

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Tue, 21 Oct 2025 at 20:35
Subject: Environmental Information Regulations request - EIR Request, Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty
To: EIR requests at ARIA <info@aria.org.uk>

Dear Advanced Research and Invention Agency,

Please provide information demonstrating your compliance with your Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

Please use this email address for all replies to this request:

[REDACTED]

Is info@aria.org.uk the wrong address for Environmental Information Regulations requests to Advanced Research and Invention Agency? If so, please contact us using this form:
https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/change_request/new?body=aria

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<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/officers>

For more detailed guidance on safely disclosing information, read the latest advice from the ICO:

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/ico-guidance-for-authorities>

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/ico-anonymisation-code>

Please note that in some cases publication of requests and responses will be delayed.

If you find this service useful as an FOI officer, please ask your web manager to link to us from your organisation's FOI page.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

18 November 2025

Dear [REDACTED],

Environmental Information Regulations 2004 ("EIR") Request

We are writing in response to your recent request for information to the Advanced Research + Invention Agency ("**ARIA**") dated 21 October 2025 in which you asked:

"Please provide information demonstrating your compliance with your Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty."

Response to EIR request

We enclose ARIA's Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 (see **Annex 1**). Please refer to page 21 which includes a Sustainability Report outlining the organisation's commitment to integrating sustainable practices into its operations and which includes information relevant to your request. ARIA continues to evaluate ways to minimise its environmental impact in accordance with the Greening Government Commitments and contribute to the UK's net zero objectives. ARIA has no landholdings and no independent estate. All of our office occupation in 2024/25 was within multi-occupied estates offices. We do not have a biodiversity action plan given this context.

Yours sincerely,

ARIA

You can ask us to review our response. If you want us to carry out a review, please let us know within 40 working days by emailing eir@aria.org.uk.

If you are still dissatisfied after our internal review, you may complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for further investigation who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Annex 1: ARIA's Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25

Annual Report + Accounts

2024–25

Advanced Research and Invention Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2024–25

for the year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

Presented to Parliament pursuant to paragraphs 14(5) and 15(4) of Schedule 1 to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 10 July 2025.

OGL

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This publication is available at www.gov.uk/official-documents.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at info@aria.org.uk.

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Introduction

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Chair's letter



“It’s a privilege to introduce ARIA’s second Annual Report and Accounts.”

I’ve always said that ARIA is the closest thing to a startup in the public sector. When I think about how I’d usually evaluate a startup hitting its second birthday — especially one with ambitions as bold and horizons as long as ARIA’s — my mind turns to two questions. First, has the organisation managed to achieve a critical mass of exceptional talent? And, second, are we starting to see the green shoots of impact, however nascent?

When I look at ARIA today, the answer to both questions is a resounding yes.

It’s been an outstanding year for building ARIA’s team. We recruited a second cohort of Programme Directors, who I know will bring an extraordinary vitality and creativity to ARIA’s next phase of work. Alongside them, we welcomed 18 new members to the ARIA team since our last report and I am constantly impressed by their ability, pace and dedication.

We were also fortunate to add three world-class Non-Executive Directors to our Board — Strive Masiyiwa, Nick McKeown, and Max Jaderberg — who bring

exceptional experience of championing and commercialising innovation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Sir Patrick Vallance and Sir Dave McMillan, our two departing Non-Executive Directors, who stepped down this year after making foundational contributions to ARIA’s early development.

The second critical measure of success for ARIA is impact. This year marked the transition from setup mode to delivery, demonstrated by the launch of our first seven programmes, which are now actively funding pioneering research across synthetic plants, precision neurotech, and beyond. These are deliberately high-risk pursuits, but their potential upside is enormous. If successful, they will not only generate scientific breakthroughs, but create entirely new markets and industries that transform the UK and the world.

Central to our impact strategy is our selection of Activation Partners — organisations working within our opportunity spaces to give them the best shot of maximum impact. We’ve always said that the path to scale for ARIA programmes lies not in public sector procurement, but scientific entrepreneurship. Our Activation Partners play an essential role in bringing this to life, by providing the expertise, networks, and entrepreneurial pathways to bring breakthroughs from the lab into real-world applications.

The inaugural ARIA Summit held in May 2025, brought this vision to life. It was a wonderful opportunity to showcase publicly the community, ambition and creativity that’s at the heart of what we do.

ARIA is an enormous group effort. The Board and I want to thank Ilan and the team for everything they’re doing to make it a success — and to acknowledge the support and contributions of the wider R&D ecosystem across the country. Together, we are laying the foundations for scientific and technological breakthroughs that can power new industries, strengthen the UK’s future competitiveness, and deliver lasting public value.

Matt Clifford CBE
Chair

Chief Executive's Statement



“We founded ARIA on the belief that the UK has the talent, expertise, institutions, and networks to turn this mission into reality. Though we’re working on decadal timescales, early signs suggest that belief was well placed.”

ARIA enters its third year with the same ambition that we began with — to unlock scientific and technological breakthroughs that transform industries, lives, and communities across the UK and beyond.

Parliament created ARIA with a belief that the UK’s scientific talent, institutions, and entrepreneurial drive can translate that mission into reality. Seeing the incredible community that’s grown to support our mission this year, we can confidently say that belief holds true.

A year ago, our Programme Directors (PDs) defined ARIA’s first opportunity spaces — areas where scientific breakthroughs can catalyse a step change in economic growth and social prosperity. Today, we are funding nearly 200 R&D Creator teams to redefine what’s possible in areas ranging from synthetic biology to AI, robotics, and climate. The consequences of success in any one of these spaces are profound.

Our scalable neurotech teams are developing new tools to treat neurological and psychiatric disorders that affect hundreds of millions of people worldwide, including the first clinical trial of the world’s most cutting-edge braincomputer interfaces with NHS patients. Our programmable plants teams are applying cutting-edge synthetic biology to engineer new traits in plants, from drought resistance to novel material production — a generational opportunity to transform global agriculture from the ground up. And the list goes on.

All told, our initial programmes have made more than £400m in funding available to the UK’s R&D ecosystem over the next three to five years. In line with our mandate, this funding is supporting researchers in entirely new ways that amplify the strengths of UKRI and our partners across the ecosystem. But to succeed, the researchers we fund will have to achieve more than scientific breakthroughs. They’ll need those breakthroughs to spark valuable new capabilities, markets, and industries. To help with that, we launched Activation Partners — a coalition of nine pioneering organisations across science entrepreneurship, investment, and ecosystem building — to ensure that when ARIA research breakthroughs emerge, they turn into real impact. This initiative, and our broader focus on science entrepreneurship, are already bearing fruit. Our funding has already catalysed the creation of eight new UK startups and seven new UK subsidiaries of global firms.

Of course, when working at the edge of the possible, nothing is guaranteed from the start. Our job is to create the conditions where the boldest ideas can find their footing, then learn from the dead ends and move with conviction toward the paths that show promise. Fulfilling our mandate depends on high ambitions, and on a robust portfolio from which the world-changing outcomes can emerge. That in mind, we are thrilled to introduce ARIA’s second cohort of Programme Directors — eight entrepreneurial researchers from diverse backgrounds who believe the UK is the best place in the world to realise their visions for the future. They are already activating key parts of the research community that ARIA has not yet engaged, and whose bold ambitions we will need to succeed.

Onwards.

Ilan Gur
CEO

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About ARIA

This is ARIA's second Annual Report and Accounts and covers the year to 31 March 2025.

ARIA was officially launched by the UK Government in January 2023 under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022 (the ARIA Act 2022) as a new research and development (R&D) funding agency with an ambitious risk appetite. ARIA is an independent non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and with an initial allocation of approximately £800m.

Mission

ARIA's mission is to unlock scientific and technological breakthroughs that benefit everyone. Our success will be measured by the lives, industries and communities transformed by ARIA's work.

[↗](#) For further information regarding ARIA — please see our [Corporate Plan](#).

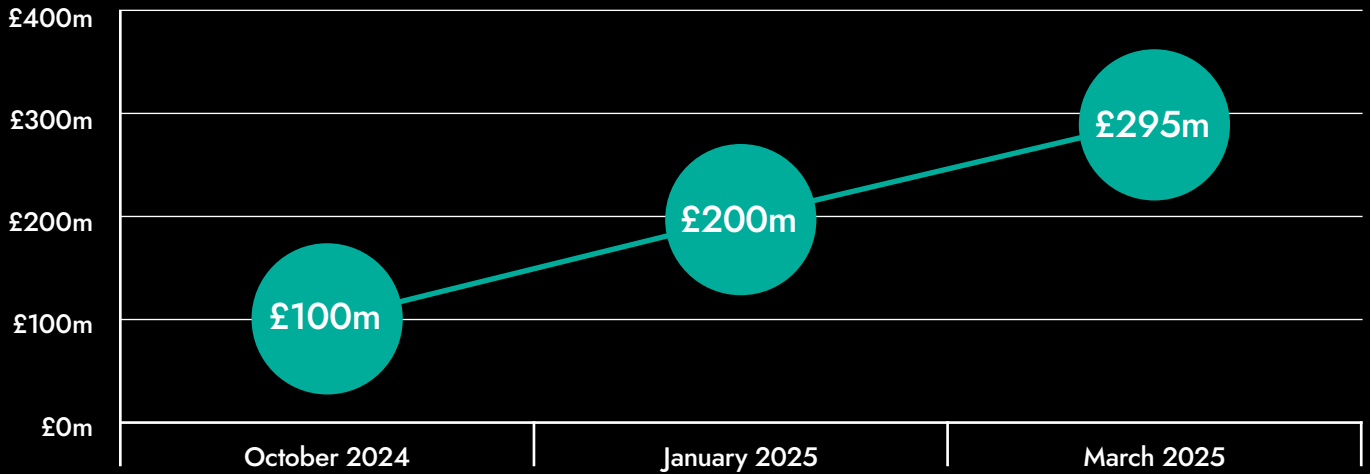
Transformative new technologies are essential to accelerating economic growth. Bold, speculative R&D has been proven to be the most effective way to achieve this. DARPA, which inspired ARIA, is a prime example. The innovations it has catalysed — such as the internet, mRNA vaccines, personal computing, and GPS — have driven non-linear growth for the US economy and made a profound, positive impact on society.

To achieve a comparable impact on the UK economy, ARIA is developing a robust portfolio of opportunity spaces. With the independence and flexibility to strategically manage a strong research portfolio — doubling down on the highest potential spaces and exiting the less promising ones — ARIA is helping reposition the UK as a global leader by enabling research breakthroughs that can power world-leading companies and frontier industries.



ARIA also funds Activation Partners, external organisations that are embedding science entrepreneurship across our work by supporting new ventures, empowering talent, and accelerating research-to-impact efforts. They are tasked with building and delivering a range of initiatives across the UK from building dedicated scientist training programmes to developing new prototype inventions emerging from ARIA's opportunity spaces. This partnership model enhances ARIA's ability to drive innovation and supports the broader UK R&D ecosystem.

Highlights

Research and development funding agreements signed



Key milestones in the year to 31 March 2025

<p>MARCH 2024 First programme funding solicitation launched</p>	<p>JULY 2024 First programme projects begin</p>	<p>JANUARY 2025 Second cohort of Programme Directors selected</p> 
<p>MAY 2024 First seed projects begin</p>		
		<p>OCTOBER 2024 Nine Activation Partners announced to spur science entrepreneurship</p>

The Board

ARIA's Board (the Board) oversees performance and supports the Executive Team in effective decision making and strategic direction. The Board is also responsible for monitoring and supporting the optimisation of risk within ARIA to ensure it pursues ambitious research, development and exploitation with a high tolerance to failure, while maintaining effective governance, risk management and internal controls.

Our Board comprises the Chair, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Non-Executive Board members, an Independent member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, as well as four Executive Team members.

As of April 2025, we welcome three new Non-Executive Board members, Strive Masiyiwa, Nick McKeown, and Max Jaderberg.



Matt Clifford
Chair
Co-Founder, Entrepreneur First and Prime Minister's Adviser on AI Opportunities



Dame Angela McLean
Non-Executive Director
Government Chief Scientific Adviser
Commissioner and Head of the Government Science and Engineering Profession



Stephen Cohen
Non-Executive Director
UK Civil Service Commissioner and Chair of JPMorgan Japanese Investment Trust plc



Sarah Hunter
Non-Executive Director
Technology and public policy advisor



Dame Kate Bingham
Non-Executive Director
Venture Capitalist and former Chair of the Vaccine Taskforce



Sue Hunt
Independent member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee*
Chartered Accountant and Vice Chair of The Connected Places Catapult

* ARIA is able to appoint independent members to its Board sub-committees under the ARIA Act 2022.

Appointed 1 April 2025



Strive Masiyiwa
Non-Executive Director
Global telecoms and technology entrepreneur, investor and philanthropist



Nick McKeown
Non-Executive Director
Professor Emeritus, Stanford and Senior Fellow, Intel



Max Jaderberg
Non-Executive Director
Chief AI Officer, Isomorphic Labs (Alphabet)

Departures



Sir Patrick Vallance
Non-Executive Director
Former Government Chief Scientific Adviser
Patrick Vallance resigned from the Board on 16 July 2024 in order to take up the position of Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation.



Sir David MacMillan
Non-Executive Director
Nobel laureate and organic chemist
David MacMillan resigned from the Board on 5 March 2025.

The Executive Team

The Executive Team provides a blend of startup, non-profit and public sector experience. Our Chief Executive (and Accounting Officer) previously served as a founding Programme Director at the United States' Advanced Research Projects Agency—Energy (ARPA-E), an organisation which, alongside its sister agency the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), originally inspired ARIA's creation.

The team totals 53 staff as at 31 March 2025 (see page 40 of the Staff Report for further detail), as well as working closely with outsourced operating partners to enable rapid scaling. Further details can be found in the People and culture section and Staff Report.

**Ilan Gur**

Chief Executive and
Accounting Officer

Ilan founded Activate.org, an organisation that empowers scientists and engineers to bring ground-breaking research to market. Prior to this, Ilan built two science-based startups and served as a founding Programme Director at ARPA-E.

**Pippy James**

Chief Product Officer

Pippy was previously founder and CEO of a women's health startup. She was also Global Product Manager at Entrepreneur First, which supports the creation of technology companies internationally.

**Antonia Jenkinson**

Chief Finance and Operating Officer

Antonia was previously CFO of the UK Atomic Energy Authority. Prior to this, she was CFO/COO in various private sector organisations after a career in corporate finance and private equity with Apax Partners/Altium Capital.

**Dan Cole**

Chief of Staff

Dan served as COO at UK healthtech startup Accurx, which supported the care of over 50m NHS patients. Prior to this, Dan worked in strategy consulting focusing on sustainability.

External advisors

Our network of advisors is composed of individuals who have pushed the limits of the possible across a range of disciplines and sectors. Their expertise, insights and connections are an invaluable resource for our teams.



Artur Ekert
Professional Fellow, Quantum
Physics and Cryptography,
University of Oxford



Arun Majumdar
Founding Director, ARPA-E
and Dean, Stanford Doerr School
of Sustainability



Sir Demis Hassabis
Founder and CEO, DeepMind



Hayaatun Sillem
CEO, Royal Academy of Engineering



Katie Rae
CEO and Managing Partner,
The Engine



Özlem Türeci
Co-founder and Chief Medical
Officer, BioNTech



Patrick Collison
Co-founder and CEO,
Stripe

Performance analysis

This report outlines our performance against our priorities for the year to 31 March 2025. We have not reported on performance trends given the absence of historic comparative data.

Performance against 2024–25 strategic objectives

1. Launch first programmes across our opportunity spaces

In 2024–25, all seven of ARIA’s inaugural research programmes went out to open tender, alongside multiple seed funding calls. While we initially targeted six programmes in delivery by December, we adapted timelines based on early lessons from our tendering process. By year-end, three programmes were underway, and we focused on securing funding commitments — ultimately exceeding our £208m target, with £219m under contract. We also launched core reporting systems across our programme, seed, and activation funding streams, and surpassed internal targets for both team satisfaction and Creator experience.

2. Integrate science entrepreneurship across everything we do

We met or exceeded all targets under this pillar, embedding science entrepreneurship into ARIA’s core. By September, activation partners were fully contracted; 75% of our new Programme Directors brought substantial startup or industry experience (vs. a 50% target); and over 30% of shortlisted R&D applicants came from startups or industry.

3. Establish a strong and inclusive working culture aligned with our values

We made strategic decisions to maximise near-term impact and focus Programme Director capacity. Postponing the inaugural ARIA Summit to May 2025 allowed us to prioritise finalising programme contracts and relaunching our website. The new platform now supports multiple funding streams and calls, expanding our reach and improving engagement across the Creator community.

ARIA supports the government’s mission to fuel economic growth by driving innovation, investment, and technology adoption in the future economy. In its first two years, ARIA has approved seven programmes, amounting to £471m of which, £219m of funding agreements were awarded and contracted in the year. In addition, 27 seed agreements (£15m) and nine Activation Partners (£61m) were awarded and contracted. The second cohort of PDs will launch programmes from autumn 2025, with spending commencing in 2026.

The achievements so far from ARIA’s entrepreneurship-focused translation strategy provide strong early indicators of the potential impact of expanding its portfolio of opportunity spaces.

First, ARIA’s R&D calls are attracting startups and industry, with over 40% of funding allocated to companies — including 15% that catalysed the formation of new UK-based organisations.

Secondly, ARIA is amplifying the strengths of the UK ecosystem, funding projects in almost every region, and working closely with the UK’s science base. Examples include catalysing a new AI research startup in Glasgow; collaborating with UKRI’s NERC and NPL; and, supporting a first-in-world NHS clinical trial.

Thirdly, our Activation Partners initiative has already compelled top-tier private sector engagement, prompting at least five US organisations, including two of the world’s top deep tech VC funds, to bring their expertise in science entrepreneurship to the UK.

ARIA was established later than anticipated, which delayed the commencement of spending. As a result, the funding plan deviates from the original business case and will be reviewed in future spending reviews.

Performance analysis continued

Financial review

During ARIA's second full year in operation, spend increased from £7.9m for the preceding 12 months to £30.7m. Of this, £16.5m related to research funding. The total value of research and development funding agreements signed as at 31 March 2025 was £295m.

ARIA's financial target applies to Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) budget lines — capital (CDEL) and resource (RDEL). ARIA is required to advise DSIT of its total forecast expenditure for the year and, in line with the requirements from HM Treasury, to adhere as closely as possible to this financial target.

The table below details the DEL financial target and final outturn, along with the variance between the two.

1 April 2024–31 March 2025

	Financial target £000s	Outturn £000s	Variance £000s
CDEL	27,500	30,669	(3,169)
RDEL	85	56	29
Total	27,585	30,725	(3,140)

Research and development expenditure comprised £16.5m (54%) of total expenditure, a proportion that is expected to grow as ARIA's portfolio of opportunity spaces scale. Staff costs of £6.4m and other operating expenditure of £7.7m comprised the remainder, alongside a minimal amount for depreciation and loss on disposal.

The summary risks are outlined in the Governance Statement.

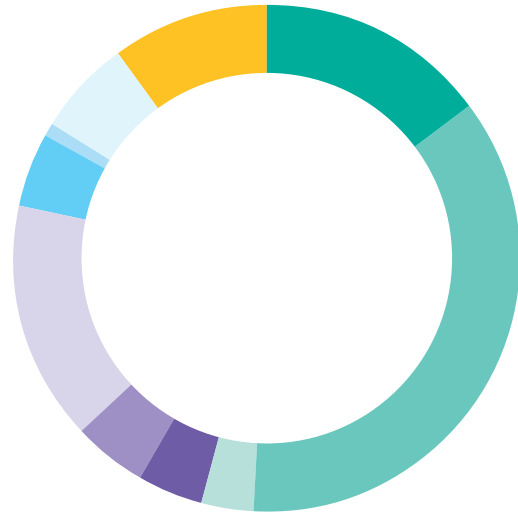
Where we operate

Our staff are predominantly based in a shared London office facility, with a smaller space in Cambridge.

ARIA's first cohort of PDs are from a range of research areas, geographies and sectors. The second cohort of PDs, technical leaders with hands-on experience in translating ideas into real-world impact, have been recruited after a global campaign and joined ARIA on 1 April 2025 to begin developing their programmes.

Where and who we funded by value

During the year, ARIA funded projects in almost every region, amplifying the strengths of the UK ecosystem by collaborating with, and funding, a range of research institutions, academia, and industry partners.

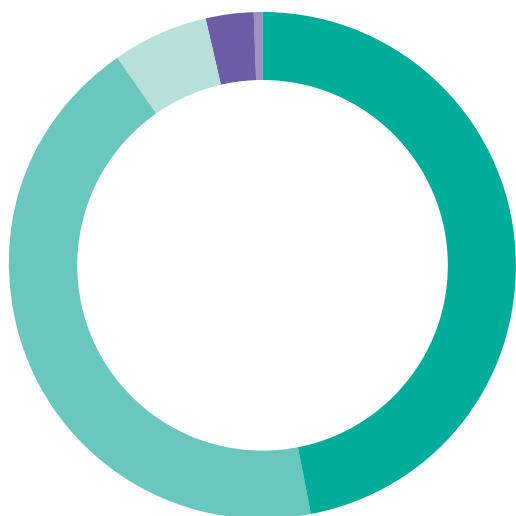


East of England	14.9%
London	36.0%
North East	3.3%
North West	4.2%
Scotland	4.8%
South East	15.2%
South West	4.7%
West Midlands	0.8%
Yorkshire and the Humber	6.2%
Non-UK*	9.9%

* Non-UK countries comprises of the US, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Greenland, Italy, and the Netherlands.

Performance analysis continued

Where and who we funded by value continued



University	47.0%
Company*	43.4%
Not for profit	6.1%
Public sector organisation	3.1%
Individual	0.4%

* Of the funding awarded to companies, 65.5% was to SMEs.

Going concern

In line with HM Treasury’s Financial Reporting Guidance, the information presented in these Financial Statements is based on the assumption that ARIA will continue to operate in the future, with no changes to our role or through legislation currently expected.

In common with other non-departmental public bodies across government, ARIA’s future funding is to be met by Grant in Aid from its sponsoring department, DSIT. Approval of Grant in Aid for 2025/26 has already been allocated. Based on this information, it has therefore been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of these Financial Statements.

Our opportunity spaces

ARIA’s first set of PDs, with their associated programmes, are listed below within the relevant opportunity spaces.



Scalable Neural Interfaces

Neurological and neuropsychiatric disorders have overwhelming societal and economic impacts. We need to build highly targeted, minimally invasive technologies that enable us to interface, at scale, with the human brain.

Programme Director **Jacques Carolan** leads the **Precision Neurotechnologies** programme, which aims to achieve breakthroughs in treating brain disorders where deep brain stimulation has shown promise. Projects funded so far include supporting a first-in-world NHS clinical trial.



Jacques Carolan



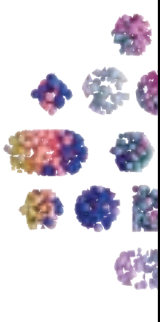
Programmable Plants

Plants enable human life and offer solutions to key challenges like food insecurity, climate change, and environmental degradation. Programmable plants can secure our future, ensuring food and a sustainable biosphere for future generations.

Programme Director **Angie Burnett** leads the **Synthetic Plants** programme, which aims to develop synthetic chromosomes and chloroplasts that are viable in a living plant. This will move beyond what can be accomplished with gene editing, and imbue plants with new functionalities, from reducing agricultural water use to protecting crop yields in uncertain conditions.



Angie Burnett



Mathematics for Safe AI

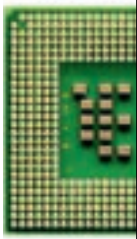
We don’t yet have known technical solutions to ensure that powerful AI systems interact as intended with real-world systems and populations. A combination of scientific world models and mathematical proofs may be the answer to ensuring AI provides transformational benefit without harm.

Programme Director **Davidad Dalrymple** leads the **Safeguarded AI** programme, which combines scientific world models and mathematical proofs to construct a ‘gatekeeper’ AI system tasked with understanding, and reducing, the risks of other AI agents. This would lay the foundations for AI automation over the next 10–30 years resulting in the potential for enormous GDP growth.



David ‘davidad’ Dalrymple

Our opportunity spaces continued



Nature Computes Better

We can redefine the way computers process information by exploiting principles found ubiquitously in nature. In doing so, we can better understand how the natural world around us performs computation and build dramatically more efficient computers.

Programme Director **Suraj Bramhavar** leads the **Scaling Compute** programme, which aims to redefine the way computer hardware processes information. One of its key objectives is to seed the creation of a new branch of the semiconductor industry, with key players anchored in the UK.



Suraj Bramhavar



Scoping Our Planet

Current earth system measurements have serious gaps that lead to uncertainties in weather forecasting and climate predictions. By harnessing the power of optics we can fill these gaps, equipping society to respond confidently to the climate crisis.

