



UK Research  
and Innovation

# Digital Research Infrastructure Retreat 2026

# Programme

Join the conversation and ask questions in Slido

MONDAY



1348232

TUESDAY



1792221

WEDNESDAY



3360075

THURSDAY



4047841

FRIDAY



4113520

## Monday 23rd March INTERCONNECTED DRI

Stop building local empires, start building national bridges

The hidden REF | Interconnected professionals | Effective communication | United federation of DRI

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## Tuesday 24th March HUMAN DRI: Building Careers

You are not 'support staff', you are infrastructure

Rethinking career progression in DRI | Mentorship models and impact | Practical leadership development without formal programmes | Culture, inclusivity, and strategic focus | Leadership vs management - finding your fit

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## Wednesday 25th March FAIR DRI - Data is Everything

Funding, policy, and sustainability | Data integrity, accessibility, and governance | Data storage, culture, and future risks | Data management risks. lessons learned, and cultural change

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## Thursday 26th March SUSTAINABLE DRI - FUTURE-PROOFING

"If it's not green, it won't get funded."

Lifecycle management and shared infrastructure | Policy, governance, and accountability | Ethical and sustainable partnerships with funders and industry | Answering funding calls exercise

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## Friday 27th March SOVEREIGN DRI

Skills to work in a GenAI world

"Cautionary tales" - nuancing of sovereign AI from basics and what it means for research | Responsible AI in research - governance and integrity | GenAI Competency/Skills matrix and gap analysis | Tales from the trenches



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# Monday 23rd March

## INTERCONNECTED DRI

Stop building local empires, start building national bridges

*“We aim to break down silos and promote collaboration within the DRI landscape by creating a more interconnected, open, inclusive, and user-friendly infrastructure. This involves fostering community engagement, promoting the creation of federated infrastructure, and ensuring that DRI funding addresses the technical challenges of operating across disciplines.”*

- UKRI

### 09:45 - 10:30 REGISTRATION

Refreshments available

### 10:30 - 10:45 WELCOME

Alan Real & Stewart Clark, Durham University

### 10:45 - 11:30 The Hidden REF

Panel

**Goal:** Build awareness of the importance of DRI professionals within the wider academic community

**Chair:** Samantha Ahern, University College London

**Panellists:** Bill Ayres (University of Manchester), Christine Stawitz (University of Birmingham), Holly Ranger (University of Sheffield), Louise Saul (University of Southampton), Roberto Villegas-Diaz (University of Liverpool)

11:30 - 12:00 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 12:00 - 13:00 Interconnected Professionals

Round-table

**Goal:** Explore the role of professional societies or special interest groups in building a profession

**Facilitators:** Ric Campbell, University of Sheffield

**Online facilitator:** Sam Bland, University of York

13:00 - 14:00 LUNCH

### 14:00 - 15:00 Effective communication

Round-table

**Goal:** Understanding communication hurdles between DRI professionals and researchers and how to break the silo mentality

**Facilitator:** Jools Kasmire, University of Manchester

**Online facilitator:** Sam Bland, University of York

15:00 - 15:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 15:30 - 16:15 United Federation of DRI

Panel

**Goal:** Build awareness of federation activities - what works and where are the current gaps.

**Chair:** Santiago Molina, ESRC

**Panellists:** Caterina Doglioni (University of Manchester), Hayley Mills (University College London), Heather Kelly (University College London), **ONLINE** Justin Clark-Casey (BioFAIR), Stewart Clark (Durham University)



# Tuesday 24th March

1792221

## HUMAN DRI

Building Careers: You are not 'support staff', you are infrastructure

*“We understand that DRI starts with the people who build, maintain, and upgrade it. By recognising their crucial role within DRI, promoting their careers, and supporting their professional development, we aim to foster a supportive culture and ensure a skilled and diverse DRI workforce.”*

- UKRI

### 09:30 - 10:15 Rethinking Career Progression in DRI

Panel  
**Goal:** Explore how career pathways can recognise technical expertise and non-traditional pathways to employment and promotion.

