+ year timescale; Endeavour, the portfolio of new instrument builds and large instrument projects; and NSEC, the National Stress Engineering Centre. All three projects are being taken forward within the UKRI Infrastructure process.

There was discussion on the running of complex experiments during Covid working practices – ISIS is running these, but they take longer than normal and we may not be able to run all that are on the books before the long shutdown.

The plan to provide a mechanism to carry experiments across the long shutdown, if PIs wanted, via a light-touch FAP review was discussed. It was noted that it would be good if ISIS allowed PIs to make updates to proposals before they were carried across.

Action: Philip to add proposal update by PI to the carry-forward process.

Communications from ISIS to the user community, particularly with respect to the long shutdown, were discussed. The suggestion of a community newsletter perhaps every 3 months during the shutdown was thought to be appropriate. Putting the cycle / proposal round / shutdown plan onto the web would be appreciated, and announcing proposal rounds as early as possible so that the community can prepare (there wasn't strong feeling as to whether the next round, for TS-2 only, should be April or May 2021 – but as much notice as possible was felt to be important). It was suggested that calendar invites could be sent out for the next proposal deadline (and for a month before this).

Action: Philip to organise long shutdown newsletters; getting the timeline online; fixing the date of the next proposal round.

Action: Andrew to explore calendar invites for the next proposal round.

4. Endeavour Programme user meetings

The Endeavour Programme was further discussed, and in particular the user workshops planned for next year. Whether there should be a single user champion per instrument, or one per instrument per science topic, was discussed, along with clarity over exactly what science would be within each of the broad themes so that users know which meeting(s) to go to.

Action: Sean/Philip to sort out user meeting details and clarity on science areas.

5. User pages on the ISIS website

The user pages on the ISIS website, and a revamp of the structure and content of these, were discussed. In general it was felt that most required information was there (though not always easy to find). The proposed structure seemed appropriate, with a few detailed comments (put the user twinning scheme in the 'before you apply for beamtime' section; create a section specifically for new users in the 'apply for time' section with key links).

Action: Philip to take forward the web page update noting the IUC comments.

It was also noted that the user twinning scheme was not well taken up or very visible, and this could be relaunched; there could be a button within the proposal system to highlight the scheme.

Action: Philip to consider relaunching the user twinning scheme.

It was noted that the ISIS proposal system is in the process of being replaced with a new system, as the current system uses out-of-date technology and is very inflexible. The new system is being produced in collaboration with the ESS. It was suggested that the IUC should see a beta version of the new system for comment.

Action: Hannah bring a beta version of the new proposal system to the IUC when ready.

6. AoB

The issue of recognition of facility time with REF was discussed. Two key points were the correctness of the actual in-kind value figures being used by departments, and then the wider issue of general recognition of the value of facility time to research programmes.

Action: Robert to raise the issue of the overall value and significance of facility time within REF with Mark Thomson.

Action: Andrew to pass figures for Bristol Chemistry to Wuge and figures for QUB Chemistry to Gosia.

7. Date of next meeting

Roughly six months' time, in the same week as the next FAPs.

8. Ongoing and new actions

Action from previous meeting and status	Status	Responsible	Meeting action added
Consider review of archaeometry proposal assessment.	*A small group has been set up to review archaeometry proposal reviewing – this will report back in Spring 2021 in time for the next FAP meetings. We will provide an update at the next IUC meeting.* *Ongoing.*	Philip King	Dec 2018

Philip King to invite Toby Perring, ISIS Scientific Programme Manager, to next IUC to update on software strategy.	*Toby to give an update on the ISIS Scientific Computing Strategy at the next IUC meeting.* **Ongoing.**	Philip King	June 2019
IUC to be given a chance to comment on the 'data gateway' during its development.	**New action.**	Hannah Griffin	Dec 2019
Chance for PIs to update proposals carried forward beyond the long shutdown to be added in	**New action.**	Philip	Dec 2020
Shutdown community newsletters to be produced every 3 months	**New action.**	Philip	Dec 2020
Timeline of proposal calls, cycles, etc, to be put online	**New action.**	Philip	Dec 2020
Users to be informed as soon as possible of the next proposal deadline	**New action**	Philip	Dec 2020
Calendar invites for proposal round deadline and one month before to be sent to users.	**New action**	Andrew	Dec 2020
Clarity on science areas for Endeavour user meetings	**New action**	Sean / Philip	Dec 2020
User web pages on ISIS website to be revamped, taking into account IUC comments.	**New action**	Philip	Dec 2020
Consider relaunching user twinning scheme	**New action**	Philip	Dec 2020
Beta version of new proposal system to come to IUC when ready	**New action**	Hannah	Dec 2020
Issue of significance of facility time in REF to be raised with Mark Thomson	**New action**	Robert	Dec 2020
REF in-kind values to be passed to Wuge for Bristol Chemistry and Gorsia for QUB Chemistry	**New action**	Andrew	Dec 2020