Programme Directors **Gemma Bale** and **Sarah Bohndiek** co-lead the **Forecasting Tipping Points** programme to develop a proof of concept for an early warning system to detect climate tipping points. Such a system could provide significant benefits by guiding infrastructure investments or enabling interventions to protect at-risk regions.



Gemma Bale and Sarah Bohndiek



Smarter Robot Bodies

Throughout history, humans have used tools and machines to reduce the burden of physical labour. We are entering a new era with robots smart enough to act independently in complex and dynamic environments. But to reap the benefits of smarter machines, we need smarter bodies.

Within this space, **Jenny Read** leads the **Robot Dexterity** programme. By advancing robot dexterity, this programme seeks to position the UK as a leader in robot technology and manufacturing. Enhanced robot dexterity would also unlock new potential across existing industries, including the medical, nuclear, and space sectors.



Jenny Read



Future Proofing Our Climate and Weather

If an abrupt alteration in a climate system were to unfold, we would have no tools to mitigate the effects. This research will drive understanding of how we might intervene to responsibly manage the climate and weather.

Programme Director **Mark Symes** leads the **Exploring Climate Cooling** programme, which investigates whether approaches designed to delay or avert climate tipping points could be feasible, scalable, and safe. Importantly, the global cost of tipping points, if incurred, may run into the tens of trillions of dollars.



Mark Symes

Activation Partners

Commercialisation is a critical challenge in unlocking the impact of the UK's R&D system. Our programmes are designed to not only have the potential for breakthroughs, but are set up to translate those into transformative economics and social value for the UK.

To meet this challenge, we've created nine activation partnerships to support our teams to move beyond the lab and into the world by designing for scale from inception. Some of our partners are already established players in the UK, while others are setting up operations here for the first time. Together, they will help embed science entrepreneurship across our work, creating new scientific talent pipelines, nucleating new communities, fostering novel IP, and facilitating more investments within the UK R&D ecosystem.

The networks that Activation Partners help build and grow are already creating impact across the UK. Our partners 50 Years, CIC Venture Cafe, and Pillar VC are establishing UK entities for the first time, bringing global expertise and investment into the heart of the UK's R&D ecosystem. We're also working to co-create, launch, and scale new innovations; ARIA's partnership with Cambridge University Health Partners (CUHP) is bringing together scientists, clinicians, and entrepreneurs to translate speculative scientific breakthroughs in neurotechnology into practical applications.



Amodo Design is a Sheffield-based engineering team working alongside ARIA to develop new scientific equipment for research and prototype inventions from our opportunity spaces, speeding up the journey from discovery to product, enhancing early-stage traction.



Cambridge University Health Partners is bringing together leaders from science, health, and business organisations. Together, this consortium — Cambridge NeuroWorks — will support ARIA's Scalable Neural Interfaces opportunity space. Working with ARIA, CUHP will launch programmes designed to accelerate innovation in neurotechnology by enabling scientists, clinicians, and entrepreneurs to collaborate and translate speculative science into practical applications at scale, while fostering a vibrant UK-wide neurotech community.



Convergent Research is identifying and developing proposals for 1–2 Focused Research Organisations (FROs) in ARIA's opportunity spaces. FROs are a new scientific institutional model designed to make fast progress by using team science and systems engineering to tackle research bottlenecks.

Activation Partners continued



Venture Café Global Institute is bringing their global innovation community to the UK in partnership with ARIA. Our UK hubs will energise and connect the nation's technology ecosystem, bringing together innovators, entrepreneurs, and small businesses through free, high-impact weekly gatherings and programming. Venture Café London will be joined by two additional UK cities creating a powerful network that opens new opportunities for collaboration between the UK's top tech talent and the wider world. Venture Café's mission is to connect talent within ARIA's current and emerging opportunity spaces to the broader UK and global innovation ecosystem, advancing progress and ensuring scalable impact. Their community space is free and open to all innovators to help make things happen.



Nucleate UK is partnering with ARIA to accelerate the development of new technologies and communities in the eco and biotech fields by supporting ARIA Creators. Nucleate will identify and support top UK scientific talent through targeted programmes like the Activator — Nucleate's flagship accelerator helping academics navigate de-risking, the spinout process, and fundraising. Through this partnership, Nucleate will build a national biotech network and help transform early-stage ideas into deep tech companies — guiding teams to deliver real-world impact.



Pillar VC is launching the Encode fellowship in partnership with ARIA. Encode is a year-long fellowship for top AI researchers tackling high-impact scientific challenges in ARIA's opportunity spaces. Fellows are embedded in leading UK labs to apply AI to areas like climate modeling, neuromorphic computing, and robotics. Fellows receive a competitive salary, compute, partnerships, and datasets, and join a vibrant community of scientists, founders, and engineers. Encode Fellows advance frontier research and help launch deep tech ventures and research organisations.



Google DeepMind is working with us in a non-funded partnership to identify projects designed to accelerate the impact of ARIA-backed research. This will include leveraging its team of multidisciplinary researchers to provide access, insights, and connectivity to researchers, and drive applications within our opportunity spaces.



Renaissance Philanthropy is building the UK Horizons Programme to act as a force multiplier for ARIA's opportunity spaces. The programme seeks to supercharge the UK's R&D ecosystem by building networks of innovators and increasing their ambition, expanding the diversity of science translation mechanisms, strengthening the UK's philanthropic ecosystem, and building research translation strategies to increase the scale and impact of ARIA's opportunity spaces.



Fifty Years is delivering its company creation programme 5050 in the UK to equip scientists and engineers with the necessary skills to start and build world-changing companies in, and around, ARIA's opportunity space.

Our people and culture

ARIA recognises that a team with a wide breadth of diversity and experience is essential for a working environment that enhances creativity, knowledge sharing, and thoughtful decision making.

We are dedicated to creating a safe and inclusive workspace based on fairness and respect. One that encourages talented people of any background to produce their best work of the highest quality.

Our diversity

All data is self reported. This team data includes our 61 staff members (employees, secondees and contractors), and our outsourced operating partners who work alongside us embedded within our team.

- Our team spans five decades, with the biggest representation of the team in the 25–29 bracket (29%).
- At least 12% are LGBTQIA+ (15% of employees have not disclosed).
- We have nine different religions and belief systems represented.
- At least 8% have a disability (15% of our team have not disclosed).
- At least 11% are neurodiverse (18% of our team have not disclosed).
- Of our team, 49% are based outside of London.

56%
female

40%
male

4%
non-binary
or transgender

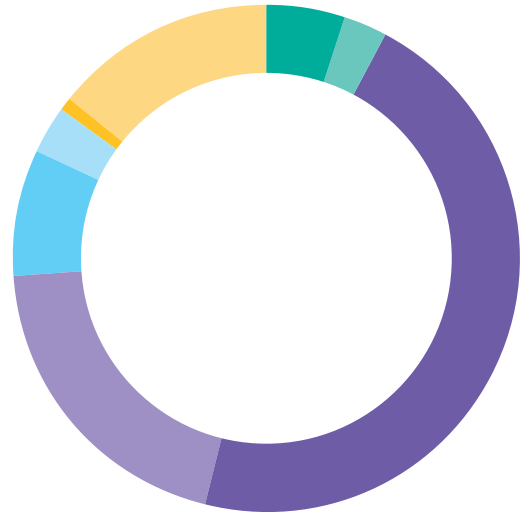
8+
different races

30
different ethnicities

15
different nationalities

9
different religions
and belief systems

Primary career backgrounds prior to ARIA



Academic	5%
Mixed	3%
Private	46%
Public	20%
Third	8%
This is my first role	3%
Other	1%
Did not respond	14%

Sustainability Report

Scope 3 Business Travel Emissions

	Measurement	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	25 Jan 2023 to 31 Mar 2024
Business travel*	Total miles (per FTE)	643,224 (12,778)	214,300 (5,986)
	Tonnes CO ₂ e (per FTE)	154.4 tonnes (3.1)	36.2 tonnes (1.0)
	Expenditure (per FTE)	£265,902 (£5,286)	£51,050 (£1,426)
	Miles — air travel (per FTE)	536,806 (10,672)	147,600 (4,123)
	Tonnes CO ₂ e — air travel (per FTE)	141.6 tonnes (2.8)	32.8 tonnes (0.9)
	Expenditure — air travel (per FTE)	£141,006 (£2,803)	£22,981 (£642)

* The above Scope 3 emissions from ARIA's business travel are calculated by ARIA's travel management company and a report is provided on an annual basis.

At ARIA, we are dedicated to integrating sustainable practices into our business operations. Since our establishment we have initiated efforts to assess ways that we can minimise our environmental impact in accordance with the Greening Government Commitments (GGCs) and contribute to achieving UK net zero goals.

During the year, organisational policies were developed with sustainable considerations, for example within our expenses and travel policy, which aim to keep ARIA's impact on the environment to a minimum. We will further develop the approach we take to environmental and climate impact, and sustainability, in 2025/26.

Our sustainability report has been prepared in alignment with the latest HM Treasury guidance for public bodies on sustainability reporting, and will serve as a baseline, against which we can benchmark our future progress.

Energy and waste consumption

All our energy, waste and water consumption arises from our office occupation. During the year, we occupied managed office facilities provided by Fora (where our use represents less than 15% of the building), hot-desking spaces within the Alan Turing Institute's occupation of the British Library (under 1% of the building), and a small office in Cambridge. The environmental impacts of our Fora and British Library occupations are disclosed in Fora's and the Alan Turing Institute's annual reports and accounts, respectively. In each case, our footprint is not separately metered and meaningful consumption data are therefore unavailable; consequently, Scope 1 and 2 emissions data do not feature in our report.

We make no use of consumer single-use plastic. For example, we provide biodegradable or reusable glass and tableware for staff.

Business travel

ARIA operates a hybrid working model where staff are able to balance the benefits of collaboration in the office with the flexibility of working from home. This adoption of smarter and more flexible ways of working, supported by our IT and digital platforms, reduces the need for staff to travel and our overall environmental footprint.

However, some business travel remains essential as we balance the need for regional presence and coverage across the UK. If travel is required, our travel policy encourages staff to assess whether their planned travel is essential. Where a business trip is necessary, then staff are encouraged to use the most sustainable form of transport.

Our business travel measurements during the year, both total and per full-time equivalent staff (FTE), are detailed above.

IT policy

We align with the GGCs and the associated Greening government: ICT and digital services strategy. Our technology estate is provided by outsourced providers. As a new organisation, with no legacy technology, we have taken a cloud-first approach to designing our technology infrastructure. We therefore make use of cloud-based hosting and associated applications. This virtual infrastructure ensures we use resources efficiently and supports our hybrid working workforce strategy and reduces the need for unnecessary travel for face-to-face meetings.

Sustainable procurement

The Procurement team has developed, and will be implementing, a Social Value Policy, aligning where possible with the government's wider procurement policy relating to Social Value.

Biodiversity

ARIA has no landholdings and no independent estate. All of our office occupation in 2024/25 was within multi-occupied estates offices. We do not have a biodiversity action plan given this context.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 9 July 2025

3

Accountability Report

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Corporate Governance Report

Directors' Report

The Corporate Governance Report sets out the governance arrangements of ARIA and comprises:

1. the Directors' Report;
2. the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities; and
3. the Governance Statement.

ARIA is an independent non-departmental public body of DSIT.

The following items, required as part of the Director's Report are included in the Governance Statement on page 25:

- composition of the ARIA Board;
- disclosure of other interests of the ARIA Board; and
- disclosure of personal data-related incidents.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

The ARIA Act 2022 requires ARIA to prepare a statement of accounts in the form specified by the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State for DSIT has directed ARIA to prepare a statement of accounts for the financial year to 31 March 2025 in the form, and on the basis set out in the, Accounts Direction.

The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of ARIA and of its income and expenditure, statement of financial position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FRoM) and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by DSIT, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the FRoM have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts;
- prepare the accounts on the going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable, and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Principal Accounting Officer for DSIT designated the Chief Executive as ARIA's Accounting Officer.

The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer are set out in Managing Public Money published by HM Treasury. These include responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable to, for keeping proper records, and for safeguarding ARIA's assets.

Preparation and audit of the accounts

The accounts have been prepared under a direction issued by DSIT and are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that ARIA's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

I also confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts are fair, balanced and understandable, and I take personal responsibility for judgements made to ensure that they are fair, balanced and understandable.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 9 July 2025

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement

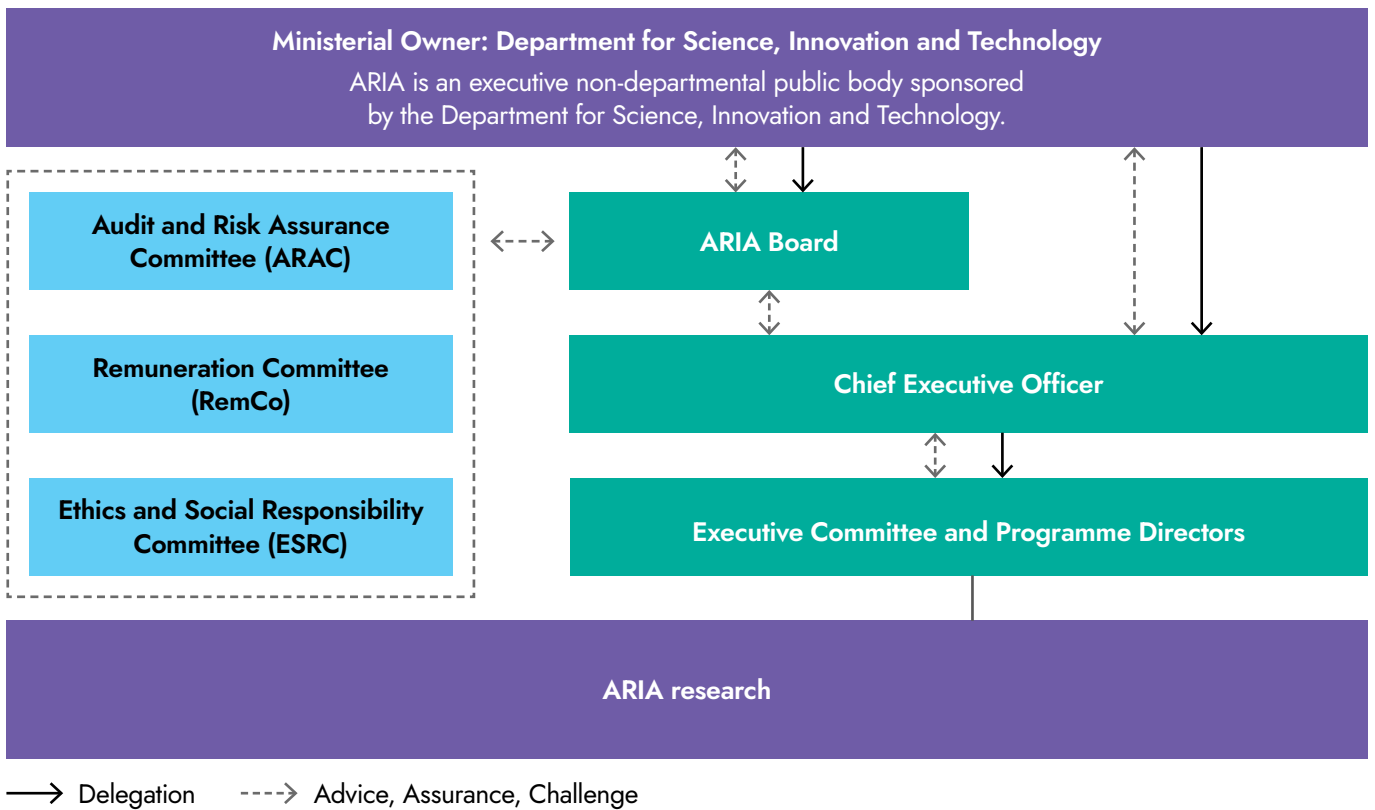
The Accounting Officer is responsible for maintaining a system of internal control that supports the achievement of ARIA’s policies, aims and objectives, while safeguarding public funds and departmental assets. This is in accordance with the responsibilities assigned in the HM Treasury publication Managing Public Money.

This Governance Statement describes how these duties have been carried out by the Accounting Officer and the supporting structure in place in the year. The Accounting Officer ensured that proportionate controls were in place at all times, and that these were applied in a system of effective governance.

Governance structure

ARIA is accountable to Parliament through our parent department, DSIT, for the funds it expends. ARIA’s working relationship and lines of accountability with DSIT are defined in its Framework Agreement, and Delegation and Allocation Letter made to the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer. These documents are subject to periodic review. The ARIA Framework Document was reviewed and published in February 2023. ARIA also maintains active engagement and a transparent relationship with its parent department.

ARIA Governance structure



Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement continued

The Board

The Board is the main body for oversight within ARIA. The key objectives of the Board are as follows:

- agreeing an annual strategic and operational plan for ARIA;
- supporting the Chief Executive to help ARIA achieve its objectives, in alignment with those set out in the ARIA Act 2022;
- ensuring effective stewardship of ARIA's funding;
- agreeing ARIA's risk appetite, and monitoring and supporting optimisation of risk within ARIA to ensure it pursues ambitious research, development and exploitation with a high tolerance to failure, while maintaining effective governance, risk management and internal controls;
- advising the Secretary of State for DSIT where there are any significant areas of concern that may impact on ARIA's ability to fulfil its objectives; and
- representing ARIA to help promote its activities and improve its connectivity in the UK and abroad.

The Board comprises the Chair, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, five other Non-Executive Board members and the founding Chief Executive — appointed by the Secretary of State for DSIT — as well as three other Executive Team members, including a Chief Finance and Operating Officer — appointed by the Chair.

Board members, and any roles as part of the three sub-committees of the Board as at 31 March 2024 — the Remuneration Committee (RemCo), the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), and the Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee (ESRC) — are listed below.

Appointee	Role	Sub-committee	Dates served
Matt Clifford	Chair	N/A	Full year
Ilan Gur	Chief Executive	N/A	Full year
Dame Kate Bingham	Non-Executive Director	RemCo (Chair)	Full year
Stephen Cohen	Non-Executive Director	ARAC (Chair)	Full year
Sarah Hunter	Non-Executive Director	ESRC (Chair) RemCo	Full year
Sir David MacMillan	Non-Executive Director	ESRC	Full year
Sir Patrick Vallance*	Non-Executive Director	ARAC ESRC	01 April 2024– 5 July 2024
Dame Angela McLean	Non-Executive Director	N/A	Full year
Antonia Jenkinson	Chief Finance & Operating Officer	N/A	Full year
Pippy James	Chief Product Officer	N/A	Full year
Dan Cole	Interim Chief of Staff	N/A	Full year
Independent member		Sub-committee	Dates served
Sue Hunt	Sub-committee Independent Member	ARAC	Full year

* Sir Patrick Vallance was a member of the ARIA Board in his role as Government Chief Scientific Adviser. This terminated when he stepped down from this role in April 2023. He was subsequently appointed an independent Non-Executive Director in June 2023.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement continued

During the year, the Board held four regular Board meetings. The key areas of focus for the Board during the year included:

- development of ARIA strategy and its performance against strategic OKRs;
- R&D Programme updates, new initiatives, the commercial and funding operating model, and budgets;
- ethical and social responsibility considerations;
- people updates, Director recruitment and EDI strategy;
- financial performance, internal and external audit results, and risk management;
- information security and cyber protection; and
- the Board, and its committees', Terms of Reference, and effectiveness.

Conflicts of interest

All Board members are required to declare any personal or business interests, which may influence their judgement in discharging their obligations, or which may be perceived to do so. These interests are published on ARIA's website at: www.aria.org.uk/transparency.

Board effectiveness

ARIA's second effectiveness review of the Board was completed in March 2025, following the first review in 2024. The results were that the Board and its Committees effectively: perform high-quality reviews of ARIA's strategy and its implementation; monitor the agency's optimisation of risk in line with the ARIA Act, while maintaining effective governance, risk management and internal controls; ensure effective stewardship of ARIA's funding; and, provide the appropriate balance of challenge and support to the Executive Team. The sole improvement identified was to elevate the detail presented to the Board on value-generating milestones for each programme and Activation Partner, enabling better portfolio-level risk optimisation.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) is a permanent sub-committee of the Board to support it, and the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer, in their responsibilities for risk, control and governance. It also oversees internal and external audit arrangements covering both financial and non-financial systems.

The ARAC met three times during the year to review ARIA's performance, the framework for assessing and managing controls, fraud and risk, and the appointment of internal and external auditors.

The results of the internal audit team's work, including assurance ratings for individual audits and summaries on the progress of the implementation of agreed actions, are reported at each meeting. The ARAC reviewed the external audit planning work and final audit reports, which were delivered by the National Audit Office.

The Chair of the ARAC reported to the Board after each meeting.

Remuneration Committee

The role of the Remuneration Committee (RemCo) is to ensure that remuneration arrangements, including senior pay strategy and succession planning for senior appointments support ARIA's aims and enable the recruitment, retention and performance of the leadership team and PDs. The Committee will also support and inform ARIA's wider workforce strategies, including ensuring the organisation attracts, retains and develops diverse people at all levels, and provides an inclusive and equal opportunities working environment.

The RemCo also approves the performance-related pay scheme and other remuneration and people-related policies and issues. The RemCo met three times during the year.

The Chair of the RemCo reported to the Board after each meeting.

Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee

The Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee (ESRC) supports the Board and the Chief Executive by providing additional oversight on issues related to ethics and social responsibility. The ESRC met once during the year, and its responsibilities include reviewing and sharing recommendations on the ethical and social responsibility aspects of ARIA's programmes and other funding.

This year, we have also brought on our first set of ESR Advisors, external experts who can be drawn on to advise our programme directors and our strategic approach to ESR more broadly, including being invited to contribute to the ESR Committee, providing an additional mechanism for accessing expert advice and surfacing key issues.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement continued

Board and Committee attendance for the year to 31 March 2025:

Board/Committee member	Board	Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	Remuneration Committee	Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee
Total meetings during the reporting period	4	3	3	1
Non-Executive Directors				
Matt Clifford Chair	4	2 By invitation only	1 By invitation only	N/A
Dame Angela McLean Government Chief Scientific Adviser	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dame Kate Bingham Chair of RemCo	4	N/A	3	N/A
Stephen Cohen Chair of ARAC	4	3	N/A	N/A
Sarah Hunter* Chair of ESRC	4	2	3	1
Sir David MacMillan	1	1	—	1
Sir Patrick Vallance	1	1	N/A	N/A
ARAC Independent Member				
Sue Hunt	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
Executive Directors				
Ilan Gur Chief Executive	4	3	2	1
Antonia Jenkinson Chief Financial & Operating Officer	4	3	2	1
Dan Cole Chief of Staff	4	N/A	N/A	1
Pippy James Chief Product Officer	4	N/A	N/A	1
Observer				
Alex Jones Director General for Science, Innovation and Growth	2	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Interim member of ARAC who joined partway through the year, and attended all meetings held during their tenure.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement continued

Executive Team

The Executive Team (ET) convenes bi-weekly and is responsible for developing ARIA's strategy, annual plan (strategic objectives and budget) and ensures their delivery, with oversight from the Board. In addition, the ET is responsible for effective governance, financial stewardship, risk management, compliance, stakeholder management and ensuring the organisation has the appropriate culture and policies.

Executive Team member	Position
Ilan Gur	Chief Executive
Antonia Jackson	Chief Financial & Operating Officer
Pippy James	Chief Product Officer
Dan Cole	Chief of Staff

Risk management

ARIA is unique in its attitude to risk and aims to explore bold and innovative approaches to R&D. The ARIA Act 2022 states:

“Ambitious research, development and exploitation: tolerance to failure... In exercising any of its functions under this Act, ARIA may give particular weight to the potential for significant benefits to be achieved or facilitated through scientific research, or the development and exploitation of scientific knowledge, that carries a high risk of failure.”

ARIA recognises that appropriate risk optimisation is vital to achieving its mission and goals. To achieve this approach to risk, ARIA has established its processes to support the effective management and, in certain areas, acceptance of risk. ARIA encourages openness, challenge, innovation and excellence in embedding this approach to support decision making at all levels of the business.

Risk strategy

ARIA has been established to be a ‘high risk, high reward’ research funding agency. This risk appetite relates to its strategic delivery and scientific programmes (and underlying projects); there is a lower risk tolerance to operational and reputational matters, and a low risk tolerance to legal compliance, safety, environmental harm and any form of financial misconduct (see overleaf for details). ARIA will assess and closely monitor technical and programmatic risks post Programme Approval, while ensuring risk-related opportunities are fully explored.

ARIA’s risk and strategic management are closely integrated, with risk considerations integrated into decision making around key areas such as organisational strategy, governance and assurance.

Risk management continued

Risk appetite

ARIA's risk appetite reflects the ambition to take on bold and high-risk R&D ventures, while retaining strict oversight and diligent approach to environmental, financial and security risks.

High risk

Strategic delivery

ARIA is set up to take an experimental approach, and in its startup phase it will place a high value on iterative learning. This means that we may take on operational risk if the value of fast learning (and potentially failing) merits doing so in pursuit of a more optimal long-term solution.