**Chair:** Jeremy Cohen, Imperial College London

**Panellists:** Isabella von Holstein (Imperial College London), Jools Kasmire (University of Manchester), Juan Wang (University of York), Nik Ogryzko (UKRI), Phil Reed (University of Manchester), Roberto Villegas-Diaz (University of Liverpool)

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10:15 - 10:45 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 10:45 - 11:30 Mentorship Models and Impact

Panel  
**Goal:** Define effective mentorship practices and explore innovative models

**Chair:** Sam Bland, University of York

**Panellists:** Chris Jewell (Lancaster University), James Byrne (University of Exeter), Oscar Seip (University of Manchester), Sam Haynes (Quadram Institute Biosciences), Sam Finnigan (Durham University), Sara Villa (OLS/The Turing Way)

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11:30 - 12:00 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 12:00 - 13:00 Practical leadership development without formal programmes

Round-table  
**Goal:** Explore ways to build leadership skills through projects and informal opportunities.

**Facilitator:** Diego Alonso Alvarez, Imperial College London

**Online Facilitator:** Alan Real, Durham University

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13:00 - 14:00 LUNCH

### 14:00 - 15:00 Culture, Inclusivity, and Strategic Focus

Round-table  
**Goal:** Strategic thinking and strategies that foster inclusive cultures.

**Facilitator:** Anita Banerji, University of Manchester

**Online Facilitator:** Ric Campbell, University of Sheffield

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15:00 - 15:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 15:30 - 16:15 Leadership vs Management – Finding Your Fit

Panel  
**Goal:** Help understand the difference between leadership and management to assess your potential.

**Chair:** Skylar Wan, University of Leeds

**Panellists:** Diego Alonso Alvarez (Imperial College London), Liyuan Zhu (Newcastle University), Martin Turner (University of Manchester), Samantha Ahern (University College London), Sara Villa (OLS/The Turing Way), Sarah Byrne (STFC)



# Wednesday 25th March

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## FAIR DRI Data is everything

*“We will ensure that research infrastructure is easily accessible, interoperable, and reusable by driving adoption of the FAIR (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reusability) principles. This enhances research efficiency and fosters a more collaborative research environment.”*

- UKRI

### 09:45 - 10:30 Funding, Policy, and Sustainability

Panel

**Goal:** Address financial and policy challenges in long-term data stewardship.

**Chair:** Jeremy Cohen, Imperial College London

**Panellists:** Caterina Doglioni (University of Manchester), Emma Barnes (University of York), Holly Ranger (University of Sheffield), Louise Saul (University of Southampton), Paul Richards (UKRI), Skylar Wan (University of Leeds)

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10:30 - 11:00 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 11:00 - 11:45 Data Integrity, Accessibility, and Governance

Panel

**Goal:** Ensure long-term usability and accountability for research data.

**Chair:** Stephen Longshaw, UKRI-STFC

**Panellists:** Michael Bearpark (Imperial College London), Santiago Molina (ESRC), Simon Burbidge (DiRAC), Stephen Fox (University of Glasgow), **ONLINE** Tristan Martin (University of Manchester)

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11:45 - 12:15 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 12:15 - 13:00 Data storage, culture, and future risks

Panel

**Goal:** Tackle cultural awareness and long-term sustainability challenges.

**Chair:** Ric Campbell, University of Sheffield

**Panellists:** Bill Ayres (University of Manchester), Emma Barnes (University of York), Neil Dullaway (Lancaster University), Robert Andrews (Cardiff University), Roberto Villegas-Diaz (University of Liverpool)

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13:00 - 14:00 LUNCH

### 14:00 - 15:00 Data Management Risks, Lessons Learned, and Cultural Change

Round-table

**Goal:** Learn from failures and build a culture of proactive data management and transform DMPs from a compliance exercise into a practical tool.

