

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

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

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

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

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



1348232

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)

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)

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

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

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)

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)

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)

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

15:00 - 15:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

15:30 Take a break activities



4047841

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)

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)

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)

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

15:00 - 15:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

15:30 - 16:15 Answering funding calls exercise

Round-table

Facilitator: Alan Real, Durham University

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SEE WEBPAGE FOR FUNDING CALL EXAMPLES: <https://n8cir.org.uk/training-and-events/dri-retreat-2026/thursday/>



4113520

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: Guilherme Fians (University of Manchester), Iain Stenson (The Alan Turing Institute), Liyuan Zhu (Newcastle University), Stewart Clark (Durham University), Tony Burdett (BioFAIR)

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)

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

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)

15:00 - 15:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

15:30 END OF MEETING