Expected programme and project results

The nature of the work ARIA funds is highly innovative and uncertain. In many cases, the programme proposals will be taking what looks like a 'leap of faith' in terms of what's possible. This will be acceptable to ARIA so long as the societal benefit is both material and well articulated, and progress is well managed and evaluated.

Medium risk

Budgeting

Budgeting risks denote the possibility of underspend/overspend each year, which can have knock-on effects to funding elsewhere in the department and HM Treasury. The ARIA model relies on giving programme managers freedom to cut projects and reallocate funds at short notice, optimising the likelihood of portfolio success at any given moment.

Commercial

In commercial undertakings, we will exercise good business practice to protect the business and its ongoing growth and development. We will be prepared to take some risk where the strategic or scientific return merits this.

Communications

In support of its strategic and programme goals, ARIA may decide to communicate in a manner perceived to be different or provocative, to engage a community or encourage ideas.

Reputational risk

ARIA will deliberately seek to protect its reputation and brand as a trusted public body with all relevant stakeholders, recognising that ARIA's reputation and brand should reflect the higher risk appetite described in other parts of this framework.

Low risk

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety of all people (employees, contractors, visitors or members of the public) is paramount, and ARIA will mitigate these risks in line with all applicable legislation, taking into account shared best practice with similar research organisations.

Security

ARIA will be an outward-facing Intellectual Property (IP) generating public sector research organisation that works in an international arena and is subject to security threats. ARIA will manage cyber, personnel and building security by continually monitoring these respective policies, processes, training and systems.

Financial

ARIA will operate robust financial control systems to protect against fraud and other financial losses. ARIA will endeavour to minimise risks of fraud associated with financial transactions.

Compliance with legislation

ARIA will operate strictly in accordance with all laws at all times. Any non-compliances identified will be addressed as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Protection of the environment

ARIA will not take significant risks with regards to damage to the environment.

Risk management continued

Accountability and responsibility framework for risk management

Group	Responsibility	Frequency
ARIA Board	Review and approve ARIA's risk appetite	Annual review
	Monitor ARIA's risks	Quarterly review of most critical risks
ARAC	Review, oversight, assurance and challenge around ARIA's risks	Three times a year
ESRC	Ethical and social responsibility risks	Three times a year
Executive Team/Functional Leads/ Programme Directors	Ownership and management of risks, opportunities and issues	Continuous, alongside quarterly deep dives and calibration

Key strategic and operational risks

ARIA defined its risks in the following categories, based on areas of impact.

- Safety and Security
- Trust with Stakeholders
- Team and Culture
- Operational Excellence
- Focus
- Technical

Risk management continued

ARIA's current top strategic and operational risks are:

Risk description	Risk areas (primary and secondary)	Mitigations enacted	Risk appetite	Latest risk movement
Top three strategic risks				
Failure to maintain risk optimised culture	Team and Culture Focus Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the culture and awareness of ARIA's unique risk appetite pervades the organisation at all times Feedback mechanisms for anyone in the organisation to challenge why we do what we do 	High	↑
Failure to attract diverse talent	Trust with stakeholders Focus Team and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity considerations built into all aspects of programme lifecycle and wider engagement Key diversity metric added as a Strategic Operational Key Result 	Medium	→
Maintaining budget flexibilities due to uncertain nature of research	Operational Excellence Trust with stakeholders Team and culture Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working closely with government sponsors to maintain flexibilities set out in ARIA's delegation letter 	Low	→
Top three operational risks				
Cyber attack/malicious action from internal or external party	Safety and Security Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyber Essentials Plus accreditations renewed and NCSS Cyber Assessment Framework completed Security measures embedded across all of ARIA's policies, processes and training 	Low	→
Serious internal data incident/mistake	Safety and Security Trust with Stakeholders Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information security and data incident process, plans and training in place System-based safety measures in place 	Low	→
Difficulties in recruiting talent within Programmes	Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support creators in attracting top talent by enabling the initiation of recruitment at early stages 	Medium	New

↑ Upwards → Steady/stable New New risk

Assurance

ARIA's control environment is managed across three lines of defence: operational functions and support functions; functions that oversee or who specialise in compliance or the management of risk such as Legal or Finance; and functions that provide independent assurance such as Internal Audit.

Counter fraud, anti-bribery and anti-corruption

ARIA is committed to maintaining the highest standards in counter fraud, anti-bribery and anti-corruption measures, ensuring that public funds are protected, while fostering an innovative and high risk, high reward research environment. Over the past year, ARIA has taken significant strides in strengthening its counter fraud framework, further embedding robust policies and aligning with best practice.

ARIA's recent counter fraud internal audit reflected positively on our approach, acknowledging the strong foundations we have put in place to prevent, detect, and respond to fraud risks. The audit identified just one medium-priority action and five low-priority actions, demonstrating that ARIA's counter fraud framework is fundamentally sound and well aligned with best practices.

There were no instances of fraud, bribery or corruption reported during the reporting period, and ARIA maintains a gifts and hospitality register to record all gifts or hospitality received or given.

Internal audit

Forvis Mazars provides ARIA's internal audit services. The internal audit plan for 2024/25 comprised a risk-based programme of work across a range of key control areas. The ARAC receives reports from the internal audit provider on the progress of its audits, final internal audit reports, including ARIA's management response to the findings (where appropriate) and the progress made in addressing any issues identified during the audits.

During the year to 31 March 2025, five internal audit reports were issued. The ratings of each of these reports, and the action points along with their priority levels, are detailed below.

Control area	Assurance given	No. of audit actions
Key IT Controls	Substantial	2 low priority
Programme		
Approval Process	Substantial	1 low priority
Risk Optimisation	Substantial	1 low priority
Counter Fraud	Moderate	5 low priority, 1 medium priority
Core Systems	Substantial	2 low priority

Substantial Assurance: The framework of governance, risk management and control is adequate and effective.

Moderate Assurance: Some improvements are required to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control.

Limited Assurance: There are significant weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management and control such that it could be, or could become, inadequate and ineffective.

Unsatisfactory Assurance: There are fundamental weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management and control such that it is inadequate and ineffective or is likely to fail.

As at 31 March 2025, five internal audit actions were completed, with seven not yet due for completion. No actions were past due. The overall opinion on the design of the framework of governance, risk management, and control was Substantial in its overall adequacy and effectiveness.

All actions relating to internal audits conducted in 2023/24 were completed, with no actions past due.

Government Functional Standards

ARIA is required to have regard to the Government Functional Standards (GovS) as appropriate. The three noted in ARIA's Framework Agreement are:

- Government Functional Standard GovS 007: Security
- Government Functional Standard GovS 013: Counter Fraud
- Government Functional Standard GovS 015: Grants

In particular, ARIA is implementing the requirements of GovS 013: Counter Fraud.

Assurance continued

Health and Safety

A Health and Safety policy was implemented during the year, which sets out ARIA's approach to managing its responsibilities for Health and Safety throughout the organisation. Key to this is ensuring that all levels of the organisation understand the importance of Health and Safety and the role that each individual plays in contributing to this. All staff and contractors are required to complete mandatory Health and Safety awareness training, with additional support provided to encourage safe office and home working in the form of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) training and assessments. A Stress and Resilience training module was also introduced during the year as part of ARIA's core training requirement.

ARIA conducts regular six-weekly Health and Safety review meetings, which monitors the level of incidents during the year, examines training statistics and DSE referrals, and updates the Health and Safety risk log with any related mitigations. An update to ARIA's Working Location Policy was made during the year, providing an allowance for home office equipment to ARIA users and facilitating Health and Safety best practice. Several ARIA staff members have received first aid training and are acting as designated first aiders for the office. We have also expanded our contingent of mental health first aiders. Fire Marshals have been established to ensure that all ARIA staff, operating partners, contractors and visitors are safely evacuated from the office premises in the event of a fire, after which Fora's general evacuation process becomes active. Health and Safety risk assessments have been completed for both of ARIA's office facilities. Regular Health and Safety inspections are conducted in order to proactively identify and resolve any risks. There were no reportable injuries during the year.

Information security

Policies and procedures were further refined during the year to manage information security and data protection effectively. These controls include access management protocols that restrict sensitive data access to authorised personnel only. Audits and monitoring mechanisms ensure compliance with security policies and regulatory requirements. Encryption methods are employed to safeguard data during transmission and storage. Additionally, employee communications and training programmes are conducted to emphasise the importance of data security and provide guidance on best practices.

Incident response procedures are in place to promptly address any security breaches or vulnerabilities, minimising potential damage. Continuous evaluation and improvement of these internal controls are undertaken to maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of ARIA's data.

ARIA continues to enforce a robust security posture across its devices and systems. Devices are managed centrally with remote provision and wiping available when required. New app or system requests are passed through a rigorous internal assessment process to ensure that data residency and processing is kept within the UK/EEA when required, and that ARIA's security requirements are met. ARIA has made improvements to its security systems infrastructure with more robust internet and network monitoring in place.

During the year, ARIA passed its IT Security Controls Audit and achieved recertification in Cyber Essentials Plus. The rigorous certification process involved a thorough audit of our technical controls, ensuring we meet the recognised standard in the following key areas: access control, firewalls and routers, malware protection, secure configuration, and software updates. The auditors inspected a range of devices and simulated various attack scenarios to test ARIA's cyber security resilience. This further demonstrates ARIA's commitment to robust cybersecurity practices.

Data protection

ARIA has embedded data protection into our processes and systems by design and default, such that personal data is managed proactively, thoughtfully and in compliance with our legal obligations. ARIA's Data Protection Officer is a visible champion of the issue within the organisation, including thorough onboarding and periodic training.

ARIA has adopted a comprehensive set of data protection policies, which set out ARIA's approach to data protection at an organisational level, the technical and organisational measures that personnel must deploy in their role, data retention and handling, when and how data protection impact assessments and transfer risk assessments must be carried out, and the proper handling of data subject access requests.

Whistleblowing

ARIA has a whistleblowing policy, which is available to all staff and operating partners. No whistleblowing claims were received during the year.

Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration policy

ARIA maintains fairness and transparency in all aspects of remuneration, with appointments made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. All recruitment policies and processes are overseen and approved by the RemCo.

The remuneration of Non-Executive Directors appointed to the ARIA Board and the Chief Executive is set by the Secretary of State for DSIT in accordance with the ARIA Act 2022.

The RemCo advises the Chair who determines the overall remuneration package for Executive Directors (excluding the Chief Executive) after consulting the other Non-Executive Directors and with the consent of the Secretary of State.

The RemCo also advises the Board on the overall remuneration package for PDs.

In reaching its recommendations, the RemCo has regards to the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified people to exercise their different responsibilities, the evidence it receives about wider economic considerations and the affordability of its recommendations.

The remuneration of those who serve on the ARIA Board is disclosed within this report.

Service contracts

As per the ARIA Act 2022, the first Chief Executive is appointed by the Secretary of State for DSIT. Thereafter, the appointments of the Chief Executive and the Executive Directors are to be proposed by the Chair after consulting with the Non-Executive Directors, and with the consent of the Secretary of State, which can only be withheld in the interests of national security.

The Chief Executive is on a four-year fixed-term contract that will be reviewed when it approaches expiry in 2026/27. The other Executive Directors are on open-ended appointments.

The notice period for the Chief Executive, Chief Financial and Operating Officer, and Chief Product Officer is three months and one month for other Executive Directors. Each Executive Director remained in post for the entirety of the year to 31 March 2025.

Remuneration — audited information

The following table shows the remuneration of Executive Board members on an annual basis and during the year, including the details of their salary, allowances, performance-related pay and pension entitlements.

Annual values — for the year ended 31 March 2025

Name	Salary & allowances in bands of £5,000	Performance-related pay in bands of £5,000	Pension benefits to nearest £1,000	Total remuneration in bands of £5,000
Ilan Gur* Chief Executive	385–390	40–45	19	455–460
Antonia Jenkinson Chief Finance & Operating Officer	180–185	20–25	9	215–220
Pippy James Chief Product Officer	190–195	20–25	9	225–230
Dan Cole Chief of Staff	140–145	15–20	7	165–170

* Note that salary and allowances for Ilan Gur includes travel allowance of £5–10k.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Annual values — for the 12 months to 31 March 2024

Name	Start date if during the year	Salary and allowances in bands of £5,000	Performance-related pay in bands of £5,000	Pension benefits to nearest £1,000	Total remuneration in bands of £5,000
Ilan Gur* Chief Executive		385–390	45–50	19	455–460
Antonia Jenkinson Chief Finance & Operating Officer		180–185	20–25	9	215–220
Pippy James Chief Product Officer		145–150	20–25	7	175–180
Dan Cole Chief of Staff	15 May 2023	120–125 (full-year equivalent 135–140)	15–20	6 (full-year equivalent 7)	140–145

* Note that salary and allowances for Ilan Gur includes travel allowance of £5–10k.

Salary

Salary includes gross salary and travel allowances.

Performance-related pay

ARIA's performance-related pay policy has been approved by the ARIA Board and DSIT. Performance-related Payments (PRP) are discretionary (non-contractual), subject to available funding and require RemCo approval every year.

The performance-related pay for Executive Directors is calculated, as with all staff, in accordance with performance against agreed objectives, skills and behaviours, and evaluated on an annual basis in line with the financial year. For the Chief Executive these objectives are determined by the Chair of the ARIA Board, with recommendations from the RemCo. The Chief Executive sets the objectives for other Executive Directors.

PRPs reflect performance levels attained as assessed during the appraisal process. Payments are non-consolidated and non-pensionable. Amounts shown are estimated and accrued, and will be paid in 2025/26.

Pension benefits

Pension benefits are employer only, as accrued during the year, in ARIA's defined contribution scheme.

Benefits in kind

No Executives covered by this report received any benefits in kind during the year.

Expenses

All staff are reimbursed for reasonable business expenses incurred in line with the ARIA expense policy.

Fair pay disclosure — audited information

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation, and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the organisation's workforce. This is shown on the following page.

Total remuneration includes salary, allowances and accrued performance-related pay. It does not include employer pension contributions.

There are no non-salary components in the total remuneration figures disclosed in the following table for the median, 25th percentile and 75th percentile.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

	Remuneration banding	Ratio to highest-paid		
		Total remuneration	Director's remuneration	Salary component
Year ended 31 March 2025	Highest-paid Director	£430,000 — £435,000		£380,000 — £385,000
	75th centile employee	£140,000	3.1:1	£127,050
	Median employee	£90,000	4.8:1	£90,000
	25th centile employee	£70,088	6.2:1	£63,000
	Remuneration range	£50,000 — £55,000 to £430,000 — £435,000		£50,000 — £55,000 to £380,000 — £385,000
Year ended 31 March 2024	Highest-paid Director	£435,000 — £440,000		£380,000 — £385,000
	75th centile employee	£138,875	3.2:1	£123,750
	Median employee	£103,750	4.2:1	£94,500
	25th centile employee	£73,500	6.0:1	£66,000
	Remuneration range	£57,000 — £57,500 to £435,000 — £440,000		£45,000 — £50,000 to £380,000 — £385,000
Percentage change	Highest-paid Director	(1.1%)		0.0%
	75th centile employee	0.8%		2.7%
	Median employee	(13.3%)		(4.8%)
	25th centile employee	(4.6%)		(4.5%)

In 2024/25, no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid Director.

Annualised salaries and allowances had an average of £94,893 in 2024/25, which is a 5.4% decrease (2023/24: £100,266). Annualised performance-related pay had an average of £7,252, which is a 22.4% decrease (2023/24: £9,345).

These decreases reflect the recruitment of junior personnel to support the agency's scaling efforts during the year.

Pension benefits

Employees of ARIA are eligible to participate in a defined contribution pension scheme, which is managed on ARIA's behalf by Smart Pension. Employees are automatically enrolled in the pension scheme on their first day of employment unless they decide to opt out. The employer makes a basic contribution of 5%. Employee contributions are made via salary sacrifice arrangements at a minimum rate of 3%.

For the year ending 31 March 2025, employer contributions of £203k (year ending 31 March 2024: £98k; period ending 31 March 2024: £104k) were paid.

No Non-Executive Member received a pension benefit from ARIA during the year under review.

Life assurance

We have implemented a life assurance policy for all our employees as this does not form a part of the ARIA defined contribution pension scheme benefits.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Remuneration of the Board and independent member — audited information

Membership details of the Board and the independent member are detailed in the Governance Statement.

Below are the annual fees paid to the Non-Executive Board members and the independent member in the year to 31 March 2025.

	Year ended 31 March 2025 in bands of £5,000	Full-year equivalent to 31 March 2024 in bands of £5,000
Matthew Clifford	25–30	25–30
Stephen Cohen	15–20	15–20
Sarah Hunter	15–20	10–15
Sir David MacMillan	5–10	10–15
Sue Hunt	5–10	5–10
Sir Patrick Vallance	0–5	10–15
Dame Angela McLean	—	—
Dame Kate Bingham	—	—

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Staff report

Staff numbers — audited information

The FTE number of persons at 31 March 2025 was as follows:

Category of staff	As at 31 March 2025	As at 31 March 2024
Permanent	32.9	25.0
Fixed-term	12.8	5.6
Secondees	3.8	3.2
Temporary/Contractors	0.8	2.0
Total staff	50.3	35.8

The average number of FTE staff during the year to 31 March 2025 was as follows:

Staff	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024
Permanent	28.6	11.2
Fixed-term	9.5	5.5
Secondees	3.5	5.0
Temporary/Contractors	1.1	3.6
Total	42.7	25.3

The number of staff-in-post (headcount) by gender as at 31 March 2025 was as follows:

Staff	As at 31 March 2025				As at 31 March 2024			
	Male	Female	Non-binary	Total	Male	Female	Non-binary	Total
Executive members of the Board	2	2	—	4	2	2	—	4
Directors (excluding executive members of the Board)	2	3	—	5	2	2	—	4
Other	16	26	2	44	10	17	2	29
Total staff	20	31	2	53	14	21	2	37
Non-Executive Directors of the Board and its Committees	2	4	—	6	4	4	—	8

Staff, as set out above, includes employees (permanent and fixed-term), secondees and temporary staff/contractors.

Early departure costs — audited information

There were no early departures in 2024/25.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Staff costs — audited information

Staff costs consists of the following:

	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025			1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024		
	Permanently employed staff £000	Others £000	Total £000	Permanently employed staff £000	Others £000	Total £000
Wages and salaries	3,128	2,443	5,572	1,249	1,887	3,136
Social security costs	403	169	573	156	168	324
Pension costs	140	63	203	52	118	170
Total	3,672	2,676	6,347	1,457	2,173	3,630
Non-Executive Director fees	—	—	88	—	—	93
Total staff costs	3,672	2,676	6,435	1,457	2,173	3,723

'Permanently employed staff' comprises staff employed on a permanent basis. 'Others' includes staff employed directly on a fixed-term basis, agency staff and inward secondments.

Staff turnover

During 2024/25, staff turnover (including the conclusion of fixed-term contracts and secondments) was 7.5% (2023/24: 0%).

Sickness absence data

The total FTE days lost through staff sickness absence in the year was 74.5 (2023/24: 15.5). The average working days lost per employee during the year was 1.7 FTE (2023/24: 0.53 FTE); these were all short-term sickness absences of five days or less.

Off-payroll engagements

The tables below present data on our off-payroll engagements. Off-payroll engagements refer to workers who are paid off-payroll, without deducting tax and national insurance at source, typically contractors.

	As at 31 March 2025	As at 31 March 2024
Highly paid off-payroll worker engagements earning £245 per day or greater		
Number of existing engagements as at 31 March 2025	1	1
Of which, number that have existed:		
Less than one year	1	1
Between one and two years	—	—

	Year ended 31 March 2025	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024
All highly paid off-payroll workers engaged at any point during the year, earning £245 per day or greater at ARIA		
No. of all off-payroll workers engaged during the reporting period ended 31 March 2025	4	7
Of which, not subject to off-payroll legislation	—	—
Of which, subject to off-payroll legislation and determined as in-scope of IR35	1	1
Of which, subject to off-payroll legislation and determined as out-of-scope of IR35	3	6
No. of engagements reassessed for compliance or assurance purposes during the reporting period	—	—
Of which, no. of engagements that saw a change to IR35 status following review	—	—

Parliamentary Accountability and Audit Report

Expenditure on consultancy

Expenditure on consultancy in the year ended 31 March 2025 was £30.6k (2023–24: £684k). This expenditure primarily relates to advice on metrics.

Regularity of expenditure — audited information

We have considered all our activities during the reporting period and confirm that they are in accordance with the legislation authorising them.

Losses and special payments — audited information

There were no losses or special payments that need to be reported in accordance with Managing Public Money.

Remote contingent liabilities — audited information

In addition to contingent liabilities reported within the meaning of IAS 37, Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets, ARIA discloses, for parliamentary reporting and accountability purposes, liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of a contingent liability. As at 31 March 2025, there are nil to report.

Audit fees — audited information

The accounts of ARIA are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General under the ARIA Act 2022. The audit fee charged was £63,000. The auditors did not provide any non-audit services.

The auditors have been provided with all relevant audit information necessary to complete their audit and the Accounting Officer has taken all of the necessary steps to ensure that the auditors are aware of any relevant information.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 9 July 2025

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament

Opinion on Financial Statements

I certify that I have audited the Financial Statements of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency for the year ended 31 March 2025 under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

The Financial Statements comprise the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's:

- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025;
- Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Statement of Cash Flows and Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year then ended; and
- the related notes including the significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in the preparation of the Financial Statements is applicable law and UK-adapted accounting standards.

In my opinion, the Financial Statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and comprehensive net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022 and Secretary of State directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects, the income and expenditure recorded in the Financial Statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the Financial Statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom (2024). My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Statements section of my certificate.

Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2024. I am independent of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the Financial Statements in the UK. My staff and I have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the Financial Statements, I have concluded that the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the Financial Statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least 12 months from when the Financial Statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities, and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer, with respect to going concern, are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Advanced Research and Invention Agency is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual, which requires entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the Financial Statements where it is anticipated that the services, which they provide, will continue into the future.

Other information

The other information comprises information included in the Annual Report but does not include the Financial Statements and my auditor's certificate and report thereon. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information.

My opinion on the Financial Statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the Financial Statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the Financial Statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament continued

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, the part of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit have been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions made under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022; and
- the information given in the Performance and Accountability Reports for the financial year for which the Financial Statements are prepared is consistent with the Financial Statements and is in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance and Accountability Reports.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the Advanced Research and Invention Agency or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Financial Statements and the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual have not been made or parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited is not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the Financial Statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records;
- providing the The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) with access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the Financial Statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- providing the C&AG with additional information and explanations needed for his audit;
- providing the C&AG with unrestricted access to persons within the Advanced Research and Invention Agency from whom the auditor determines it necessary to obtain audit evidence;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of Financial Statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- preparing Financial Statements which give a true and fair view in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022;
- preparing the Annual Report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022; and
- assessing the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Advanced Research and Invention Agency will not continue to be provided in the future.

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament continued

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the Financial Statements in accordance with the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Financial Statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error, and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these Financial Statements.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud. The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud is detailed below.

Identifying and assessing potential risks related to non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, I:

- considered the nature of the sector, control environment and operational performance including the design of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's accounting policies;
- inquired of management, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's head of internal audit and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's policies and procedures on:
 - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations;

- detecting and responding to the risks of fraud; and
- the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations including the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's controls relating to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's compliance with the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022 and Managing Public Money;
- inquired of management, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's head of internal audit and those charged with governance whether:
 - they were aware of any instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations; or
 - they had knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud; and
- discussed with the engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the Financial Statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, I considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the Advanced Research and Invention Agency for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in the following areas: posting of unusual journals, complex transactions, and bias in management estimates. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), I am required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override.

I obtained an understanding of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's framework of authority and other legal and regulatory frameworks in which the Advanced Research and Invention Agency operates. I focused on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on material amounts and disclosures in the Financial Statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency. The key laws and regulations I considered in this context included the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022, Managing Public Money, and relevant employment, pensions and tax legislation.

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament continued

Audit response to identified risk

To respond to the identified risks resulting from the above procedures:

- I reviewed the Financial Statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with provisions of relevant laws and regulations described above as having direct effect on the Financial Statements;
- I enquired of management, and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- I reviewed minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the Board and internal audit reports; and
- I addressed the risk of fraud through management override of controls by testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements on estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

I communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential risks of fraud to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

Other auditor's responsibilities

I am required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the Financial Statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the Financial Statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these Financial Statements.

Gareth Davies

Comptroller and Auditor General

Date: 9 July 2025

National Audit Office
157–197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London
SW1W 9SP

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Financial Statements

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Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

for the year ended 31 March 2025

		Year ended 31 March 2025 £000	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024 £000
	Note		
Staff costs	2	6,435	4,138
Other operating expenditure	3	7,716	4,408
Research and development expenditure	4	16,517	—
Depreciation and loss on disposal	5	57	30
Net operating expenditure		30,725	8,576
Finance income		—	—
Finance expense		—	—
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		30,725	8,576

The notes on pages 52 to 58 form part of these Financial Statements.