**Facilitator:** Bill Ayres, University of Manchester

**Online Facilitator:** Sam Bland, University of York

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15:00 - 15:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 15:30 Take a break activities



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# Thursday 26th March

## SUSTAINABLE DRI

Proofing the Future: "If it's not green, it won't get funded"

*"We focus on ensuring the long-term health of DRI by addressing efficiency, security, environmental, and financial challenges to create a sustainable DRI ecosystem."*

- UKRI

### 09:30 - 10:15 Lifecycle Management and Shared Infrastructure

Panel

**Goal:** Address sustainability in the hardware lifecycle and collaborative facilities.

**Chair:** Martin Turner, University of Manchester

**Panellists:** **ONLINE** Andrew Turner (University of Edinburgh), Dave Love (University of Manchester), Heather Kelly (University College London), James Byrne (University of Exeter), Sam Haynes (Quadram Institute Biosciences), Simon Burbidge (DiRAC)

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10:15 - 10:45 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 10:45 - 11:30 Policy, Governance, and Accountability

Panel

**Goal:** Define governance frameworks and accountability for environmental impact.

**Chair:** Matt Probert, University of York

**Panellists:** Alex Owen (Queen Mary University of London), Ben Yarnall (UKRI), Michael Bearpark (Imperial College London), Santiago Molina (ESRC), **ONLINE** Stephanie Thompson (University of Birmingham)

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11:30 - 12:00 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 12:00 - 13:00 Ethical and Sustainable Industry Partnerships

Panel

**Goal:** Define principles for partnerships that align with societal and sustainability goals.

**Chair:** Bharti Gupta (University of Manchester)

**Panellists:** Ben Yarnall (UKRI), Emily Collins (University of Manchester), Emma Barnes (University of York), Oscar Seip (University of Manchester)

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13:00 - 14:00 LUNCH

### 14:00 - 15:00 Answering funding calls exercise

Round-table

**Facilitator:** Alan Real, Durham University

**Online Facilitators:** Stewart Clark, Durham University & Polly Eccleston, Bristol University

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15:00 - 15:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

### 15:30 - 16:15 Answering funding calls exercise

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**Facilitator:** Alan Real, Durham University

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# Friday 27th March

## SOVEREIGN AI

### Skills to work in a GenAI world

*“Artificial Intelligence (AI) capabilities are developing at an extraordinary pace. In an AI-enabled world, it matters who influences and builds the models, data, and AI infrastructure that are increasingly present in our lives.”*

*- UK Govt DSIT*

#### **09:30 - 10:15 "Cautionary tales" - nuancing of sovereign AI from basics and what it means for research**

Panel

**Goal:** Explore how career pathways can recognise technical expertise and non-traditional pathways to employment and promotion.

**Chair:** Martin Callaghan, Open University

**Panellists:** Iain Stenson (The Alan Turing Institute), Liyuan Zhu (Newcastle University), Tony Burdett (BioFAIR)

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10:15 - 10:45 REFRESHMENT BREAK

#### **10:45 - 11:30 Responsible AI in Research – Governance and Integrity**

Panel

**Goal:** Define effective mentorship practices and explore innovative models

**Chair:** Chris Jewell, Lancaster University

**Panellists:** Bharti Gupta (University of Manchester), Caterina Doglioni (University of Manchester), David Socol de la Osa (University of Oxford), Jiguang Li (Northumbria University)

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11:30 - 12:00 REFRESHMENT BREAK

#### **12:00 - 13:00 GenAI Competency/Skills matrix and gap analysis**

Round-table

**Facilitator:** Martin Callaghan, Open University

**Online Facilitator:** Matt Probert, University of York

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13:00 - 14:00 LUNCH

#### **14:00 - 15:00 Tales from the trenches, wrapping up and beyond...**

Round-table

**Chairs:** Alan Real (Durham University) & Martin Callaghan (Open University)

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15:00 - 15:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

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**15:30 END OF MEETING**

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