

Champions for Transformational Change towards Sustainable Research Computing

The Champions for Transformational Change towards Sustainable Research Computing will provide leadership across all aspects of technological advance and community transformation. The NetDRIVE project is allocating £805k to fund eight to ten champions to work with the project for 30 months.

Applications will be encouraged from all career stages and appointments will be allocated to ensure balanced support is provided for across the four NetDRIVE themes: galvanising individual action, systematic change, machine room & hardware, green software engineering.

The champions will be responsible for condensing and synthesizing outputs from across the project to formulate timely and actionable advice for UKRI and the academic community. They will work closely with the project core team, as described in the published workplan ([Juckes and Sparrow, 2025](#)), building on outcomes of the [Net Zero DRI Scoping study](#) (Juckes et al., 2023). They will include both technical experts and leaders in community transformation.

The champions will be current and future leaders providing specialist domain knowledge¹. They will build on scoping study outcomes and help set the vision for community activities, working closely with them and the network to formulate and synthesise actionable advice.

The Champions will be appointed through a competitive process via awards to their existing institutions with expected time allocations of around 20% full-time-equivalent.

Champions will be provided with support and mentorship from within the Network, particularly targeting early career champions (see Appendix 1 for more information on career stages) enabling them to develop skills necessary to become future leaders.

There will be drop-in sessions at for questions to the project about both the champions and the network on April 16th and 23rd at 12:00 on [Teams](#), Meeting ID: 352 590 053 033, Passcode: WX2J2pu9

Submissions close May 1st, 2025. There will be an online interview between May 27th and 29th.

TASKS

1) Advice and Guidance

Champions will provide leadership and work collectively with the core NetDRIVE team and UKRI to set the vision and direction for community activities across the NetDRIVE themes and breadth of UKRI activity. Working closely with the community activities to energise, motivate and lead technical review of outputs, and with the network for inspiration and scrutiny, the champions will synthesise and present actionable advice to UKRI and UKRI DRI stakeholders through reports, recommendations and face to face meetings. They will review knowledge translation plans from community projects funded out of the NetDRIVE flexible fund.

2) Outreach, Dissemination and Engagement

Champions will play a critical role in presenting NetDRIVE work to stakeholders and the wider UKRI community through engagement in related networks, projects and institutional activities.

3) Strategic Direction

Contributing to project management and setting strategic direction through participation in the Project Operations Team (POT).

The POT, made up of champions, core team, and nominated representatives from the network, will meet monthly. The POT will also review project risks and review the outputs of community projects.

Assessment of Proposals

Applicants will be assessed on their knowledge and understanding of their selected thematic focus, on their ability to communicate and engage, and on their vision for delivering the objectives. We will be seeking a balance across themes and career stages and will appoint the strongest candidates in each theme and each career stage. After an initial assessment based on the submitted application there will be online interviews in the week starting May 26th (invitations to interview will be sent out in the week starting May 5th).

If a theme or career stage is not adequately covered by the applications received, funds will be held back for a second round of recruitments.

Contract

For academic institutions the award will cover 80% of costs calculated on an FEC basis.

For commercial institutions there will be a negotiation to establish a schedule of deliverables following the approval of an application; total contract value is not expected to exceed £60,000.

Appendix 1: Career Stages

We have identified four career stages by merging categories used in engineering from Test Rigor² and categories used in research and innovation by the European Commission³:

C1: First Stage Researcher (up to the point of PhD), or software engineer (degree and 2-4 years' work experience), or equivalent in other relevant profession.
C2: PhD, or 5 or more years software work experience, or equivalent
C3: Independent researcher, software engineer with management role, or equivalent.
C4: Researcher leading research area or field, or senior management.

These categories are intended to allow us to distinguish between different career stages in a meaningful way without giving undue weighting or disadvantage to specific career paths.

References

Juckes, M., Bane, M., Bulpett, J., Cartmell, K., MacFarlane, M., MacRae, M., Owen, A., Pascoe, C., & Townsend, P. (2023). Sustainability in Digital Research Infrastructure: UKRI Net Zero DRI Scoping Project final technical report. Zenodo.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8199984>

Juckes, M., & Sparrow, S. (2025). Net-Zero Digital Research Infrastructure Vision and Expertise. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14626648>

² <https://testrigor.com/blog/engineering-levels-in-different-companies-compared/>

³ <https://www.more-4.eu/indicator-tool/career-stages-r1-to-r4>