Statement of Financial Position

as at 31 March 2025

	Note	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	5	186	96
Total non-current assets		186	96
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	6	1,919	169
Cash and cash equivalents	7	10,363	1,726
Total current assets		12,282	1,895
Total assets		12,468	1,991
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	8	(10,894)	(1,192)
Total current liabilities		(10,894)	(1,192)
Total assets less current liabilities		1,574	799
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves			
General fund		(1,574)	(799)
Total equity		(1,574)	(799)

The notes on pages 52 to 58 form part of these Financial Statements.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 9 July 2025

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 31 March 2025

		Reporting Year ended 31 March 2025 £000	period ended 31 March 2024 £000
	Note		
Cash flows from operating activities			
Total comprehensive net expenditure		(30,725)	(8,576)
Adjustments for non-cash items:			
(Increase)/Decrease in trade and other receivables	6	(1,750)	(169)
Increase/(Decrease) in trade and other payables	8	9,701	1,192
Depreciation	5	56	29
Loss on disposal of non-current assets	5	2	1
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities		(22,716)	(7,523)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of fixed assets	5	(147)	(126)
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities		(147)	(126)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grant in Aid received from sponsoring department		31,500	9,375
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from financing activities		31,500	9,375
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents		8,637	1,726
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		1,726	—
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	7	10,363	1,726

The notes on pages 52 to 58 form part of these Financial Statements.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity

for the year ended 31 March 2025

	General reserve £000	Total reserves £000
Balance at 1 April 2024	(799)	(799)
Grant in Aid from DSIT	(31,500)	(31,500)
Net expenditure for the period	30,725	30,725
Balance at 31 March 2025	(1,574)	(1,574)
Balance at 23 January 2023	—	—
Grant in Aid from DSIT	(9,375)	(9,375)
Net expenditure for the period	8,576	8,576
Balance at 31 March 2024	(799)	(799)

The notes on pages 52 to 58 form part of these Financial Statements.

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

ARIA is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these Financial Statements are set out below.

1.1 Basis of accounting

These Financial Statements have been prepared on a going concern basis in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by HM Treasury, which is updated annually. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of ARIA for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected.

The particular policies adopted by ARIA are described below. We have applied these policies consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

The Financial Statements are prepared in sterling and rounded to the nearest £000.

1.2 Grant in Aid

In line with the FReM, Grant in Aid for revenue purposes from DSIT (the controlling body) are recognised as a financing flow and thus credited to the General Reserve and is recognised in the reporting period in which it is received.

1.3 Plant and equipment

Plant and equipment comprises single assets and are capitalised at cost on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefit associated with the item will flow to ARIA. A capitalisation threshold of £500 is applied to all asset classes. Expenditure below this value is charged as an expense in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

1.4 Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful life of the asset as follows:

Asset class	Useful life
Computer equipment	3 years
Fixtures and fittings	3 years
AV/IT equipment	3 years

Depreciation is charged in full in the month of acquisition on the date it was brought into service.

1.5 Leased assets

ARIA has adopted IFRS 16, in line with FReM requirements. At the inception of a contract ARIA assesses whether a contract contains a lease. A contract, contains a lease if the contract conveys the right for ARIA to control the use of an identified asset for a period of time in exchange for consideration. To assess whether a contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset, ARIA assesses whether:

- the asset is greater in value than ARIA's capitalisation threshold, which is £500;
- the contract involves the use of an identified asset, which is physically distinct or represents substantially all of the capacity of a distinct asset and there are no substantive substitution rights;
- the contract conveys the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from use of the asset throughout the period of use; and
- the lessee has the right to direct the use of the asset.

ARIA has assessed all of its contracts and determined that it does not have any leases as defined by IFRS 16.

1.6 Grants payable

Grant expenditure is recognised in the period in which eligible activity creates an entitlement in line with the terms and conditions of the grant.

1.7 IFRS 17 Insurance contracts

ARIA has determined that it has no contracts that will be impacted by the implementation of IFRS 17, which requires insurance contract liabilities to be calculated as the present value of future insurance cash flows with a provision for risk.

1.8 Value-added tax

ARIA is not registered for value-added tax (VAT) as it does not provide taxable supplies. All expenses are therefore presented inclusive of VAT.

1.9 Currency

The functional and presentational currency of ARIA is sterling.

1.10 Pensions

Employees of ARIA are eligible to participate in a defined contribution pension scheme, which is managed on the Agency's behalf by Smart Pension. Employees are automatically enrolled in the pension scheme on their first day of employment unless they decide to opt out. The costs of ARIA's employer's contributions to this scheme is recorded as expenditure in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

1.11 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash in hand held with the Government Banking Service, which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash, and which are subject to insignificant risk of changes in value and have an original maturity of three months or less.

The carrying amount of these assets approximates their fair value.

1.12 Trade and other payables

Trade payables are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of business from suppliers. Accounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less (or in the normal operating cycle of the business if longer). If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities.

Trade and other payables are non-interest bearing and recognised initially at fair value.

Other payables represent money owing to third parties at the reporting date.

1.13 Provisions

ARIA makes provision for liabilities and charges in accordance with IAS 37 where a legal or constructive liability (i.e. a present obligation arising from past events) exists, the transfer of economic benefits is probable, and a reasonable estimate can be made.

Provisions for liabilities are based on reliable estimates of the expenditure required to settle future legal or constructive obligations that exist. Provisions are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and released when the transfer of economic benefit to settle the obligation is made.

1.14 Foreign exchange

Transactions designated in foreign currencies are translated into pounds sterling at the rate of exchange prevailing at the transaction date. Monetary assets and liabilities designated in foreign currencies are translated at the rates prevailing at the reporting date with the resulting profit or loss recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the reporting period.

1.15 Segmental analysis

A segment is a distinguishable component of the organisation that is engaged either in providing products or services (business segment), or in providing products or services within a particular economic environment (geographical segment), and is subject to risks and rewards that are different from those of other segments.

ARIA has no separate reportable business segments and all its funding is received from one UK source, therefore, no analysis of ARIA's activities has been presented.

1.16 Corporation tax

ARIA is subject to corporation tax on taxable profits from trading activities. No corporation tax is payable as ARIA did not undertake any trading activities during the reporting period.

1.17 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

The Chief Executive, in his capacity as Accounting Officer, uses judgement in making estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the accounting period in which the estimate is revised, and if the revision also affects future periods in these periods as well. In reviewing these estimates, we consider the extent to which these could possibly vary and whether such a variation could indicate the need for a material adjustment to the accounts. There is nothing in the current review to indicate that a variation of a material amount could arise.

Critical judgements that have the most significant effect on the amounts recognised in the Financial Statements are considered to be accrued expenditure.

1.18 Financial instruments

A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Financial assets and financial liabilities would be recognised in the balance sheet if ARIA became a party to the contractual provisions of an instrument.

ARIA has no borrowings and relies on Grant in Aid from DSIT for its cash requirements, and is therefore not exposed to liquidity risks. All material assets and liabilities are denominated in sterling so it is not exposed to significant currency risk.

1.19 Accounting periods and presentation of Financial Statements

ARIA was established through the ARIA Act 2022. On the basis of Schedule 1, section 18 of the Act, the first accounting period was from the date on which ARIA was established (25 January 2023) and ending with the second 31 March following that date (31 March 2024). This extended accounting period of 15 months has been presented as prior-year comparatives against the figures for the 2024/25 financial year. The inclusion of the initial three months in the comparatives does not materially affect the interpretation of the Financial Statements, as limited costs were incurred during this period.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

Research funding

2. Staff costs

	Permanently employed staff £000	Other £000	Year ended 31 March 2025 £000	Permanently employed staff £000	Other £000	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024 £000
Wages and salaries	3,128	2,443	5,572	1,290	2,192	3,482
Social security costs	403	169	573	160	191	351
Other pension costs	140	63	203	53	144	197
Total	3,672	2,676	6,347	1,503	2,527	4,030
Non-Executive Director fees	—	—	88	—	—	108
Total staff costs	3,672	2,676	6,435	1,503	2,527	4,138

3. Other operating costs

	Year to 31 March 2025 £000	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024 £000
HR, training and recruitment costs	427	637
Legal and professional costs	409	450
IT costs	974	791
Rent and building costs	1,277	580
Engagement and communications costs*	1,686	988
Programme management costs**	1,465	603
Travel and subsistence costs	459	139
Programme development costs	872	120
External audit fees	63	60
Internal audit fees	84	40
Total spend	7,716	4,408

* Engagement and communication costs include outsourced strategic communications advice and support, as well as costs incurred in hosting events and workshops during the year.

** Programme management costs relate to outsourced specialist support to ARIA's Programme Directors, in the form of expertise and personnel to deliver grant/contract awards.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

4. Research and Development Expenditure

	Year to 31 March 2025 £000	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024 £000
Future Proofing Our Climate and Weather	—	—
Mathematics for Safe AI	2,323	—
Nature Computes Better	6,496	—
Programmable Plants	—	—
Scalable Neural Interfaces	1,698	—
Scoping our Planet	1,211	—
Smarter Robot Bodies	1,476	—
Total Opportunity Spaces Expenditure	13,204	—
Activation Partners	3,286	—
Other	27	—
Total Research and Development Expenditure	16,517	—

5. Property, plant and equipment

	Fixtures and fittings £000	Computer equipment £000	Total £000
As at 31 March 2025			
Cost			
At 1 April 2024	1	123	124
Additions	59	87	147
Disposals	—	(2)	(2)
At 31 March 2025	60	208	269
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2024	—	(28)	(28)
Charged in year	(9)	(47)	(56)
Disposals	—	1	1
At 31 March 2025	(9)	(74)	(83)
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	51	134	186

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

5. Property, plant and equipment continued

As at 31 March 2024	Fixtures and fittings £000	Computer equipment £000	Total £000
Cost			
At 25 January 2023	—	—	—
Additions	1	125	126
Disposals	—	(1)	(1)
At 31 March 2024	1	124	125
Depreciation			
At 25 January 2023	—	—	—
Charged in period	—	(29)	(29)
Disposals	—	—	—
At 31 March 2024	—	(29)	(29)
Carrying amount at 31 March 2024	1	95	96

6. Trade and other receivables

	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Prepayments	1,097	165
Deposits	822	4
Total receivables	1,919	169

Prepayments predominantly consist of prepaid license to occupy, event costs, and software licenses.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

7. Cash and cash equivalents

	31 March 2025 £000
Balance at 31 March 2024	1,726
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	8,637
Balance at 31 March 2025	10,363
The following balances were held at 31 March:	
Government banking service	10,363
Total cash and cash equivalents	10,363
	31 March 2024 £000
Balance at 23 January 2023	—
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	1,726
Balance at 31 March 2024	1,726
The following balances were held at 31 March:	
Government banking service	1,726
Total cash and cash equivalents	1,726

8. Trade and other payables

	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Trade payables	613	71
Accruals	1,157	957
Grant accruals	8,924	—
Social security and other taxation	170	155
Other payables	30	9
Total trade and other payables	10,894	1,192

Accruals include accrued expenditure in respect of amounts due to operating partners for the provision of communications, programme management and legal services, and fees for seconded staff, as well as other operating expenditure accruals, including employee benefits accruals in respect of performance-related pay and untaken annual leave.

The grant accrual is based on participants' verified expenditure claims, ensuring only eligible and incurred costs are recognised. Payments are made in arrears, contingent on grantee performance. As at 31 March 2025, the grant accrual was £8.9m (31 March 2024: £nil). ARIA considers the carrying amount of trade and other payables approximates to their fair value.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

9. Commitments

Capital commitments

ARIA has no contractual capital commitments as at 31 March 2025.

Research and development commitments

ARIA has multi-year contractual obligations for research and development expenditure. As of 31 March 2025, ARIA has signed research and development funding agreements totalling £295m. These agreements contain a 60-day break clause, allowing ARIA to terminate future payments with notice. The below table excludes any research and development expenditure to date.

While these agreements are not considered to be 'non-cancellable' as per the criteria of FReM 7.6.16, these commitments have been disclosed to provide a more complete view of ARIA's financial position given the material sums involved.

	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
By time		
Not later than one year	111,263	—
Later than one year, but not later than five years	166,884	—
Later than five years	—	—
Total research and development commitments	278,148	—

Other financial commitments

ARIA has entered into non-cancellable contracts, which are not leases or PFI contracts or other service concession arrangements, for a license to occupy, and event space hire. The total payments to which ARIA is committed are as follows.

	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Non-cancellable contracts		
Not later than one year	2,349	—
Later than one year, but not later than five years	2,516	—
Later than five years	—	—
Total	4,865	—

10. Contingent assets and liabilities

ARIA has no contingent assets or liabilities.

11. Related party transactions

ARIA is an Arm's Length Non-Departmental Body sponsored by DSIT, which is regarded as a related party.

During the year, ARIA had a few material transactions with DSIT within the DSIT group, including Innovate UK. These transactions primarily relate to information technology services and personnel on secondment. In accordance with the FReM IAS24 Related Party Disclosures interpretation, details of these transactions are not disclosed.

No other Board member, key management personnel or other related party has undertaken any material transactions with ARIA during the year, except for remuneration as disclosed in the Remuneration and Staff Report.

12. Events after the reporting period

These accounts have been authorised for issue by the Accounting Officer on the date the audit certificate and report were signed by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

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E03360110

Advanced
Research
+ Invention
Agency

ARIA

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Wed, 19 Nov 2025 at 19:06
Subject: Internal review of Environmental Information Regulations request - EIR Request, Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty
To: EIR requests at ARIA <info@aria.org.uk>

Dear Advanced Research and Invention Agency,

Please pass this on to the person who conducts EIR reviews.

I am writing to request an internal review of Advanced Research and Invention Agency's handling of my EIR request 'EIR Request, Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty'.

REASONS -

In response to my request you point me to a single page Sustainability Report in you accounts for the year ending 31/03/2025.

This focuses on sustainability and the Greening Government Commitments.

In relation to Biodiversity it states only 'ARIA has no landholdings and no independent estate. All of our office occupation in 2024/25 was within multi-occupied estates offices. We do not have a biodiversity action plan given this context.'

Regardless of you having no landholdings and no independent estate I understand you are still subject to the general biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021 which applies to all your functions and activities not just your office occupation.

I understand this requires amongst other things that you to consider how you can conserve and enhance biodiversity in all your functions and activities, and including in policy development, planning decisions, and procurement, not just land management and the like.

The Sustainability Report you provided does not appear to even acknowledge your biodiversity duty, indeed quite the opposite.

My request was 'Please provide information demonstrating your compliance with your Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty.'

Please internal review your response and either provide that information or confirm you hold nothing else of relevance to the request other than that sustainability report.

If the latter then please accept as validly presented to you here my complaint that you do not appear to have complied with your biodiversity duty.

A full history of my EIR request and all correspondence is available on the Internet at this address:

[REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,

19 January 2026

Dear [REDACTED],

Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (“EIR”) Request - Internal Review

This review will consider whether your request for information has been dealt with by the Advanced Research + Invention Agency (“**ARIA**”) in accordance with the requirements of the EIR.

Background

We refer to your request for information raised on 21 October 2025 under the EIR. In response to this request, ARIA responded on 18 November 2025 and referred to its Sustainability Report within its 2024/25 Annual Report. On 19 November 2025, you requested an internal review of ARIA’s response. Copies of this correspondence are attached at **Annex 1**.

Internal Review

Under regulation 5(1) of the EIR, a public authority that holds environmental information must make it available on request. Information is held by a public authority where it is in the authority’s possession or is held by another person on behalf of the authority (regulation 3(2) EIR). The EIR does not impose an obligation on public authorities to create new information in response to a request.

ARIA has provided you with a copy of its Annual Report which demonstrates that it has considered the biodiversity duty. For completeness, we note that a statement regarding ARIA’s biodiversity duty is also included in the agency’s Annual Report for 2023/4. For your convenience, a copy of this report is included at **Annex 2**. After undertaking consultations with relevant business areas, ARIA is satisfied it has conducted reasonable and thorough searches and based on those searches, we confirm it does not hold further information relevant to your request.

ARIA's Biodiversity Duty

In relation to ARIA's biodiversity duty, section 102 of the Environment Act 2021 requires public authorities to consider what action the authority can properly take, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective. Beyond this consideration, this section of the act does not place a public authority under any obligation to carry out a specific course of action, and authorities are free to conclude that there is no new action that they can properly take.

As shown by the information provided in our response, ARIA considered what action it can take to further the general biodiversity objective in advance of its 2023/24 and 2024/25 Annual Reports. Following this consideration, ARIA concluded that there was no new action that it could take to further the general biodiversity objective. As outlined in the Annual Reports, this decision is based on the fact that ARIA has no landholdings or independent estate, and occupies a small proportion of a multi-occupied office space.

Notwithstanding this, you may also be interested to learn more about ARIA's funded research that is being developed with the goal of combatting biodiversity loss. In particular, a research programme is currently under development within ARIA's Engineering Ecosystem Resilience opportunity space. Subject to approval, this proposed programme, Accelerated Adaptation, will explore potential pathways to accelerate the adaptation of species to prevent biodiversity loss and ecosystem breakdown, including the ethics and governance implications of such interventions. More information about this can be found on ARIA's website: [ARIA | Engineering Ecosystem Resilience](#). For your convenience, we have included an extract of this website at **Annex 3**. We have also included a copy of the proposed programme's thesis document at **Annex 4**.

We hope this addresses your request for an internal review of ARIA's original decision.

Yours sincerely,

ARIA

If you are still dissatisfied after our internal review, you may complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for further investigation who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Annex 1: Copies of previous correspondence

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Tue, 21 Oct 2025 at 20:35
Subject: Environmental Information Regulations request - EIR Request, Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty
To: EIR requests at ARIA <info@aria.org.uk>

Dear Advanced Research and Invention Agency,

Please provide information demonstrating your compliance with your Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

Please use this email address for all replies to this request:

[REDACTED]

Is info@aria.org.uk the wrong address for Environmental Information Regulations requests to Advanced Research and Invention Agency? If so, please contact us using this form:

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/change_request/new?body=aria

Disclaimer: This message and any reply that you make will be published on the internet. Our privacy and copyright policies:

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/officers>

For more detailed guidance on safely disclosing information, read the latest advice from the ICO:

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/ico-guidance-for-authorities>

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/ico-anonymisation-code>

Please note that in some cases publication of requests and responses will be delayed.

If you find this service useful as an FOI officer, please ask your web manager to link to us from your organisation's FOI page.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

18 November 2025

Dear [REDACTED],

Environmental Information Regulations 2004 ("EIR") Request

We are writing in response to your recent request for information to the Advanced Research + Invention Agency ("**ARIA**") dated 21 October 2025 in which you asked:

"Please provide information demonstrating your compliance with your Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty."

Response to EIR request

We enclose ARIA's Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 (see **Annex 1**). Please refer to page 21 which includes a Sustainability Report outlining the organisation's commitment to integrating sustainable practices into its operations and which includes information relevant to your request. ARIA continues to evaluate ways to minimise its environmental impact in accordance with the Greening Government Commitments and contribute to the UK's net zero objectives. ARIA has no landholdings and no independent estate. All of our office occupation in 2024/25 was within multi-occupied estates offices. We do not have a biodiversity action plan given this context.

Yours sincerely,

ARIA

You can ask us to review our response. If you want us to carry out a review, please let us know within 40 working days by emailing eir@aria.org.uk.

If you are still dissatisfied after our internal review, you may complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for further investigation who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Annex 1: ARIA's Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25

Annual Report + Accounts

2024–25

Advanced Research and Invention Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2024–25

for the year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

Presented to Parliament pursuant to paragraphs 14(5) and 15(4) of Schedule 1 to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 10 July 2025.

OGL

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This publication is available at www.gov.uk/official-documents.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at info@aria.org.uk.

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Introduction

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Chair's letter



“It’s a privilege to introduce ARIA’s second Annual Report and Accounts.”

I’ve always said that ARIA is the closest thing to a startup in the public sector. When I think about how I’d usually evaluate a startup hitting its second birthday — especially one with ambitions as bold and horizons as long as ARIA’s — my mind turns to two questions. First, has the organisation managed to achieve a critical mass of exceptional talent? And, second, are we starting to see the green shoots of impact, however nascent?

When I look at ARIA today, the answer to both questions is a resounding yes.

It’s been an outstanding year for building ARIA’s team. We recruited a second cohort of Programme Directors, who I know will bring an extraordinary vitality and creativity to ARIA’s next phase of work. Alongside them, we welcomed 18 new members to the ARIA team since our last report and I am constantly impressed by their ability, pace and dedication.

We were also fortunate to add three world-class Non-Executive Directors to our Board — Strive Masiyiwa, Nick McKeown, and Max Jaderberg — who bring

exceptional experience of championing and commercialising innovation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Sir Patrick Vallance and Sir Dave McMillan, our two departing Non-Executive Directors, who stepped down this year after making foundational contributions to ARIA’s early development.

The second critical measure of success for ARIA is impact. This year marked the transition from setup mode to delivery, demonstrated by the launch of our first seven programmes, which are now actively funding pioneering research across synthetic plants, precision neurotech, and beyond. These are deliberately high-risk pursuits, but their potential upside is enormous. If successful, they will not only generate scientific breakthroughs, but create entirely new markets and industries that transform the UK and the world.

Central to our impact strategy is our selection of Activation Partners — organisations working within our opportunity spaces to give them the best shot of maximum impact. We’ve always said that the path to scale for ARIA programmes lies not in public sector procurement, but scientific entrepreneurship. Our Activation Partners play an essential role in bringing this to life, by providing the expertise, networks, and entrepreneurial pathways to bring breakthroughs from the lab into real-world applications.

The inaugural ARIA Summit held in May 2025, brought this vision to life. It was a wonderful opportunity to showcase publicly the community, ambition and creativity that’s at the heart of what we do.

ARIA is an enormous group effort. The Board and I want to thank Ilan and the team for everything they’re doing to make it a success — and to acknowledge the support and contributions of the wider R&D ecosystem across the country. Together, we are laying the foundations for scientific and technological breakthroughs that can power new industries, strengthen the UK’s future competitiveness, and deliver lasting public value.

Matt Clifford CBE
Chair

Chief Executive's Statement



“We founded ARIA on the belief that the UK has the talent, expertise, institutions, and networks to turn this mission into reality. Though we’re working on decadal timescales, early signs suggest that belief was well placed.”

ARIA enters its third year with the same ambition that we began with — to unlock scientific and technological breakthroughs that transform industries, lives, and communities across the UK and beyond.

Parliament created ARIA with a belief that the UK’s scientific talent, institutions, and entrepreneurial drive can translate that mission into reality. Seeing the incredible community that’s grown to support our mission this year, we can confidently say that belief holds true.

A year ago, our Programme Directors (PDs) defined ARIA’s first opportunity spaces — areas where scientific breakthroughs can catalyse a step change in economic growth and social prosperity. Today, we are funding nearly 200 R&D Creator teams to redefine what’s possible in areas ranging from synthetic biology to AI, robotics, and climate. The consequences of success in any one of these spaces are profound.

Our scalable neurotech teams are developing new tools to treat neurological and psychiatric disorders that affect hundreds of millions of people worldwide, including the first clinical trial of the world’s most cutting-edge braincomputer interfaces with NHS patients. Our programmable plants teams are applying cutting-edge synthetic biology to engineer new traits in plants, from drought resistance to novel material production — a generational opportunity to transform global agriculture from the ground up. And the list goes on.

All told, our initial programmes have made more than £400m in funding available to the UK’s R&D ecosystem over the next three to five years. In line with our mandate, this funding is supporting researchers in entirely new ways that amplify the strengths of UKRI and our partners across the ecosystem. But to succeed, the researchers we fund will have to achieve more than scientific breakthroughs. They’ll need those breakthroughs to spark valuable new capabilities, markets, and industries. To help with that, we launched Activation Partners — a coalition of nine pioneering organisations across science entrepreneurship, investment, and ecosystem building — to ensure that when ARIA research breakthroughs emerge, they turn into real impact. This initiative, and our broader focus on science entrepreneurship, are already bearing fruit. Our funding has already catalysed the creation of eight new UK startups and seven new UK subsidiaries of global firms.

Of course, when working at the edge of the possible, nothing is guaranteed from the start. Our job is to create the conditions where the boldest ideas can find their footing, then learn from the dead ends and move with conviction toward the paths that show promise. Fulfilling our mandate depends on high ambitions, and on a robust portfolio from which the world-changing outcomes can emerge. That in mind, we are thrilled to introduce ARIA’s second cohort of Programme Directors — eight entrepreneurial researchers from diverse backgrounds who believe the UK is the best place in the world to realise their visions for the future. They are already activating key parts of the research community that ARIA has not yet engaged, and whose bold ambitions we will need to succeed.

Onwards.

Ilan Gur
CEO

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About ARIA

This is ARIA's second Annual Report and Accounts and covers the year to 31 March 2025.

ARIA was officially launched by the UK Government in January 2023 under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022 (the ARIA Act 2022) as a new research and development (R&D) funding agency with an ambitious risk appetite. ARIA is an independent non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and with an initial allocation of approximately £800m.

Mission

ARIA's mission is to unlock scientific and technological breakthroughs that benefit everyone. Our success will be measured by the lives, industries and communities transformed by ARIA's work.

[↗](#) For further information regarding ARIA — please see our [Corporate Plan](#).

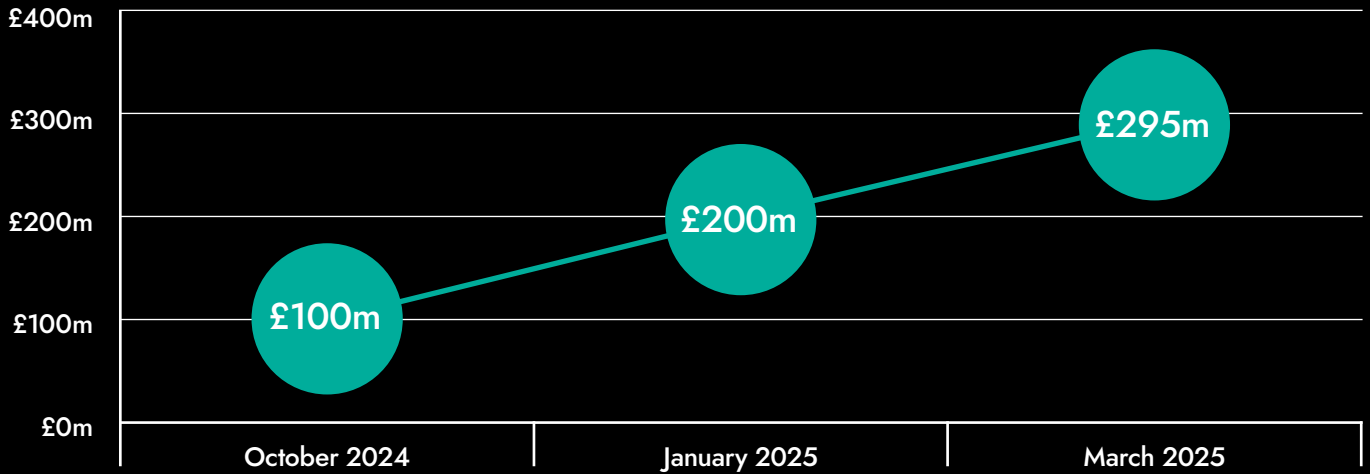
Transformative new technologies are essential to accelerating economic growth. Bold, speculative R&D has been proven to be the most effective way to achieve this. DARPA, which inspired ARIA, is a prime example. The innovations it has catalysed — such as the internet, mRNA vaccines, personal computing, and GPS — have driven non-linear growth for the US economy and made a profound, positive impact on society.

To achieve a comparable impact on the UK economy, ARIA is developing a robust portfolio of opportunity spaces. With the independence and flexibility to strategically manage a strong research portfolio — doubling down on the highest potential spaces and exiting the less promising ones — ARIA is helping reposition the UK as a global leader by enabling research breakthroughs that can power world-leading companies and frontier industries.



ARIA also funds Activation Partners, external organisations that are embedding science entrepreneurship across our work by supporting new ventures, empowering talent, and accelerating research-to-impact efforts. They are tasked with building and delivering a range of initiatives across the UK from building dedicated scientist training programmes to developing new prototype inventions emerging from ARIA's opportunity spaces. This partnership model enhances ARIA's ability to drive innovation and supports the broader UK R&D ecosystem.

Highlights

Research and development funding agreements signed



Key milestones in the year to 31 March 2025

<p>MARCH 2024 First programme funding solicitation launched</p>	<p>JULY 2024 First programme projects begin</p>	<p>JANUARY 2025 Second cohort of Programme Directors selected</p> 
<p>MAY 2024 First seed projects begin</p>		
		<p>OCTOBER 2024 Nine Activation Partners announced to spur science entrepreneurship</p>

The Board

ARIA's Board (the Board) oversees performance and supports the Executive Team in effective decision making and strategic direction. The Board is also responsible for monitoring and supporting the optimisation of risk within ARIA to ensure it pursues ambitious research, development and exploitation with a high tolerance to failure, while maintaining effective governance, risk management and internal controls.

Our Board comprises the Chair, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Non-Executive Board members, an Independent member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, as well as four Executive Team members.

As of April 2025, we welcome three new Non-Executive Board members, Strive Masiyiwa, Nick McKeown, and Max Jaderberg.



Matt Clifford
Chair
Co-Founder,
Entrepreneur
First and Prime
Minister's Adviser
on AI Opportunities



Dame Angela McLean
Non-Executive Director
Government Chief
Scientific Adviser
Commissioner and
Head of the Government
Science and
Engineering Profession



Stephen Cohen
Non-Executive Director
UK Civil Service
Commissioner and
Chair of JPMorgan
Japanese Investment
Trust plc



Sarah Hunter
Non-Executive Director
Technology and public
policy advisor



Dame Kate Bingham
Non-Executive Director
Venture Capitalist
and former Chair of
the Vaccine Taskforce



Sue Hunt
Independent member
of the Audit and Risk
Assurance Committee*
Chartered Accountant
and Vice Chair
of The Connected
Places Catapult

* ARIA is able to appoint independent members to its Board sub-committees under the ARIA Act 2022.

Appointed 1 April 2025



Strive Masiyiwa
Non-Executive Director
Global telecoms
and technology
entrepreneur, investor
and philanthropist



Nick McKeown
Non-Executive Director
Professor Emeritus,
Stanford and Senior
Fellow, Intel



Max Jaderberg
Non-Executive Director
Chief AI Officer,
Isomorphic Labs
(Alphabet)

Departures



Sir Patrick Vallance
Non-Executive Director
Former Government
Chief Scientific Adviser
Patrick Vallance resigned from the Board on 16 July 2024 in order to take up the position of Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation.



Sir David MacMillan
Non-Executive Director
Nobel laureate
and organic chemist
David MacMillan resigned from the Board on 5 March 2025.

The Executive Team

The Executive Team provides a blend of startup, non-profit and public sector experience. Our Chief Executive (and Accounting Officer) previously served as a founding Programme Director at the United States' Advanced Research Projects Agency—Energy (ARPA-E), an organisation which, alongside its sister agency the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), originally inspired ARIA's creation.

The team totals 53 staff as at 31 March 2025 (see page 40 of the Staff Report for further detail), as well as working closely with outsourced operating partners to enable rapid scaling. Further details can be found in the People and culture section and Staff Report.

**Ilan Gur**

Chief Executive and
Accounting Officer

Ilan founded Activate.org, an organisation that empowers scientists and engineers to bring ground-breaking research to market. Prior to this, Ilan built two science-based startups and served as a founding Programme Director at ARPA-E.

**Pippy James**

Chief Product Officer

Pippy was previously founder and CEO of a women's health startup. She was also Global Product Manager at Entrepreneur First, which supports the creation of technology companies internationally.

**Antonia Jenkinson**

Chief Finance and Operating Officer

Antonia was previously CFO of the UK Atomic Energy Authority. Prior to this, she was CFO/COO in various private sector organisations after a career in corporate finance and private equity with Apax Partners/Altium Capital.

**Dan Cole**

Chief of Staff

Dan served as COO at UK healthtech startup Accurx, which supported the care of over 50m NHS patients. Prior to this, Dan worked in strategy consulting focusing on sustainability.

External advisors

Our network of advisors is composed of individuals who have pushed the limits of the possible across a range of disciplines and sectors. Their expertise, insights and connections are an invaluable resource for our teams.



Artur Ekert
Professional Fellow, Quantum
Physics and Cryptography,
University of Oxford



Arun Majumdar
Founding Director, ARPA-E
and Dean, Stanford Doerr School
of Sustainability



Sir Demis Hassabis
Founder and CEO, DeepMind



Hayaatun Sillem
CEO, Royal Academy of Engineering



Katie Rae
CEO and Managing Partner,
The Engine



Özlem Türeci
Co-founder and Chief Medical
Officer, BioNTech



Patrick Collison
Co-founder and CEO,
Stripe

Performance analysis

This report outlines our performance against our priorities for the year to 31 March 2025. We have not reported on performance trends given the absence of historic comparative data.

Performance against 2024–25 strategic objectives

1. Launch first programmes across our opportunity spaces

In 2024–25, all seven of ARIA’s inaugural research programmes went out to open tender, alongside multiple seed funding calls. While we initially targeted six programmes in delivery by December, we adapted timelines based on early lessons from our tendering process. By year-end, three programmes were underway, and we focused on securing funding commitments — ultimately exceeding our £208m target, with £219m under contract. We also launched core reporting systems across our programme, seed, and activation funding streams, and surpassed internal targets for both team satisfaction and Creator experience.

2. Integrate science entrepreneurship across everything we do

We met or exceeded all targets under this pillar, embedding science entrepreneurship into ARIA’s core. By September, activation partners were fully contracted; 75% of our new Programme Directors brought substantial startup or industry experience (vs. a 50% target); and over 30% of shortlisted R&D applicants came from startups or industry.

3. Establish a strong and inclusive working culture aligned with our values

We made strategic decisions to maximise near-term impact and focus Programme Director capacity. Postponing the inaugural ARIA Summit to May 2025 allowed us to prioritise finalising programme contracts and relaunching our website. The new platform now supports multiple funding streams and calls, expanding our reach and improving engagement across the Creator community.

ARIA supports the government’s mission to fuel economic growth by driving innovation, investment, and technology adoption in the future economy. In its first two years, ARIA has approved seven programmes, amounting to £471m of which, £219m of funding agreements were awarded and contracted in the year. In addition, 27 seed agreements (£15m) and nine Activation Partners (£61m) were awarded and contracted. The second cohort of PDs will launch programmes from autumn 2025, with spending commencing in 2026.

The achievements so far from ARIA’s entrepreneurship-focused translation strategy provide strong early indicators of the potential impact of expanding its portfolio of opportunity spaces.

First, ARIA’s R&D calls are attracting startups and industry, with over 40% of funding allocated to companies — including 15% that catalysed the formation of new UK-based organisations.

Secondly, ARIA is amplifying the strengths of the UK ecosystem, funding projects in almost every region, and working closely with the UK’s science base. Examples include catalysing a new AI research startup in Glasgow; collaborating with UKRI’s NERC and NPL; and, supporting a first-in-world NHS clinical trial.

Thirdly, our Activation Partners initiative has already compelled top-tier private sector engagement, prompting at least five US organisations, including two of the world’s top deep tech VC funds, to bring their expertise in science entrepreneurship to the UK.

ARIA was established later than anticipated, which delayed the commencement of spending. As a result, the funding plan deviates from the original business case and will be reviewed in future spending reviews.

Performance analysis continued

Financial review

During ARIA's second full year in operation, spend increased from £7.9m for the preceding 12 months to £30.7m. Of this, £16.5m related to research funding. The total value of research and development funding agreements signed as at 31 March 2025 was £295m.

ARIA's financial target applies to Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) budget lines — capital (CDEL) and resource (RDEL). ARIA is required to advise DSIT of its total forecast expenditure for the year and, in line with the requirements from HM Treasury, to adhere as closely as possible to this financial target.

The table below details the DEL financial target and final outturn, along with the variance between the two.

1 April 2024–31 March 2025

	Financial target £000s	Outturn £000s	Variance £000s
CDEL	27,500	30,669	(3,169)
RDEL	85	56	29
Total	27,585	30,725	(3,140)

Research and development expenditure comprised £16.5m (54%) of total expenditure, a proportion that is expected to grow as ARIA's portfolio of opportunity spaces scale. Staff costs of £6.4m and other operating expenditure of £7.7m comprised the remainder, alongside a minimal amount for depreciation and loss on disposal.

The summary risks are outlined in the Governance Statement.

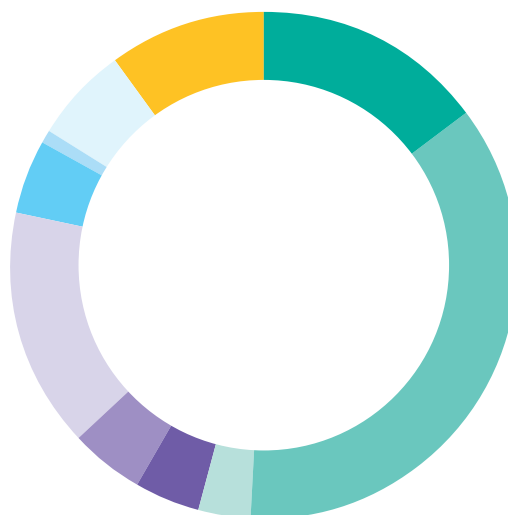
Where we operate

Our staff are predominantly based in a shared London office facility, with a smaller space in Cambridge.

ARIA's first cohort of PDs are from a range of research areas, geographies and sectors. The second cohort of PDs, technical leaders with hands-on experience in translating ideas into real-world impact, have been recruited after a global campaign and joined ARIA on 1 April 2025 to begin developing their programmes.

Where and who we funded by value

During the year, ARIA funded projects in almost every region, amplifying the strengths of the UK ecosystem by collaborating with, and funding, a range of research institutions, academia, and industry partners.

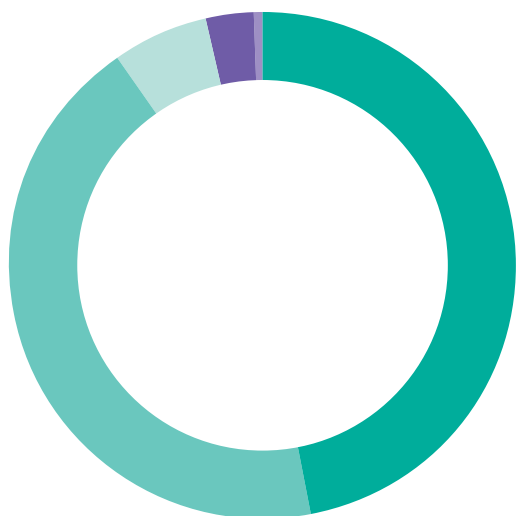


East of England	14.9%
London	36.0%
North East	3.3%
North West	4.2%
Scotland	4.8%
South East	15.2%
South West	4.7%
West Midlands	0.8%
Yorkshire and the Humber	6.2%
Non-UK*	9.9%

* Non-UK countries comprises of the US, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Greenland, Italy, and the Netherlands.

Performance analysis continued

Where and who we funded by value continued



University	47.0%
Company*	43.4%
Not for profit	6.1%
Public sector organisation	3.1%
Individual	0.4%

* Of the funding awarded to companies, 65.5% was to SMEs.

Going concern

In line with HM Treasury’s Financial Reporting Guidance, the information presented in these Financial Statements is based on the assumption that ARIA will continue to operate in the future, with no changes to our role or through legislation currently expected.

In common with other non-departmental public bodies across government, ARIA’s future funding is to be met by Grant in Aid from its sponsoring department, DSIT. Approval of Grant in Aid for 2025/26 has already been allocated. Based on this information, it has therefore been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of these Financial Statements.

Our opportunity spaces

ARIA’s first set of PDs, with their associated programmes, are listed below within the relevant opportunity spaces.



Scalable Neural Interfaces

Neurological and neuropsychiatric disorders have overwhelming societal and economic impacts. We need to build highly targeted, minimally invasive technologies that enable us to interface, at scale, with the human brain.

Programme Director **Jacques Carolan** leads the **Precision Neurotechnologies** programme, which aims to achieve breakthroughs in treating brain disorders where deep brain stimulation has shown promise. Projects funded so far include supporting a first-in-world NHS clinical trial.



Jacques Carolan



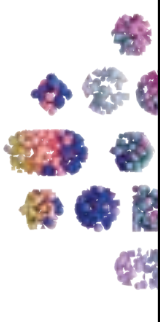
Programmable Plants

Plants enable human life and offer solutions to key challenges like food insecurity, climate change, and environmental degradation. Programmable plants can secure our future, ensuring food and a sustainable biosphere for future generations.

Programme Director **Angie Burnett** leads the **Synthetic Plants** programme, which aims to develop synthetic chromosomes and chloroplasts that are viable in a living plant. This will move beyond what can be accomplished with gene editing, and imbue plants with new functionalities, from reducing agricultural water use to protecting crop yields in uncertain conditions.



Angie Burnett



Mathematics for Safe AI

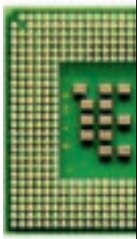
We don’t yet have known technical solutions to ensure that powerful AI systems interact as intended with real-world systems and populations. A combination of scientific world models and mathematical proofs may be the answer to ensuring AI provides transformational benefit without harm.

Programme Director **Davidad Dalrymple** leads the **Safeguarded AI** programme, which combines scientific world models and mathematical proofs to construct a ‘gatekeeper’ AI system tasked with understanding, and reducing, the risks of other AI agents. This would lay the foundations for AI automation over the next 10–30 years resulting in the potential for enormous GDP growth.



David ‘davidad’ Dalrymple

Our opportunity spaces continued



Nature Computes Better

We can redefine the way computers process information by exploiting principles found ubiquitously in nature. In doing so, we can better understand how the natural world around us performs computation and build dramatically more efficient computers.

Programme Director **Suraj Bramhavar** leads the **Scaling Compute** programme, which aims to redefine the way computer hardware processes information. One of its key objectives is to seed the creation of a new branch of the semiconductor industry, with key players anchored in the UK.



Suraj Bramhavar



Scoping Our Planet

Current earth system measurements have serious gaps that lead to uncertainties in weather forecasting and climate predictions. By harnessing the power of optics we can fill these gaps, equipping society to respond confidently to the climate crisis.

Programme Directors **Gemma Bale** and **Sarah Bohndiek** co-lead the **Forecasting Tipping Points** programme to develop a proof of concept for an early warning system to detect climate tipping points. Such a system could provide significant benefits by guiding infrastructure investments or enabling interventions to protect at-risk regions.



Gemma Bale and Sarah Bohndiek



Smarter Robot Bodies

Throughout history, humans have used tools and machines to reduce the burden of physical labour. We are entering a new era with robots smart enough to act independently in complex and dynamic environments. But to reap the benefits of smarter machines, we need smarter bodies.

Within this space, **Jenny Read** leads the **Robot Dexterity** programme. By advancing robot dexterity, this programme seeks to position the UK as a leader in robot technology and manufacturing. Enhanced robot dexterity would also unlock new potential across existing industries, including the medical, nuclear, and space sectors.



Jenny Read



Future Proofing Our Climate and Weather

If an abrupt alteration in a climate system were to unfold, we would have no tools to mitigate the effects. This research will drive understanding of how we might intervene to responsibly manage the climate and weather.

Programme Director **Mark Symes** leads the **Exploring Climate Cooling** programme, which investigates whether approaches designed to delay or avert climate tipping points could be feasible, scalable, and safe. Importantly, the global cost of tipping points, if incurred, may run into the tens of trillions of dollars.



Mark Symes

Activation Partners

Commercialisation is a critical challenge in unlocking the impact of the UK's R&D system. Our programmes are designed to not only have the potential for breakthroughs, but are set up to translate those into transformative economics and social value for the UK.

To meet this challenge, we've created nine activation partnerships to support our teams to move beyond the lab and into the world by designing for scale from inception. Some of our partners are already established players in the UK, while others are setting up operations here for the first time. Together, they will help embed science entrepreneurship across our work, creating new scientific talent pipelines, nucleating new communities, fostering novel IP, and facilitating more investments within the UK R&D ecosystem.

The networks that Activation Partners help build and grow are already creating impact across the UK. Our partners 50 Years, CIC Venture Cafe, and Pillar VC are establishing UK entities for the first time, bringing global expertise and investment into the heart of the UK's R&D ecosystem. We're also working to co-create, launch, and scale new innovations; ARIA's partnership with Cambridge University Health Partners (CUHP) is bringing together scientists, clinicians, and entrepreneurs to translate speculative scientific breakthroughs in neurotechnology into practical applications.



Amodo Design is a Sheffield-based engineering team working alongside ARIA to develop new scientific equipment for research and prototype inventions from our opportunity spaces, speeding up the journey from discovery to product, enhancing early-stage traction.



Cambridge University Health Partners is bringing together leaders from science, health, and business organisations. Together, this consortium — Cambridge NeuroWorks — will support ARIA's Scalable Neural Interfaces opportunity space. Working with ARIA, CUHP will launch programmes designed to accelerate innovation in neurotechnology by enabling scientists, clinicians, and entrepreneurs to collaborate and translate speculative science into practical applications at scale, while fostering a vibrant UK-wide neurotech community.



Convergent Research is identifying and developing proposals for 1–2 Focused Research Organisations (FROs) in ARIA's opportunity spaces. FROs are a new scientific institutional model designed to make fast progress by using team science and systems engineering to tackle research bottlenecks.

Activation Partners continued



Venture Café Global Institute is bringing their global innovation community to the UK in partnership with ARIA. Our UK hubs will energise and connect the nation's technology ecosystem, bringing together innovators, entrepreneurs, and small businesses through free, high-impact weekly gatherings and programming. Venture Café London will be joined by two additional UK cities creating a powerful network that opens new opportunities for collaboration between the UK's top tech talent and the wider world. Venture Café's mission is to connect talent within ARIA's current and emerging opportunity spaces to the broader UK and global innovation ecosystem, advancing progress and ensuring scalable impact. Their community space is free and open to all innovators to help make things happen.



Nucleate UK is partnering with ARIA to accelerate the development of new technologies and communities in the eco and biotech fields by supporting ARIA Creators. Nucleate will identify and support top UK scientific talent through targeted programmes like the Activator — Nucleate's flagship accelerator helping academics navigate de-risking, the spinout process, and fundraising. Through this partnership, Nucleate will build a national biotech network and help transform early-stage ideas into deep tech companies — guiding teams to deliver real-world impact.



Pillar VC is launching the Encode fellowship in partnership with ARIA. Encode is a year-long fellowship for top AI researchers tackling high-impact scientific challenges in ARIA's opportunity spaces. Fellows are embedded in leading UK labs to apply AI to areas like climate modeling, neuromorphic computing, and robotics. Fellows receive a competitive salary, compute, partnerships, and datasets, and join a vibrant community of scientists, founders, and engineers. Encode Fellows advance frontier research and help launch deep tech ventures and research organisations.



Google DeepMind is working with us in a non-funded partnership to identify projects designed to accelerate the impact of ARIA-backed research. This will include leveraging its team of multidisciplinary researchers to provide access, insights, and connectivity to researchers, and drive applications within our opportunity spaces.



Renaissance Philanthropy is building the UK Horizons Programme to act as a force multiplier for ARIA's opportunity spaces. The programme seeks to supercharge the UK's R&D ecosystem by building networks of innovators and increasing their ambition, expanding the diversity of science translation mechanisms, strengthening the UK's philanthropic ecosystem, and building research translation strategies to increase the scale and impact of ARIA's opportunity spaces.



Fifty Years is delivering its company creation programme 5050 in the UK to equip scientists and engineers with the necessary skills to start and build world-changing companies in, and around, ARIA's opportunity space.

Our people and culture

ARIA recognises that a team with a wide breadth of diversity and experience is essential for a working environment that enhances creativity, knowledge sharing, and thoughtful decision making.

We are dedicated to creating a safe and inclusive workspace based on fairness and respect. One that encourages talented people of any background to produce their best work of the highest quality.

Our diversity

All data is self reported. This team data includes our 61 staff members (employees, secondees and contractors), and our outsourced operating partners who work alongside us embedded within our team.

- Our team spans five decades, with the biggest representation of the team in the 25–29 bracket (29%).
- At least 12% are LGBTQIA+ (15% of employees have not disclosed).
- We have nine different religions and belief systems represented.
- At least 8% have a disability (15% of our team have not disclosed).
- At least 11% are neurodiverse (18% of our team have not disclosed).
- Of our team, 49% are based outside of London.

56%
female

40%
male

4%
non-binary
or transgender

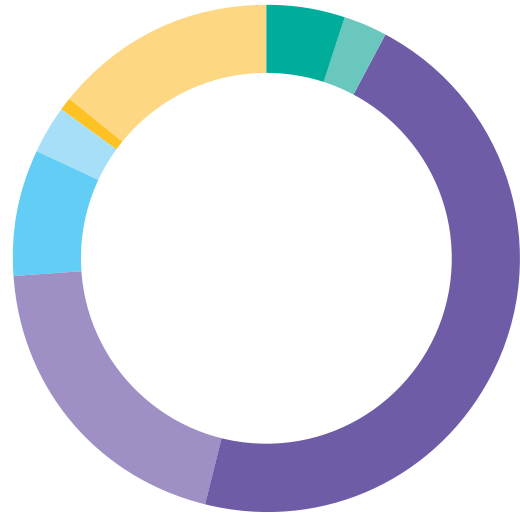
8+
different races

30
different ethnicities

15
different nationalities

9
different religions
and belief systems

Primary career backgrounds prior to ARIA



Academic	5%
Mixed	3%
Private	46%
Public	20%
Third	8%
This is my first role	3%
Other	1%
Did not respond	14%

Sustainability Report

Scope 3 Business Travel Emissions

	Measurement	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	25 Jan 2023 to 31 Mar 2024
Business travel*	Total miles (per FTE)	643,224 (12,778)	214,300 (5,986)
	Tonnes CO ₂ e (per FTE)	154.4 tonnes (3.1)	36.2 tonnes (1.0)
	Expenditure (per FTE)	£265,902 (£5,286)	£51,050 (£1,426)
	Miles — air travel (per FTE)	536,806 (10,672)	147,600 (4,123)
	Tonnes CO ₂ e — air travel (per FTE)	141.6 tonnes (2.8)	32.8 tonnes (0.9)
	Expenditure — air travel (per FTE)	£141,006 (£2,803)	£22,981 (£642)

* The above Scope 3 emissions from ARIA's business travel are calculated by ARIA's travel management company and a report is provided on an annual basis.

At ARIA, we are dedicated to integrating sustainable practices into our business operations. Since our establishment we have initiated efforts to assess ways that we can minimise our environmental impact in accordance with the Greening Government Commitments (GGCs) and contribute to achieving UK net zero goals.

During the year, organisational policies were developed with sustainable considerations, for example within our expenses and travel policy, which aim to keep ARIA's impact on the environment to a minimum. We will further develop the approach we take to environmental and climate impact, and sustainability, in 2025/26.

Our sustainability report has been prepared in alignment with the latest HM Treasury guidance for public bodies on sustainability reporting, and will serve as a baseline, against which we can benchmark our future progress.

Energy and waste consumption

All our energy, waste and water consumption arises from our office occupation. During the year, we occupied managed office facilities provided by Fora (where our use represents less than 15% of the building), hot-desking spaces within the Alan Turing Institute's occupation of the British Library (under 1% of the building), and a small office in Cambridge. The environmental impacts of our Fora and British Library occupations are disclosed in Fora's and the Alan Turing Institute's annual reports and accounts, respectively. In each case, our footprint is not separately metered and meaningful consumption data are therefore unavailable; consequently, Scope 1 and 2 emissions data do not feature in our report.

We make no use of consumer single-use plastic. For example, we provide biodegradable or reusable glass and tableware for staff.

Business travel

ARIA operates a hybrid working model where staff are able to balance the benefits of collaboration in the office with the flexibility of working from home. This adoption of smarter and more flexible ways of working, supported by our IT and digital platforms, reduces the need for staff to travel and our overall environmental footprint.

However, some business travel remains essential as we balance the need for regional presence and coverage across the UK. If travel is required, our travel policy encourages staff to assess whether their planned travel is essential. Where a business trip is necessary, then staff are encouraged to use the most sustainable form of transport.

Our business travel measurements during the year, both total and per full-time equivalent staff (FTE), are detailed above.

IT policy

We align with the GGCs and the associated Greening government: ICT and digital services strategy. Our technology estate is provided by outsourced providers. As a new organisation, with no legacy technology, we have taken a cloud-first approach to designing our technology infrastructure. We therefore make use of cloud-based hosting and associated applications. This virtual infrastructure ensures we use resources efficiently and supports our hybrid working workforce strategy and reduces the need for unnecessary travel for face-to-face meetings.

Sustainable procurement

The Procurement team has developed, and will be implementing, a Social Value Policy, aligning where possible with the government's wider procurement policy relating to Social Value.

Biodiversity

ARIA has no landholdings and no independent estate. All of our office occupation in 2024/25 was within multi-occupied estates offices. We do not have a biodiversity action plan given this context.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 9 July 2025

3

Accountability Report

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Corporate Governance Report

Directors' Report

The Corporate Governance Report sets out the governance arrangements of ARIA and comprises:

1. the Directors' Report;
2. the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities; and
3. the Governance Statement.

ARIA is an independent non-departmental public body of DSIT.

The following items, required as part of the Director's Report are included in the Governance Statement on page 25:

- composition of the ARIA Board;
- disclosure of other interests of the ARIA Board; and
- disclosure of personal data-related incidents.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

The ARIA Act 2022 requires ARIA to prepare a statement of accounts in the form specified by the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State for DSIT has directed ARIA to prepare a statement of accounts for the financial year to 31 March 2025 in the form, and on the basis set out in the, Accounts Direction.

The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of ARIA and of its income and expenditure, statement of financial position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FRoM) and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by DSIT, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the FRoM have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts;
- prepare the accounts on the going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable, and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Principal Accounting Officer for DSIT designated the Chief Executive as ARIA's Accounting Officer.

The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer are set out in Managing Public Money published by HM Treasury. These include responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable to, for keeping proper records, and for safeguarding ARIA's assets.

Preparation and audit of the accounts

The accounts have been prepared under a direction issued by DSIT and are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that ARIA's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

I also confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts are fair, balanced and understandable, and I take personal responsibility for judgements made to ensure that they are fair, balanced and understandable.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 9 July 2025

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement

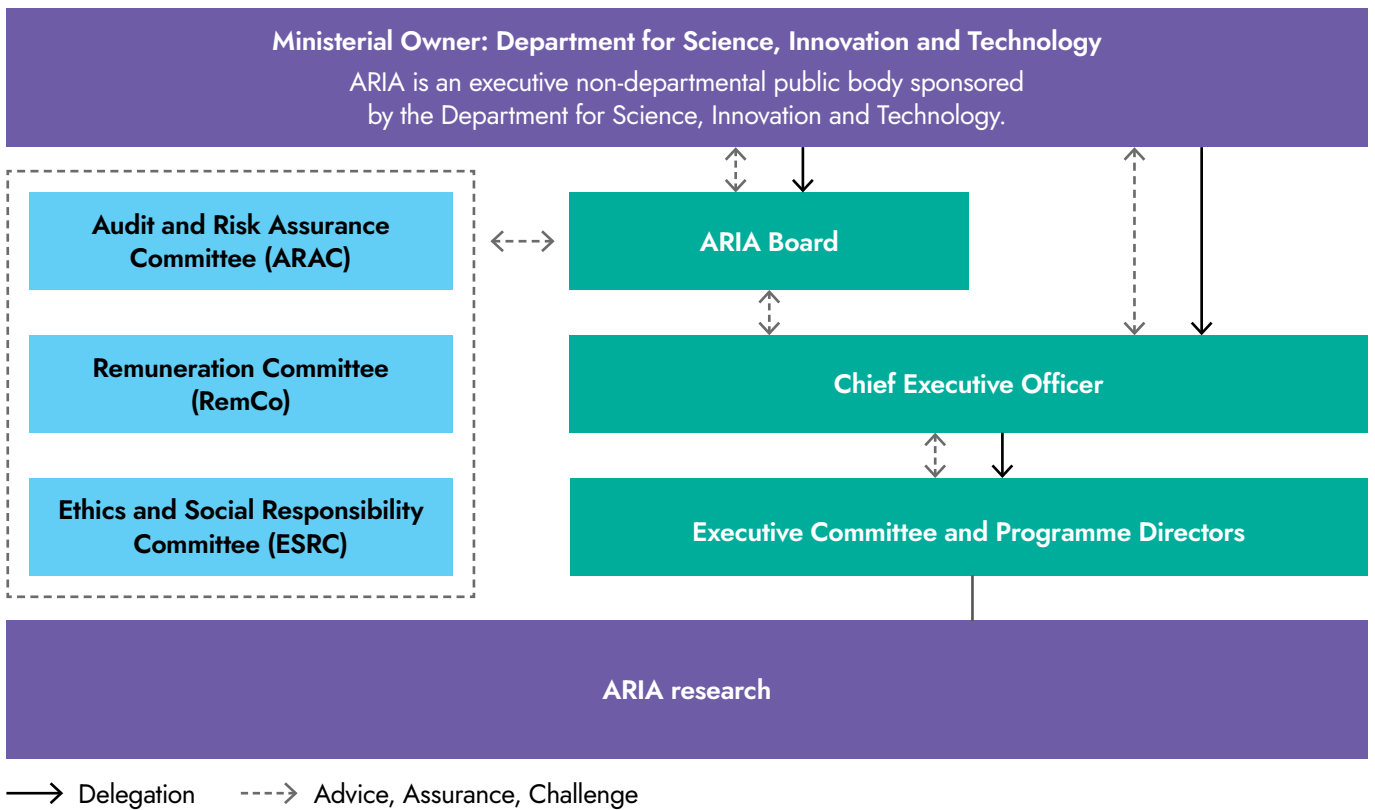
The Accounting Officer is responsible for maintaining a system of internal control that supports the achievement of ARIA’s policies, aims and objectives, while safeguarding public funds and departmental assets. This is in accordance with the responsibilities assigned in the HM Treasury publication Managing Public Money.

This Governance Statement describes how these duties have been carried out by the Accounting Officer and the supporting structure in place in the year. The Accounting Officer ensured that proportionate controls were in place at all times, and that these were applied in a system of effective governance.

Governance structure

ARIA is accountable to Parliament through our parent department, DSIT, for the funds it expends. ARIA’s working relationship and lines of accountability with DSIT are defined in its Framework Agreement, and Delegation and Allocation Letter made to the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer. These documents are subject to periodic review. The ARIA Framework Document was reviewed and published in February 2023. ARIA also maintains active engagement and a transparent relationship with its parent department.

ARIA Governance structure



Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement continued

The Board

The Board is the main body for oversight within ARIA. The key objectives of the Board are as follows:

- agreeing an annual strategic and operational plan for ARIA;
- supporting the Chief Executive to help ARIA achieve its objectives, in alignment with those set out in the ARIA Act 2022;
- ensuring effective stewardship of ARIA's funding;
- agreeing ARIA's risk appetite, and monitoring and supporting optimisation of risk within ARIA to ensure it pursues ambitious research, development and exploitation with a high tolerance to failure, while maintaining effective governance, risk management and internal controls;
- advising the Secretary of State for DSIT where there are any significant areas of concern that may impact on ARIA's ability to fulfil its objectives; and
- representing ARIA to help promote its activities and improve its connectivity in the UK and abroad.

The Board comprises the Chair, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, five other Non-Executive Board members and the founding Chief Executive — appointed by the Secretary of State for DSIT — as well as three other Executive Team members, including a Chief Finance and Operating Officer — appointed by the Chair.

Board members, and any roles as part of the three sub-committees of the Board as at 31 March 2024 — the Remuneration Committee (RemCo), the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), and the Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee (ESRC) — are listed below.

Appointee	Role	Sub-committee	Dates served
Matt Clifford	Chair	N/A	Full year
Ilan Gur	Chief Executive	N/A	Full year
Dame Kate Bingham	Non-Executive Director	RemCo (Chair)	Full year
Stephen Cohen	Non-Executive Director	ARAC (Chair)	Full year
Sarah Hunter	Non-Executive Director	ESRC (Chair) RemCo	Full year
Sir David MacMillan	Non-Executive Director	ESRC	Full year
Sir Patrick Vallance*	Non-Executive Director	ARAC ESRC	01 April 2024– 5 July 2024
Dame Angela McLean	Non-Executive Director	N/A	Full year
Antonia Jenkinson	Chief Finance & Operating Officer	N/A	Full year
Pippy James	Chief Product Officer	N/A	Full year
Dan Cole	Interim Chief of Staff	N/A	Full year
Independent member		Sub-committee	Dates served
Sue Hunt	Sub-committee Independent Member	ARAC	Full year

* Sir Patrick Vallance was a member of the ARIA Board in his role as Government Chief Scientific Adviser. This terminated when he stepped down from this role in April 2023. He was subsequently appointed an independent Non-Executive Director in June 2023.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement continued

During the year, the Board held four regular Board meetings. The key areas of focus for the Board during the year included:

- development of ARIA strategy and its performance against strategic OKRs;
- R&D Programme updates, new initiatives, the commercial and funding operating model, and budgets;
- ethical and social responsibility considerations;
- people updates, Director recruitment and EDI strategy;
- financial performance, internal and external audit results, and risk management;
- information security and cyber protection; and
- the Board, and its committees', Terms of Reference, and effectiveness.

Conflicts of interest

All Board members are required to declare any personal or business interests, which may influence their judgement in discharging their obligations, or which may be perceived to do so. These interests are published on ARIA's website at: www.aria.org.uk/transparency.

Board effectiveness

ARIA's second effectiveness review of the Board was completed in March 2025, following the first review in 2024. The results were that the Board and its Committees effectively: perform high-quality reviews of ARIA's strategy and its implementation; monitor the agency's optimisation of risk in line with the ARIA Act, while maintaining effective governance, risk management and internal controls; ensure effective stewardship of ARIA's funding; and, provide the appropriate balance of challenge and support to the Executive Team. The sole improvement identified was to elevate the detail presented to the Board on value-generating milestones for each programme and Activation Partner, enabling better portfolio-level risk optimisation.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) is a permanent sub-committee of the Board to support it, and the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer, in their responsibilities for risk, control and governance. It also oversees internal and external audit arrangements covering both financial and non-financial systems.

The ARAC met three times during the year to review ARIA's performance, the framework for assessing and managing controls, fraud and risk, and the appointment of internal and external auditors.

The results of the internal audit team's work, including assurance ratings for individual audits and summaries on the progress of the implementation of agreed actions, are reported at each meeting. The ARAC reviewed the external audit planning work and final audit reports, which were delivered by the National Audit Office.

The Chair of the ARAC reported to the Board after each meeting.

Remuneration Committee

The role of the Remuneration Committee (RemCo) is to ensure that remuneration arrangements, including senior pay strategy and succession planning for senior appointments support ARIA's aims and enable the recruitment, retention and performance of the leadership team and PDs. The Committee will also support and inform ARIA's wider workforce strategies, including ensuring the organisation attracts, retains and develops diverse people at all levels, and provides an inclusive and equal opportunities working environment.

The RemCo also approves the performance-related pay scheme and other remuneration and people-related policies and issues. The RemCo met three times during the year.

The Chair of the RemCo reported to the Board after each meeting.

Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee

The Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee (ESRC) supports the Board and the Chief Executive by providing additional oversight on issues related to ethics and social responsibility. The ESRC met once during the year, and its responsibilities include reviewing and sharing recommendations on the ethical and social responsibility aspects of ARIA's programmes and other funding.

This year, we have also brought on our first set of ESR Advisors, external experts who can be drawn on to advise our programme directors and our strategic approach to ESR more broadly, including being invited to contribute to the ESR Committee, providing an additional mechanism for accessing expert advice and surfacing key issues.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement continued

Board and Committee attendance for the year to 31 March 2025:

Board/Committee member	Board	Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	Remuneration Committee	Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee
Total meetings during the reporting period	4	3	3	1
Non-Executive Directors				
Matt Clifford Chair	4	2 By invitation only	1 By invitation only	N/A
Dame Angela McLean Government Chief Scientific Adviser	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dame Kate Bingham Chair of RemCo	4	N/A	3	N/A
Stephen Cohen Chair of ARAC	4	3	N/A	N/A
Sarah Hunter* Chair of ESRC	4	2	3	1
Sir David MacMillan	1	1	—	1
Sir Patrick Vallance	1	1	N/A	N/A
ARAC Independent Member				
Sue Hunt	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
Executive Directors				
Ilan Gur Chief Executive	4	3	2	1
Antonia Jenkinson Chief Financial & Operating Officer	4	3	2	1
Dan Cole Chief of Staff	4	N/A	N/A	1
Pippy James Chief Product Officer	4	N/A	N/A	1
Observer				
Alex Jones Director General for Science, Innovation and Growth	2	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Interim member of ARAC who joined partway through the year, and attended all meetings held during their tenure.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement continued

Executive Team

The Executive Team (ET) convenes bi-weekly and is responsible for developing ARIA's strategy, annual plan (strategic objectives and budget) and ensures their delivery, with oversight from the Board. In addition, the ET is responsible for effective governance, financial stewardship, risk management, compliance, stakeholder management and ensuring the organisation has the appropriate culture and policies.

Executive Team member	Position
Ilan Gur	Chief Executive
Antonia Jackson	Chief Financial & Operating Officer
Pippy James	Chief Product Officer
Dan Cole	Chief of Staff

Risk management

ARIA is unique in its attitude to risk and aims to explore bold and innovative approaches to R&D. The ARIA Act 2022 states:

“Ambitious research, development and exploitation: tolerance to failure... In exercising any of its functions under this Act, ARIA may give particular weight to the potential for significant benefits to be achieved or facilitated through scientific research, or the development and exploitation of scientific knowledge, that carries a high risk of failure.”

ARIA recognises that appropriate risk optimisation is vital to achieving its mission and goals. To achieve this approach to risk, ARIA has established its processes to support the effective management and, in certain areas, acceptance of risk. ARIA encourages openness, challenge, innovation and excellence in embedding this approach to support decision making at all levels of the business.

Risk strategy

ARIA has been established to be a ‘high risk, high reward’ research funding agency. This risk appetite relates to its strategic delivery and scientific programmes (and underlying projects); there is a lower risk tolerance to operational and reputational matters, and a low risk tolerance to legal compliance, safety, environmental harm and any form of financial misconduct (see overleaf for details). ARIA will assess and closely monitor technical and programmatic risks post Programme Approval, while ensuring risk-related opportunities are fully explored.

ARIA’s risk and strategic management are closely integrated, with risk considerations integrated into decision making around key areas such as organisational strategy, governance and assurance.

Risk management continued

Risk appetite

ARIA's risk appetite reflects the ambition to take on bold and high-risk R&D ventures, while retaining strict oversight and diligent approach to environmental, financial and security risks.

High risk

Strategic delivery

ARIA is set up to take an experimental approach, and in its startup phase it will place a high value on iterative learning. This means that we may take on operational risk if the value of fast learning (and potentially failing) merits doing so in pursuit of a more optimal long-term solution.

Expected programme and project results

The nature of the work ARIA funds is highly innovative and uncertain. In many cases, the programme proposals will be taking what looks like a 'leap of faith' in terms of what's possible. This will be acceptable to ARIA so long as the societal benefit is both material and well articulated, and progress is well managed and evaluated.

Medium risk

Budgeting

Budgeting risks denote the possibility of underspend/overspend each year, which can have knock-on effects to funding elsewhere in the department and HM Treasury. The ARIA model relies on giving programme managers freedom to cut projects and reallocate funds at short notice, optimising the likelihood of portfolio success at any given moment.

Commercial

In commercial undertakings, we will exercise good business practice to protect the business and its ongoing growth and development. We will be prepared to take some risk where the strategic or scientific return merits this.

Communications

In support of its strategic and programme goals, ARIA may decide to communicate in a manner perceived to be different or provocative, to engage a community or encourage ideas.

Reputational risk

ARIA will deliberately seek to protect its reputation and brand as a trusted public body with all relevant stakeholders, recognising that ARIA's reputation and brand should reflect the higher risk appetite described in other parts of this framework.

Low risk

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety of all people (employees, contractors, visitors or members of the public) is paramount, and ARIA will mitigate these risks in line with all applicable legislation, taking into account shared best practice with similar research organisations.

Security

ARIA will be an outward-facing Intellectual Property (IP) generating public sector research organisation that works in an international arena and is subject to security threats. ARIA will manage cyber, personnel and building security by continually monitoring these respective policies, processes, training and systems.

Financial

ARIA will operate robust financial control systems to protect against fraud and other financial losses. ARIA will endeavour to minimise risks of fraud associated with financial transactions.

Compliance with legislation

ARIA will operate strictly in accordance with all laws at all times. Any non-compliances identified will be addressed as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Protection of the environment

ARIA will not take significant risks with regards to damage to the environment.

Risk management continued

Accountability and responsibility framework for risk management

Group	Responsibility	Frequency
ARIA Board	Review and approve ARIA's risk appetite	Annual review
	Monitor ARIA's risks	Quarterly review of most critical risks
ARAC	Review, oversight, assurance and challenge around ARIA's risks	Three times a year
ESRC	Ethical and social responsibility risks	Three times a year
Executive Team/Functional Leads/ Programme Directors	Ownership and management of risks, opportunities and issues	Continuous, alongside quarterly deep dives and calibration

Key strategic and operational risks

ARIA defined its risks in the following categories, based on areas of impact.

- Safety and Security
- Trust with Stakeholders
- Team and Culture
- Operational Excellence
- Focus
- Technical

Risk management continued

ARIA's current top strategic and operational risks are:

Risk description	Risk areas (primary and secondary)	Mitigations enacted	Risk appetite	Latest risk movement
Top three strategic risks				
Failure to maintain risk optimised culture	Team and Culture Focus Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the culture and awareness of ARIA's unique risk appetite pervades the organisation at all times Feedback mechanisms for anyone in the organisation to challenge why we do what we do 	High	↑
Failure to attract diverse talent	Trust with stakeholders Focus Team and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity considerations built into all aspects of programme lifecycle and wider engagement Key diversity metric added as a Strategic Operational Key Result 	Medium	→
Maintaining budget flexibilities due to uncertain nature of research	Operational Excellence Trust with stakeholders Team and culture Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working closely with government sponsors to maintain flexibilities set out in ARIA's delegation letter 	Low	→
Top three operational risks				
Cyber attack/malicious action from internal or external party	Safety and Security Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyber Essentials Plus accreditations renewed and NCSS Cyber Assessment Framework completed Security measures embedded across all of ARIA's policies, processes and training 	Low	→
Serious internal data incident/mistake	Safety and Security Trust with Stakeholders Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information security and data incident process, plans and training in place System-based safety measures in place 	Low	→
Difficulties in recruiting talent within Programmes	Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support creators in attracting top talent by enabling the initiation of recruitment at early stages 	Medium	New

↑ Upwards → Steady/stable New New risk

Assurance

ARIA's control environment is managed across three lines of defence: operational functions and support functions; functions that oversee or who specialise in compliance or the management of risk such as Legal or Finance; and functions that provide independent assurance such as Internal Audit.

Counter fraud, anti-bribery and anti-corruption

ARIA is committed to maintaining the highest standards in counter fraud, anti-bribery and anti-corruption measures, ensuring that public funds are protected, while fostering an innovative and high risk, high reward research environment. Over the past year, ARIA has taken significant strides in strengthening its counter fraud framework, further embedding robust policies and aligning with best practice.

ARIA's recent counter fraud internal audit reflected positively on our approach, acknowledging the strong foundations we have put in place to prevent, detect, and respond to fraud risks. The audit identified just one medium-priority action and five low-priority actions, demonstrating that ARIA's counter fraud framework is fundamentally sound and well aligned with best practices.

There were no instances of fraud, bribery or corruption reported during the reporting period, and ARIA maintains a gifts and hospitality register to record all gifts or hospitality received or given.

Internal audit

Forvis Mazars provides ARIA's internal audit services. The internal audit plan for 2024/25 comprised a risk-based programme of work across a range of key control areas. The ARAC receives reports from the internal audit provider on the progress of its audits, final internal audit reports, including ARIA's management response to the findings (where appropriate) and the progress made in addressing any issues identified during the audits.

During the year to 31 March 2025, five internal audit reports were issued. The ratings of each of these reports, and the action points along with their priority levels, are detailed below.

Control area	Assurance given	No. of audit actions
Key IT Controls	Substantial	2 low priority
Programme		
Approval Process	Substantial	1 low priority
Risk Optimisation	Substantial	1 low priority
Counter Fraud	Moderate	5 low priority, 1 medium priority
Core Systems	Substantial	2 low priority

Substantial Assurance: The framework of governance, risk management and control is adequate and effective.

Moderate Assurance: Some improvements are required to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control.

Limited Assurance: There are significant weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management and control such that it could be, or could become, inadequate and ineffective.

Unsatisfactory Assurance: There are fundamental weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management and control such that it is inadequate and ineffective or is likely to fail.

As at 31 March 2025, five internal audit actions were completed, with seven not yet due for completion. No actions were past due. The overall opinion on the design of the framework of governance, risk management, and control was Substantial in its overall adequacy and effectiveness.

All actions relating to internal audits conducted in 2023/24 were completed, with no actions past due.

Government Functional Standards

ARIA is required to have regard to the Government Functional Standards (GovS) as appropriate. The three noted in ARIA's Framework Agreement are:

- Government Functional Standard GovS 007: Security
- Government Functional Standard GovS 013: Counter Fraud
- Government Functional Standard GovS 015: Grants

In particular, ARIA is implementing the requirements of GovS 013: Counter Fraud.

Assurance continued

Health and Safety

A Health and Safety policy was implemented during the year, which sets out ARIA's approach to managing its responsibilities for Health and Safety throughout the organisation. Key to this is ensuring that all levels of the organisation understand the importance of Health and Safety and the role that each individual plays in contributing to this. All staff and contractors are required to complete mandatory Health and Safety awareness training, with additional support provided to encourage safe office and home working in the form of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) training and assessments. A Stress and Resilience training module was also introduced during the year as part of ARIA's core training requirement.

ARIA conducts regular six-weekly Health and Safety review meetings, which monitors the level of incidents during the year, examines training statistics and DSE referrals, and updates the Health and Safety risk log with any related mitigations. An update to ARIA's Working Location Policy was made during the year, providing an allowance for home office equipment to ARIA users and facilitating Health and Safety best practice. Several ARIA staff members have received first aid training and are acting as designated first aiders for the office. We have also expanded our contingent of mental health first aiders. Fire Marshals have been established to ensure that all ARIA staff, operating partners, contractors and visitors are safely evacuated from the office premises in the event of a fire, after which Fora's general evacuation process becomes active. Health and Safety risk assessments have been completed for both of ARIA's office facilities. Regular Health and Safety inspections are conducted in order to proactively identify and resolve any risks. There were no reportable injuries during the year.

Information security

Policies and procedures were further refined during the year to manage information security and data protection effectively. These controls include access management protocols that restrict sensitive data access to authorised personnel only. Audits and monitoring mechanisms ensure compliance with security policies and regulatory requirements. Encryption methods are employed to safeguard data during transmission and storage. Additionally, employee communications and training programmes are conducted to emphasise the importance of data security and provide guidance on best practices.

Incident response procedures are in place to promptly address any security breaches or vulnerabilities, minimising potential damage. Continuous evaluation and improvement of these internal controls are undertaken to maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of ARIA's data.

ARIA continues to enforce a robust security posture across its devices and systems. Devices are managed centrally with remote provision and wiping available when required. New app or system requests are passed through a rigorous internal assessment process to ensure that data residency and processing is kept within the UK/EEA when required, and that ARIA's security requirements are met. ARIA has made improvements to its security systems infrastructure with more robust internet and network monitoring in place.

During the year, ARIA passed its IT Security Controls Audit and achieved recertification in Cyber Essentials Plus. The rigorous certification process involved a thorough audit of our technical controls, ensuring we meet the recognised standard in the following key areas: access control, firewalls and routers, malware protection, secure configuration, and software updates. The auditors inspected a range of devices and simulated various attack scenarios to test ARIA's cyber security resilience. This further demonstrates ARIA's commitment to robust cybersecurity practices.

Data protection

ARIA has embedded data protection into our processes and systems by design and default, such that personal data is managed proactively, thoughtfully and in compliance with our legal obligations. ARIA's Data Protection Officer is a visible champion of the issue within the organisation, including thorough onboarding and periodic training.

ARIA has adopted a comprehensive set of data protection policies, which set out ARIA's approach to data protection at an organisational level, the technical and organisational measures that personnel must deploy in their role, data retention and handling, when and how data protection impact assessments and transfer risk assessments must be carried out, and the proper handling of data subject access requests.

Whistleblowing

ARIA has a whistleblowing policy, which is available to all staff and operating partners. No whistleblowing claims were received during the year.

Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration policy

ARIA maintains fairness and transparency in all aspects of remuneration, with appointments made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. All recruitment policies and processes are overseen and approved by the RemCo.

The remuneration of Non-Executive Directors appointed to the ARIA Board and the Chief Executive is set by the Secretary of State for DSIT in accordance with the ARIA Act 2022.

The RemCo advises the Chair who determines the overall remuneration package for Executive Directors (excluding the Chief Executive) after consulting the other Non-Executive Directors and with the consent of the Secretary of State.

The RemCo also advises the Board on the overall remuneration package for PDs.

In reaching its recommendations, the RemCo has regards to the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified people to exercise their different responsibilities, the evidence it receives about wider economic considerations and the affordability of its recommendations.

The remuneration of those who serve on the ARIA Board is disclosed within this report.

Service contracts

As per the ARIA Act 2022, the first Chief Executive is appointed by the Secretary of State for DSIT. Thereafter, the appointments of the Chief Executive and the Executive Directors are to be proposed by the Chair after consulting with the Non-Executive Directors, and with the consent of the Secretary of State, which can only be withheld in the interests of national security.

The Chief Executive is on a four-year fixed-term contract that will be reviewed when it approaches expiry in 2026/27. The other Executive Directors are on open-ended appointments.

The notice period for the Chief Executive, Chief Financial and Operating Officer, and Chief Product Officer is three months and one month for other Executive Directors. Each Executive Director remained in post for the entirety of the year to 31 March 2025.

Remuneration — audited information

The following table shows the remuneration of Executive Board members on an annual basis and during the year, including the details of their salary, allowances, performance-related pay and pension entitlements.

Annual values — for the year ended 31 March 2025

Name	Salary & allowances in bands of £5,000	Performance-related pay in bands of £5,000	Pension benefits to nearest £1,000	Total remuneration in bands of £5,000
Ilan Gur* Chief Executive	385–390	40–45	19	455–460
Antonia Jenkinson Chief Finance & Operating Officer	180–185	20–25	9	215–220
Pippy James Chief Product Officer	190–195	20–25	9	225–230
Dan Cole Chief of Staff	140–145	15–20	7	165–170

* Note that salary and allowances for Ilan Gur includes travel allowance of £5–10k.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Annual values — for the 12 months to 31 March 2024

Name	Start date if during the year	Salary and allowances in bands of £5,000	Performance-related pay in bands of £5,000	Pension benefits to nearest £1,000	Total remuneration in bands of £5,000
Ilan Gur* Chief Executive		385–390	45–50	19	455–460
Antonia Jenkinson Chief Finance & Operating Officer		180–185	20–25	9	215–220
Pippy James Chief Product Officer		145–150	20–25	7	175–180
Dan Cole Chief of Staff	15 May 2023	120–125 (full-year equivalent 135–140)	15–20	6 (full-year equivalent 7)	140–145

* Note that salary and allowances for Ilan Gur includes travel allowance of £5–10k.

Salary

Salary includes gross salary and travel allowances.

Performance-related pay

ARIA's performance-related pay policy has been approved by the ARIA Board and DSIT. Performance-related Payments (PRP) are discretionary (non-contractual), subject to available funding and require RemCo approval every year.

The performance-related pay for Executive Directors is calculated, as with all staff, in accordance with performance against agreed objectives, skills and behaviours, and evaluated on an annual basis in line with the financial year. For the Chief Executive these objectives are determined by the Chair of the ARIA Board, with recommendations from the RemCo. The Chief Executive sets the objectives for other Executive Directors.

PRPs reflect performance levels attained as assessed during the appraisal process. Payments are non-consolidated and non-pensionable. Amounts shown are estimated and accrued, and will be paid in 2025/26.

Pension benefits

Pension benefits are employer only, as accrued during the year, in ARIA's defined contribution scheme.

Benefits in kind

No Executives covered by this report received any benefits in kind during the year.

Expenses

All staff are reimbursed for reasonable business expenses incurred in line with the ARIA expense policy.

Fair pay disclosure — audited information

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation, and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the organisation's workforce. This is shown on the following page.

Total remuneration includes salary, allowances and accrued performance-related pay. It does not include employer pension contributions.

There are no non-salary components in the total remuneration figures disclosed in the following table for the median, 25th percentile and 75th percentile.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

	Remuneration banding	Ratio to highest-paid		
		Total remuneration	Director's remuneration	Salary component
Year ended 31 March 2025	Highest-paid Director	£430,000 — £435,000		£380,000 — £385,000
	75th centile employee	£140,000	3.1:1	£127,050
	Median employee	£90,000	4.8:1	£90,000
	25th centile employee	£70,088	6.2:1	£63,000
	Remuneration range	£50,000 — £55,000 to £430,000 — £435,000		£50,000 — £55,000 to £380,000 — £385,000
Year ended 31 March 2024	Highest-paid Director	£435,000 — £440,000		£380,000 — £385,000
	75th centile employee	£138,875	3.2:1	£123,750
	Median employee	£103,750	4.2:1	£94,500
	25th centile employee	£73,500	6.0:1	£66,000
	Remuneration range	£57,000 — £57,500 to £435,000 — £440,000		£45,000 — £50,000 to £380,000 — £385,000
Percentage change	Highest-paid Director	(1.1%)		0.0%
	75th centile employee	0.8%		2.7%
	Median employee	(13.3%)		(4.8%)
	25th centile employee	(4.6%)		(4.5%)

In 2024/25, no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid Director.

Annualised salaries and allowances had an average of £94,893 in 2024/25, which is a 5.4% decrease (2023/24: £100,266). Annualised performance-related pay had an average of £7,252, which is a 22.4% decrease (2023/24: £9,345).

These decreases reflect the recruitment of junior personnel to support the agency's scaling efforts during the year.

Pension benefits

Employees of ARIA are eligible to participate in a defined contribution pension scheme, which is managed on ARIA's behalf by Smart Pension. Employees are automatically enrolled in the pension scheme on their first day of employment unless they decide to opt out. The employer makes a basic contribution of 5%. Employee contributions are made via salary sacrifice arrangements at a minimum rate of 3%.

For the year ending 31 March 2025, employer contributions of £203k (year ending 31 March 2024: £98k; period ending 31 March 2024: £104k) were paid.

No Non-Executive Member received a pension benefit from ARIA during the year under review.

Life assurance

We have implemented a life assurance policy for all our employees as this does not form a part of the ARIA defined contribution pension scheme benefits.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Remuneration of the Board and independent member — audited information

Membership details of the Board and the independent member are detailed in the Governance Statement.

Below are the annual fees paid to the Non-Executive Board members and the independent member in the year to 31 March 2025.

	Year ended 31 March 2025 in bands of £5,000	Full-year equivalent to 31 March 2024 in bands of £5,000
Matthew Clifford	25–30	25–30
Stephen Cohen	15–20	15–20
Sarah Hunter	15–20	10–15
Sir David MacMillan	5–10	10–15
Sue Hunt	5–10	5–10
Sir Patrick Vallance	0–5	10–15
Dame Angela McLean	—	—
Dame Kate Bingham	—	—

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Staff report

Staff numbers — audited information

The FTE number of persons at 31 March 2025 was as follows:

Category of staff	As at 31 March 2025	As at 31 March 2024
Permanent	32.9	25.0
Fixed-term	12.8	5.6
Secondees	3.8	3.2
Temporary/Contractors	0.8	2.0
Total staff	50.3	35.8

The average number of FTE staff during the year to 31 March 2025 was as follows:

Staff	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024
Permanent	28.6	11.2
Fixed-term	9.5	5.5
Secondees	3.5	5.0
Temporary/Contractors	1.1	3.6
Total	42.7	25.3

The number of staff-in-post (headcount) by gender as at 31 March 2025 was as follows:

Staff	As at 31 March 2025				As at 31 March 2024			
	Male	Female	Non-binary	Total	Male	Female	Non-binary	Total
Executive members of the Board	2	2	—	4	2	2	—	4
Directors (excluding executive members of the Board)	2	3	—	5	2	2	—	4
Other	16	26	2	44	10	17	2	29
Total staff	20	31	2	53	14	21	2	37
Non-Executive Directors of the Board and its Committees	2	4	—	6	4	4	—	8

Staff, as set out above, includes employees (permanent and fixed-term), secondees and temporary staff/contractors.

Early departure costs — audited information

There were no early departures in 2024/25.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Staff costs — audited information

Staff costs consists of the following:

	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025			1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024		
	Permanently employed staff £000	Others £000	Total £000	Permanently employed staff £000	Others £000	Total £000
Wages and salaries	3,128	2,443	5,572	1,249	1,887	3,136
Social security costs	403	169	573	156	168	324
Pension costs	140	63	203	52	118	170
Total	3,672	2,676	6,347	1,457	2,173	3,630
Non-Executive Director fees	—	—	88	—	—	93
Total staff costs	3,672	2,676	6,435	1,457	2,173	3,723

'Permanently employed staff' comprises staff employed on a permanent basis. 'Others' includes staff employed directly on a fixed-term basis, agency staff and inward secondments.

Staff turnover

During 2024/25, staff turnover (including the conclusion of fixed-term contracts and secondments) was 7.5% (2023/24: 0%).

Sickness absence data

The total FTE days lost through staff sickness absence in the year was 74.5 (2023/24: 15.5). The average working days lost per employee during the year was 1.7 FTE (2023/24: 0.53 FTE); these were all short-term sickness absences of five days or less.

Off-payroll engagements

The tables below present data on our off-payroll engagements. Off-payroll engagements refer to workers who are paid off-payroll, without deducting tax and national insurance at source, typically contractors.

Highly paid off-payroll worker engagements earning £245 per day or greater	As at 31 March 2025	As at 31 March 2024
Number of existing engagements as at 31 March 2025	1	1
Of which, number that have existed:		
Less than one year	1	1
Between one and two years	—	—

All highly paid off-payroll workers engaged at any point during the year, earning £245 per day or greater at ARIA	Year ended 31 March 2025	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024
No. of all off-payroll workers engaged during the reporting period ended 31 March 2025	4	7
Of which, not subject to off-payroll legislation	—	—
Of which, subject to off-payroll legislation and determined as in-scope of IR35	1	1
Of which, subject to off-payroll legislation and determined as out-of-scope of IR35	3	6
No. of engagements reassessed for compliance or assurance purposes during the reporting period	—	—
Of which, no. of engagements that saw a change to IR35 status following review	—	—

Parliamentary Accountability and Audit Report

Expenditure on consultancy

Expenditure on consultancy in the year ended 31 March 2025 was £30.6k (2023–24: £684k). This expenditure primarily relates to advice on metrics.

Regularity of expenditure — audited information

We have considered all our activities during the reporting period and confirm that they are in accordance with the legislation authorising them.

Losses and special payments — audited information

There were no losses or special payments that need to be reported in accordance with Managing Public Money.

Remote contingent liabilities — audited information

In addition to contingent liabilities reported within the meaning of IAS 37, Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets, ARIA discloses, for parliamentary reporting and accountability purposes, liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of a contingent liability. As at 31 March 2025, there are nil to report.

Audit fees — audited information

The accounts of ARIA are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General under the ARIA Act 2022. The audit fee charged was £63,000. The auditors did not provide any non-audit services.

The auditors have been provided with all relevant audit information necessary to complete their audit and the Accounting Officer has taken all of the necessary steps to ensure that the auditors are aware of any relevant information.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 9 July 2025

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament

Opinion on Financial Statements

I certify that I have audited the Financial Statements of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency for the year ended 31 March 2025 under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

The Financial Statements comprise the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's:

- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025;
- Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Statement of Cash Flows and Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year then ended; and
- the related notes including the significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in the preparation of the Financial Statements is applicable law and UK-adapted accounting standards.

In my opinion, the Financial Statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and comprehensive net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022 and Secretary of State directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects, the income and expenditure recorded in the Financial Statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the Financial Statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom (2024). My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Statements section of my certificate.

Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2024. I am independent of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the Financial Statements in the UK. My staff and I have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the Financial Statements, I have concluded that the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the Financial Statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least 12 months from when the Financial Statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities, and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer, with respect to going concern, are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Advanced Research and Invention Agency is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual, which requires entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the Financial Statements where it is anticipated that the services, which they provide, will continue into the future.

Other information

The other information comprises information included in the Annual Report but does not include the Financial Statements and my auditor's certificate and report thereon. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information.

My opinion on the Financial Statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the Financial Statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the Financial Statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament continued

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, the part of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit have been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions made under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022; and
- the information given in the Performance and Accountability Reports for the financial year for which the Financial Statements are prepared is consistent with the Financial Statements and is in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance and Accountability Reports.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the Advanced Research and Invention Agency or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Financial Statements and the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual have not been made or parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited is not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the Financial Statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records;
- providing the The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) with access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the Financial Statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- providing the C&AG with additional information and explanations needed for his audit;
- providing the C&AG with unrestricted access to persons within the Advanced Research and Invention Agency from whom the auditor determines it necessary to obtain audit evidence;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of Financial Statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- preparing Financial Statements which give a true and fair view in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022;
- preparing the Annual Report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022; and
- assessing the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Advanced Research and Invention Agency will not continue to be provided in the future.

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament continued

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the Financial Statements in accordance with the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Financial Statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error, and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these Financial Statements.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud. The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud is detailed below.

Identifying and assessing potential risks related to non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, I:

- considered the nature of the sector, control environment and operational performance including the design of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's accounting policies;
- inquired of management, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's head of internal audit and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's policies and procedures on:
 - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations;

- detecting and responding to the risks of fraud; and
- the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations including the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's controls relating to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's compliance with the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022 and Managing Public Money;
- inquired of management, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's head of internal audit and those charged with governance whether:
 - they were aware of any instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations; or
 - they had knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud; and
- discussed with the engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the Financial Statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, I considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the Advanced Research and Invention Agency for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in the following areas: posting of unusual journals, complex transactions, and bias in management estimates. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), I am required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override.

I obtained an understanding of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's framework of authority and other legal and regulatory frameworks in which the Advanced Research and Invention Agency operates. I focused on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on material amounts and disclosures in the Financial Statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency. The key laws and regulations I considered in this context included the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022, Managing Public Money, and relevant employment, pensions and tax legislation.

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament continued

Audit response to identified risk

To respond to the identified risks resulting from the above procedures:

- I reviewed the Financial Statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with provisions of relevant laws and regulations described above as having direct effect on the Financial Statements;
- I enquired of management, and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- I reviewed minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the Board and internal audit reports; and
- I addressed the risk of fraud through management override of controls by testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements on estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

I communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential risks of fraud to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

Other auditor's responsibilities

I am required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the Financial Statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the Financial Statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these Financial Statements.

Gareth Davies

Comptroller and Auditor General

Date: 9 July 2025

National Audit Office
157–197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London
SW1W 9SP

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Financial Statements

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Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

for the year ended 31 March 2025

		Year ended 31 March 2025 £000	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024 £000
	Note		
Staff costs	2	6,435	4,138
Other operating expenditure	3	7,716	4,408
Research and development expenditure	4	16,517	—
Depreciation and loss on disposal	5	57	30
Net operating expenditure		30,725	8,576
Finance income		—	—
Finance expense		—	—
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		30,725	8,576

The notes on pages 52 to 58 form part of these Financial Statements.

Statement of Financial Position

as at 31 March 2025

	Note	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	5	186	96
Total non-current assets		186	96
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	6	1,919	169
Cash and cash equivalents	7	10,363	1,726
Total current assets		12,282	1,895
Total assets		12,468	1,991
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	8	(10,894)	(1,192)
Total current liabilities		(10,894)	(1,192)
Total assets less current liabilities		1,574	799
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves			
General fund		(1,574)	(799)
Total equity		(1,574)	(799)

The notes on pages 52 to 58 form part of these Financial Statements.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 9 July 2025

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 31 March 2025

		Reporting Year ended 31 March 2025 £000	period ended 31 March 2024 £000
	Note		
Cash flows from operating activities			
Total comprehensive net expenditure		(30,725)	(8,576)
Adjustments for non-cash items:			
(Increase)/Decrease in trade and other receivables	6	(1,750)	(169)
Increase/(Decrease) in trade and other payables	8	9,701	1,192
Depreciation	5	56	29
Loss on disposal of non-current assets	5	2	1
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities		(22,716)	(7,523)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of fixed assets	5	(147)	(126)
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities		(147)	(126)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grant in Aid received from sponsoring department		31,500	9,375
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from financing activities		31,500	9,375
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents		8,637	1,726
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		1,726	—
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	7	10,363	1,726

The notes on pages 52 to 58 form part of these Financial Statements.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity

for the year ended 31 March 2025

	General reserve £000	Total reserves £000
Balance at 1 April 2024	(799)	(799)
Grant in Aid from DSIT	(31,500)	(31,500)
Net expenditure for the period	30,725	30,725
Balance at 31 March 2025	(1,574)	(1,574)
Balance at 23 January 2023	—	—
Grant in Aid from DSIT	(9,375)	(9,375)
Net expenditure for the period	8,576	8,576
Balance at 31 March 2024	(799)	(799)

The notes on pages 52 to 58 form part of these Financial Statements.

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

ARIA is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these Financial Statements are set out below.

1.1 Basis of accounting

These Financial Statements have been prepared on a going concern basis in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by HM Treasury, which is updated annually. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of ARIA for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected.

The particular policies adopted by ARIA are described below. We have applied these policies consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

The Financial Statements are prepared in sterling and rounded to the nearest £000.

1.2 Grant in Aid

In line with the FReM, Grant in Aid for revenue purposes from DSIT (the controlling body) are recognised as a financing flow and thus credited to the General Reserve and is recognised in the reporting period in which it is received.

1.3 Plant and equipment

Plant and equipment comprises single assets and are capitalised at cost on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefit associated with the item will flow to ARIA. A capitalisation threshold of £500 is applied to all asset classes. Expenditure below this value is charged as an expense in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

1.4 Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful life of the asset as follows:

Asset class	Useful life
Computer equipment	3 years
Fixtures and fittings	3 years
AV/IT equipment	3 years

Depreciation is charged in full in the month of acquisition on the date it was brought into service.

1.5 Leased assets

ARIA has adopted IFRS 16, in line with FReM requirements. At the inception of a contract ARIA assesses whether a contract contains a lease. A contract, contains a lease if the contract conveys the right for ARIA to control the use of an identified asset for a period of time in exchange for consideration. To assess whether a contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset, ARIA assesses whether:

- the asset is greater in value than ARIA's capitalisation threshold, which is £500;
- the contract involves the use of an identified asset, which is physically distinct or represents substantially all of the capacity of a distinct asset and there are no substantive substitution rights;
- the contract conveys the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from use of the asset throughout the period of use; and
- the lessee has the right to direct the use of the asset.

ARIA has assessed all of its contracts and determined that it does not have any leases as defined by IFRS 16.

1.6 Grants payable

Grant expenditure is recognised in the period in which eligible activity creates an entitlement in line with the terms and conditions of the grant.

1.7 IFRS 17 Insurance contracts

ARIA has determined that it has no contracts that will be impacted by the implementation of IFRS 17, which requires insurance contract liabilities to be calculated as the present value of future insurance cash flows with a provision for risk.

1.8 Value-added tax

ARIA is not registered for value-added tax (VAT) as it does not provide taxable supplies. All expenses are therefore presented inclusive of VAT.

1.9 Currency

The functional and presentational currency of ARIA is sterling.

1.10 Pensions

Employees of ARIA are eligible to participate in a defined contribution pension scheme, which is managed on the Agency's behalf by Smart Pension. Employees are automatically enrolled in the pension scheme on their first day of employment unless they decide to opt out. The costs of ARIA's employer's contributions to this scheme is recorded as expenditure in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

1.11 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash in hand held with the Government Banking Service, which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash, and which are subject to insignificant risk of changes in value and have an original maturity of three months or less.

The carrying amount of these assets approximates their fair value.

1.12 Trade and other payables

Trade payables are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of business from suppliers. Accounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less (or in the normal operating cycle of the business if longer). If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities.

Trade and other payables are non-interest bearing and recognised initially at fair value.

Other payables represent money owing to third parties at the reporting date.

1.13 Provisions

ARIA makes provision for liabilities and charges in accordance with IAS 37 where a legal or constructive liability (i.e. a present obligation arising from past events) exists, the transfer of economic benefits is probable, and a reasonable estimate can be made.

Provisions for liabilities are based on reliable estimates of the expenditure required to settle future legal or constructive obligations that exist. Provisions are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and released when the transfer of economic benefit to settle the obligation is made.

1.14 Foreign exchange

Transactions designated in foreign currencies are translated into pounds sterling at the rate of exchange prevailing at the transaction date. Monetary assets and liabilities designated in foreign currencies are translated at the rates prevailing at the reporting date with the resulting profit or loss recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the reporting period.

1.15 Segmental analysis

A segment is a distinguishable component of the organisation that is engaged either in providing products or services (business segment), or in providing products or services within a particular economic environment (geographical segment), and is subject to risks and rewards that are different from those of other segments.

ARIA has no separate reportable business segments and all its funding is received from one UK source, therefore, no analysis of ARIA's activities has been presented.

1.16 Corporation tax

ARIA is subject to corporation tax on taxable profits from trading activities. No corporation tax is payable as ARIA did not undertake any trading activities during the reporting period.

1.17 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

The Chief Executive, in his capacity as Accounting Officer, uses judgement in making estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the accounting period in which the estimate is revised, and if the revision also affects future periods in these periods as well. In reviewing these estimates, we consider the extent to which these could possibly vary and whether such a variation could indicate the need for a material adjustment to the accounts. There is nothing in the current review to indicate that a variation of a material amount could arise.

Critical judgements that have the most significant effect on the amounts recognised in the Financial Statements are considered to be accrued expenditure.

1.18 Financial instruments

A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Financial assets and financial liabilities would be recognised in the balance sheet if ARIA became a party to the contractual provisions of an instrument.

ARIA has no borrowings and relies on Grant in Aid from DSIT for its cash requirements, and is therefore not exposed to liquidity risks. All material assets and liabilities are denominated in sterling so it is not exposed to significant currency risk.

1.19 Accounting periods and presentation of Financial Statements

ARIA was established through the ARIA Act 2022. On the basis of Schedule 1, section 18 of the Act, the first accounting period was from the date on which ARIA was established (25 January 2023) and ending with the second 31 March following that date (31 March 2024). This extended accounting period of 15 months has been presented as prior-year comparatives against the figures for the 2024/25 financial year. The inclusion of the initial three months in the comparatives does not materially affect the interpretation of the Financial Statements, as limited costs were incurred during this period.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

Research funding

2. Staff costs

	Permanently employed staff £000	Other £000	Year ended 31 March 2025 £000	Permanently employed staff £000	Other £000	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024 £000
Wages and salaries	3,128	2,443	5,572	1,290	2,192	3,482
Social security costs	403	169	573	160	191	351
Other pension costs	140	63	203	53	144	197
Total	3,672	2,676	6,347	1,503	2,527	4,030
Non-Executive Director fees	—	—	88	—	—	108
Total staff costs	3,672	2,676	6,435	1,503	2,527	4,138

3. Other operating costs

	Year to 31 March 2025 £000	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024 £000
HR, training and recruitment costs	427	637
Legal and professional costs	409	450
IT costs	974	791
Rent and building costs	1,277	580
Engagement and communications costs*	1,686	988
Programme management costs**	1,465	603
Travel and subsistence costs	459	139
Programme development costs	872	120
External audit fees	63	60
Internal audit fees	84	40
Total spend	7,716	4,408

* Engagement and communication costs include outsourced strategic communications advice and support, as well as costs incurred in hosting events and workshops during the year.

** Programme management costs relate to outsourced specialist support to ARIA's Programme Directors, in the form of expertise and personnel to deliver grant/contract awards.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

4. Research and Development Expenditure

	Year to 31 March 2025 £000	Reporting period ended 31 March 2024 £000
Future Proofing Our Climate and Weather	—	—
Mathematics for Safe AI	2,323	—
Nature Computes Better	6,496	—
Programmable Plants	—	—
Scalable Neural Interfaces	1,698	—
Scoping our Planet	1,211	—
Smarter Robot Bodies	1,476	—
Total Opportunity Spaces Expenditure	13,204	—
Activation Partners	3,286	—
Other	27	—
Total Research and Development Expenditure	16,517	—

5. Property, plant and equipment

	Fixtures and fittings £000	Computer equipment £000	Total £000
As at 31 March 2025			
Cost			
At 1 April 2024	1	123	124
Additions	59	87	147
Disposals	—	(2)	(2)
At 31 March 2025	60	208	269
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2024	—	(28)	(28)
Charged in year	(9)	(47)	(56)
Disposals	—	1	1
At 31 March 2025	(9)	(74)	(83)
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	51	134	186

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

5. Property, plant and equipment continued

As at 31 March 2024	Fixtures and fittings £000	Computer equipment £000	Total £000
Cost			
At 25 January 2023	—	—	—
Additions	1	125	126
Disposals	—	(1)	(1)
At 31 March 2024	1	124	125
Depreciation			
At 25 January 2023	—	—	—
Charged in period	—	(29)	(29)
Disposals	—	—	—
At 31 March 2024	—	(29)	(29)
Carrying amount at 31 March 2024	1	95	96

6. Trade and other receivables

	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Prepayments	1,097	165
Deposits	822	4
Total receivables	1,919	169

Prepayments predominantly consist of prepaid license to occupy, event costs, and software licenses.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

7. Cash and cash equivalents

	31 March 2025 £000
Balance at 31 March 2024	1,726
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	8,637
Balance at 31 March 2025	10,363
The following balances were held at 31 March:	
Government banking service	10,363
Total cash and cash equivalents	10,363
	31 March 2024 £000
Balance at 23 January 2023	—
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	1,726
Balance at 31 March 2024	1,726
The following balances were held at 31 March:	
Government banking service	1,726
Total cash and cash equivalents	1,726

8. Trade and other payables

	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Trade payables	613	71
Accruals	1,157	957
Grant accruals	8,924	—
Social security and other taxation	170	155
Other payables	30	9
Total trade and other payables	10,894	1,192

Accruals include accrued expenditure in respect of amounts due to operating partners for the provision of communications, programme management and legal services, and fees for seconded staff, as well as other operating expenditure accruals, including employee benefits accruals in respect of performance-related pay and untaken annual leave.

The grant accrual is based on participants' verified expenditure claims, ensuring only eligible and incurred costs are recognised. Payments are made in arrears, contingent on grantee performance. As at 31 March 2025, the grant accrual was £8.9m (31 March 2024: £nil). ARIA considers the carrying amount of trade and other payables approximates to their fair value.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

9. Commitments

Capital commitments

ARIA has no contractual capital commitments as at 31 March 2025.

Research and development commitments

ARIA has multi-year contractual obligations for research and development expenditure. As of 31 March 2025, ARIA has signed research and development funding agreements totalling £295m. These agreements contain a 60-day break clause, allowing ARIA to terminate future payments with notice. The below table excludes any research and development expenditure to date.

While these agreements are not considered to be 'non-cancellable' as per the criteria of FReM 7.6.16, these commitments have been disclosed to provide a more complete view of ARIA's financial position given the material sums involved.

	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
By time		
Not later than one year	111,263	—
Later than one year, but not later than five years	166,884	—
Later than five years	—	—
Total research and development commitments	278,148	—

Other financial commitments

ARIA has entered into non-cancellable contracts, which are not leases or PFI contracts or other service concession arrangements, for a license to occupy, and event space hire. The total payments to which ARIA is committed are as follows.

	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Non-cancellable contracts		
Not later than one year	2,349	—
Later than one year, but not later than five years	2,516	—
Later than five years	—	—
Total	4,865	—

10. Contingent assets and liabilities

ARIA has no contingent assets or liabilities.

11. Related party transactions

ARIA is an Arm's Length Non-Departmental Body sponsored by DSIT, which is regarded as a related party.

During the year, ARIA had a few material transactions with DSIT within the DSIT group, including Innovate UK. These transactions primarily relate to information technology services and personnel on secondment. In accordance with the FReM IAS24 Related Party Disclosures interpretation, details of these transactions are not disclosed.

No other Board member, key management personnel or other related party has undertaken any material transactions with ARIA during the year, except for remuneration as disclosed in the Remuneration and Staff Report.

12. Events after the reporting period

These accounts have been authorised for issue by the Accounting Officer on the date the audit certificate and report were signed by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

ISBN: 978-1-5286-5740-2

E03360110

Advanced
Research
+ Invention
Agency

ARIA

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]

Date: Wed, 19 Nov 2025 at 19:06

Subject: Internal review of Environmental Information Regulations request - EIR Request, Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty

To: EIR requests at ARIA <info@aria.org.uk>

Dear Advanced Research and Invention Agency,

Please pass this on to the person who conducts EIR reviews.

I am writing to request an internal review of Advanced Research and Invention Agency's handling of my EIR request 'EIR Request, Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty'.

REASONS -

In response to my request you point me to a single page Sustainability Report in you accounts for the year ending 31/03/2025.

This focuses on sustainability and the Greening Government Commitments.

In relation to Biodiversity it states only 'ARIA has no landholdings and no independent estate. All of our office occupation in 2024/25 was within multi-occupied estates offices. We do not have a biodiversity action plan given this context.'

Regardless of you having no landholdings and no independent estate I understand you are still subject to the general biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021 which applies to all your functions and activities not just your office occupation.

I understand this requires amongst other things that you to consider how you can conserve and enhance biodiversity in all your functions and activities, and including in policy development, planning decisions, and procurement, not just land management and the like.

The Sustainability Report you provided does not appear to even acknowledge your biodiversity duty, indeed quite the opposite.

My request was 'Please provide information demonstrating your compliance with your Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty.'

Please internal review your response and either provide that information or confirm you hold nothing else of relevance to the request other than that sustainability report.

If the latter then please accept as validly presented to you here my complaint that you do not appear to have complied with your biodiversity duty.

A full history of my EIR request and all correspondence is available on the Internet at this address:

[REDACTED]
Yours faithfully,

██████████

Please use this email address for all replies to this request:

██

Disclaimer: This message and any reply that you make will be published on the internet. Our privacy and copyright policies:

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/officers>

For more detailed guidance on safely disclosing information, read the latest advice from the ICO:

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/ico-guidance-for-authorities>

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/ico-anonymisation-code>

Please note that in some cases publication of requests and responses will be delayed.

If you find this service useful as an FOI officer, please ask your web manager to link to us from your organisation's FOI page.

Annex 2: ARIA's Annual Report 2023/24

for the period
25 January 2023
to 31 March 2024

Annual Report + Accounts

Advanced
Research
+ Invention
Agency

ARIA

Advanced Research and Invention Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24

for the period from 25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

Presented to Parliament pursuant to paragraphs 14(5) and 15(4) of Schedule 1 of the
Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 24 July 2024.

Advanced
Research
+ Invention
Agency

ARIA

OGL

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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Introduction

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Chairman's letter

It's a privilege to introduce the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's (ARIA) first Annual Report and Accounts.

ARIA is a true startup within the public sector. One challenge for any startup is to balance an ambitious long-term vision with the operational demands of the here and now. Ilan and his team have met this challenge head on. They have spent this first year assembling the people, processes and culture to enable ARIA to fulfil its mission – unlocking scientific and technological breakthroughs for the UK and the world.

Now that ARIA is a living, breathing thing, it's easy to forget that even getting to Day One was far from inevitable. ARIA's existence is the result of a huge collective effort that began long before Ilan and I were appointed to our roles. I am grateful to the ministers, civil servants and parliamentarians who made ARIA possible and to the team at the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) who have embraced ARIA's mission, freedoms and independence since the beginning.

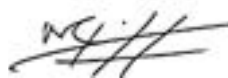
When I was appointed as ARIA's Chair, the question I was asked most frequently was how the Board and I would evaluate the organisation's progress, given that it will be decades before we know the full impact of the research ARIA funds. My answer was always that ARIA would live or die by the quality of the people it could attract from the start. This test ARIA is passing with flying colours: the calibre of people joining the organisation at every level and in every role is exceptional. I congratulate Ilan and his team on assembling a group of people and crafting a culture that extraordinary individuals want to be part of.

We are all conscious that the work that will define ARIA lies ahead. ARIA's second year will see our inaugural cohort of Programme Directors (PDs) – a truly exceptional group – launch their programmes and begin funding researchers from around the UK and the world.

It is the whole purpose of ARIA that these programmes are wildly ambitious – and commensurately risky. I see maintaining this level of ambition and risk appetite as one of the Board's most important responsibilities. It will not be easy. In any organisation like ARIA, there will always be the temptation to look for quick wins or safe bets in an effort to start to show results. But for ARIA this is the opposite of what being a good steward of public money looks like.

"If we're staying true to our mission, only a fraction of our programmes will succeed, but the impact of those that do will be world changing."

I encourage you to read through the opportunity spaces that our PDs are exploring. As you do, I hope you share my excitement, not only about the possibilities they might unlock, but about the power and potential of the ARIA model itself. There is much work ahead, but the foundations that the team has laid have given ARIA the best possible start.



Matt Clifford
Chair

Chief Executive's Statement

Society faces challenges that are bigger and more complex than ever before. The power of science and technology at our disposal is equally unprecedented. If we harness it with ambition and responsibility, we can rise to meet those challenges and create opportunities for a better life that no one imagined possible.

But scientific and technological breakthroughs don't just happen, and they can't be delivered by just anyone. They require a depth and richness of expertise, talent, networks, facilities, institutions, and imagination that exists in only a few special places around the world. The UK is one of them.

ARIA's job is ambitious but simple: support bold starts that will drive a step change in social and economic prosperity — not just of the UK, but across the world.

How will we do it? By activating the incredible science and technology ecosystem that exists here. By finding those individuals, teams, and communities who dare to think differently about what is possible. And by empowering them to put their ingenuity and determination to work in making their vision of the future real.

In fact, we've already started.

Since joining ARIA in October 2023, our founding PDs have defined seven major opportunity spaces — areas where breakthroughs in science and technology can make a huge impact on society but are currently unlikely to occur, either because the ideas are too speculative, too hard, or too interdisciplinary. Exploring those areas through public engagement, expert workshops and hundreds of meetings and lab visits, they have shaped funding initiatives that are already sparking new ambitions, ideas and research collaborations, all poised to unlock new capabilities across climate, AI, health, manufacturing, and beyond.

ARIA was created to be bold, agile and singularly focused on long-term transformation vs. quick wins. In this first year, we have built a strong foundation to support that mandate: a dedicated team, strong culture, robust operations, and a new approach to catalysing breakthroughs. Next, we'll work to cultivate powerful new communities across our opportunity spaces and infuse them with the entrepreneurial talent, ambition, and partnerships needed to not just imagine the future, but to build it. After all, discovery and inventions cannot change the world unless they form the basis of new communities and networks, products, businesses, supply chains and industries.

Our success is defined by one simple question: when the children of the UK grow up, how will their lives have been transformed by ARIA's work? Whether that's a life-changing technology or a burgeoning new industry, it should be obvious that ARIA played a catalytic role.

We can't guarantee success, nor is there a simple formula we can follow to get there. But one thing is sure: we can't do it alone. It will take our collective ingenuity and determination, a willingness to stumble and keep going, and — perhaps above all — your engagement and a shared belief that it's possible. So we invite you to join us in taking these first bold steps together. A collective bold start.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

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About ARIA

This is ARIA's first Annual Report and Accounts and covers the period from its establishment on 25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024.

ARIA was established by the UK Government under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022 (the 'ARIA Act 2022') as a new research and development (R&D) funding agency with an ambitious risk appetite. ARIA is an independent non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and with an initial allocation of approximately £800m over five years to 2025/26.

Since ARIA's official launch in January 2023, we have: hired our executive and operational teams; shaped the organisation's risk appetite and culture; designed bespoke contracting and intellectual property rights principles; established an effective control environment; and selected our inaugural cohort of Programme Directors. These PDs have launched ARIA's initial areas of research, engaged extensively with the science and research communities and launched our first funding calls.

Mission

ARIA's mission is to unlock scientific and technological breakthroughs that benefit everyone. Our success will be measured by the lives, industries and communities transformed by ARIA's work.

 For further information regarding ARIA, please see our [Corporate Plan](#)

Highlights

Key milestones in our establishment

2024

MARCH First programme funding call launched

FEBRUARY All seven opportunity spaces launched
Finance system implemented

JANUARY First opportunity seed funding call launched

2023

DECEMBER First programme thesis published

OCTOBER First PD cohort appointed

SEPTEMBER Project, CRM and work management platform selected

AUGUST Procurement system selected

JUNE Communications and engagement partner selected

MAY PD Finalist Day
Legal advisers selected

FEBRUARY Open call for PDs launched

JANUARY ARIA legally established and Board appointed
Managed IT service provider selected

- Programme and project management operating partner selected
- Outsourced recruitment provider selected
- Applicant tracking system selected

2022

JULY Ilan Gur and Matt Clifford announced as ARIA's first Chief Executive and Chair

FEBRUARY ARIA Act 2022 granted Royal Assent



The Board

ARIA's Board of Directors (the Board) oversees performance and supports the Executive Team in effective decision making and strategic direction. The Board is also responsible for monitoring and supporting the optimisation of risk within ARIA to ensure it pursues ambitious research, development and exploitation with a high tolerance to failure, while maintaining effective governance, risk management and internal controls.

Our Board comprises the Chair, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, five other Non-Executive Board members as well as four Executive Team members.



Matt Clifford
Chair
Co-Founder, Entrepreneur First



Dame Kate Bingham
Non-Executive Director
Venture Capitalist and former
Chair of the Vaccine Taskforce



Sir Patrick Vallance
Non-Executive Director
Former Government Chief
Scientific Adviser



Sarah Hunter
Non-Executive Director
Technology and public policy adviser



Sir David MacMillan
Non-Executive Director
Nobel laureate and organic chemist



Dame Angela McLean
Non-Executive Director
Government Chief Scientific Adviser



Stephen Cohen
Non-Executive Director
UK Civil Service and Gambling
Commission Commissioner



Sue Hunt
Independent member
of the Audit and Risk Committee*
Chartered Accountant and
Vice Chair of The Connected
Places Catapult

* ARIA is able to appoint independent members to its Board sub-committees under the ARIA Act 2022.

The Executive Team

The Executive Team have all joined in the reporting period and provide a blend of startup, non-profit and public sector experience. Our Chief Executive and Accounting Officer previously served as a founding PD at the United States' Advanced Research Projects Agency–Energy (ARPA-E), an organisation which, alongside its sister agency the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), originally inspired ARIA's creation.

The team has since recruited an entirely new operational and delivery team, totalling 37 staff as at 31 March 2024 (see page 34 of the Remuneration and Staff Report for further detail), as well as working closely with outsourced operating partners to enable rapid scaling. See further details in the Our people and culture section, page 14 and Remuneration and Staff Report, page 31.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Ilan founded Activate.org, an organisation that empowers scientists and engineers to bring ground-breaking research to market. Prior to this, Ilan built two science-based startups and served as a founding Programme Director at ARPA-E.



Pippy James

Chief Product Officer

Pippy was previously founder and CEO of a women's health startup. She was also Global Product Manager at Entrepreneur First, which supports the creation of technology companies internationally.



Antonia Jenkinson

Chief Finance and Operating Officer

Antonia served as CFO of the UK Atomic Energy Authority. Prior to this, she was CFO/COO in various private sector organisations after a career in corporate finance and private equity with Apex Partners/Altium Capital.



Dan Cole

Chief of Staff

Dan served as COO at UK healthtech startup Accurx, which supported the care of over 50 million NHS patients. Prior to this, Dan worked in strategy consulting focusing on sustainability.

External Advisors

Our network of advisors is composed of individuals who have pushed the limits of the possible across a range of disciplines and sectors. Their expertise, insights and connections are an invaluable resource for our teams.



Artur Ekert
Professional Fellow, Quantum
Physics and Cryptography,
University of Oxford



Arun Majumdar
Founding Director, ARPA-E
and Dean, Stanford Doerr School
of Sustainability



Sir Demis Hassabis
Founder and CEO, DeepMind



Hayaatun Sillem
CEO, Royal Academy of Engineering



Katie Rae
CEO and Managing Partner,
The Engine



Özlem Türeci
Co-founder and Chief Medical
Officer, BioNTech



Patrick Collison
Co-founder and CEO,
Stripe

How we deliver

Delivering breakthrough R&D through science entrepreneurship

ARIA's role is to create transformative, outlier outcomes. This starts with our model, which is driven by the entrepreneurial vision of our PDs.



Angie Burnett is a plant biologist with a background in plant physiology. Her work focuses on harnessing the power of plants to solve some of our most pressing challenges such as food insecurity, climate change and environmental degradation. Before ARIA, Angie worked as a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Brookhaven National Laboratory and a Consultant at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, before becoming a Research Associate at the University of Cambridge.



Gemma Bale and **Sarah Bohndiek** are co-PDs with backgrounds in optics now applying their experience to climate science. Gemma Bale is an Assistant Professor of Medical Therapeutics and Head of the Neuro Optics Lab at the University of Cambridge where she focuses developing non-invasive brain monitoring in real-world environments. Sarah Bohndiek is a Professor of Biomedical Physics at the University of Cambridge and leads an interdisciplinary team that develops optical imaging technology for earlier cancer detection.



Mark Symes is an electrochemist, focused on energy conversion and the production of green fuels. He is now looking at how we can manage the weather through responsible engineering. Mark joined ARIA from his role as Professor of Electrochemistry and Electrochemical Technology at the School of Chemistry at the University of Glasgow. He also co-founded a spin-out in the green hydrogen space.

Our PDs joined in October 2023 from Glasgow, Newcastle, Cambridge, London, Oxford and the US. There is a balanced gender profile and they come from across research areas, geographies and sectors.



David 'davidad' Dalrymple is a software engineer with a multidisciplinary scientific background. His current work looks at how we can have both transformational and safe AI. Before joining ARIA, David was a Research Fellow in technical AI safety at Oxford, co-invented the top-40 cryptocurrency Filecoin, led an international neuroscience collaboration, and was a senior software engineer at Twitter and multiple startups.



Jenny Read is a visual neuroscientist, previously trained in theoretical astrophysics. Her work focuses on how we can build smarter bodies for robots through new modes of sensing, transmission of sensory information, and actuation through hardware advances. Prior to ARIA, Jenny was Professor of Vision Science at Newcastle University.



Jacques Carolan is an applied physicist and neuroscientist. His work involves applying the principles of physics and engineering to create next-generation, scalable tools that aim to radically change our understanding of the brain and ultimately, be used to repair it. Prior to ARIA, he was a BBSRC Discovery Fellow at the University College London.



Suraj Bramhavar is an electrical engineer. His work focuses on how we can redefine the way computers process information to build dramatically more efficient computers. Suraj joined ARIA from Sync Computing, where he was co-founder and CTO, which optimises the use of modern cloud computing resources. The company spun-out from his research at MIT Lincoln Laboratory. Suraj previously worked at Intel Corp, helping transition silicon photonics technology from an R&D effort into a business worth over \$1bn.

Our operating partners

Our operating partners offer professional services and specialised expertise to help ARIA achieve its goals, deliver on strategic objectives, and scale effectively.



Project and programme management partner providing a centralised delivery office and specialist support (expertise and personnel) to the PDs, helping to deliver all programme and project management aspects related to research solicitation design, grant/contract awards and subsequent management and closure of grants/contracts.



**PENNINGTONS
MANCHES
COOPER**

Providing legal support during ARIA's set-up phase and into the launch of our first programmes, including drafting the full suite of funding documents and advising on approach to intellectual property, subsidy control, governance and policies, data protection compliance, supplier contracts, employment law and policies, and trademarks.



Engagement partner providing strategic communications advice and support, including development and implementation of an engagement plan to support the launch of programmes as well as branding, events planning and media monitoring.



Recruitment partner providing services including assisting with the implementation of new internal recruitment systems and processes, headhunting, supporting ARIA's brand activities and supporting hiring teams. These services have varied over the course of ARIA's establishment to meet specific talent acquisition challenges.

Performance analysis

This report outlines our performance against our priorities for the period from 25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024. We have not reported on performance trends given the absence of historic comparative data.

Performance against FY23/24 strategic objectives

1. Recruit exceptional and diverse operating and programme leaders



2. Empower our teams to operate with agility and excellence



3. Establish a strong and inclusive working culture aligned with our values



4. Build stakeholder trust and excitement in ARIA's early team/work



Looking forward

ARIA has been established to conduct and develop scientific knowledge over the long term. In particular, the ARIA Act 2022 stipulated that ARIA could not be dissolved for at least ten years following the Act. Following the current round of programme funding initiated by our inaugural cohort of PDs, we expect to continue recruiting new PDs, both in existing opportunity spaces and new opportunity spaces, and for there to be a continuous cycle of new talent and new science initiatives. The ARIA model will not only see us invest in additional opportunity spaces but also withdrawing from opportunity spaces where we see that our ideas have failed to materialise. In addition to programmes, we plan on developing strategic initiatives to mobilise entrepreneurship in our opportunity spaces to maximise our impact in each area and to accelerate commercialisation.

ARIA plans to use the financial flexibilities it was granted in the ARIA Act 2022, including joint ventures or other funding arrangements. These initiatives will be assessed and evaluated as and when opportunities are identified.

ARIA's funding profile will be different to the original business case as ARIA's establishment took place later than expected. This will be reviewed as part of future spending reviews.

Impact

ARIA's Model of Impact is available to view as part of the Corporate Plan on ARIA's website. It demonstrates that the ultimate success of our activities will be to catalyse world-changing technological and scientific advances over a decadal time frame. Whilst many of our programmes may not achieve this success due to the highly ambitious objectives we are pursuing, those which are successful are expected to deliver an impact far in excess of that expected in traditional research.

ARIA plans to take steps to monitor this impact over the next ten years through the creation of an evaluation framework, with steps in the interim to assess leading indicators.

Performance analysis continued

Financial review

ARIA was established as a new organisation at the start of the reporting period. No assets or liabilities were transferred from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS now DSIT) on the legal creation of ARIA. During the reporting period, ARIA spent £8.6m, the majority of which related to initial startup and operational activity.

ARIA's financial target applies to DSIT's Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) budget lines - capital (CDEL) and resource (RDEL). The total expenditure was less than the resources made available in the reporting period largely due to the later establishment date of ARIA delaying the commencement of research programmes.

ARIA is required to advise DSIT of its total forecast expenditure for the reporting period and, in line with the requirements from HM Treasury, to adhere as closely as possible to this financial target. The table below includes the details of the DEL financial target agreed with DSIT and final outturn, along with the reported variance between the two.

25 January 2023 – 31 March 2023

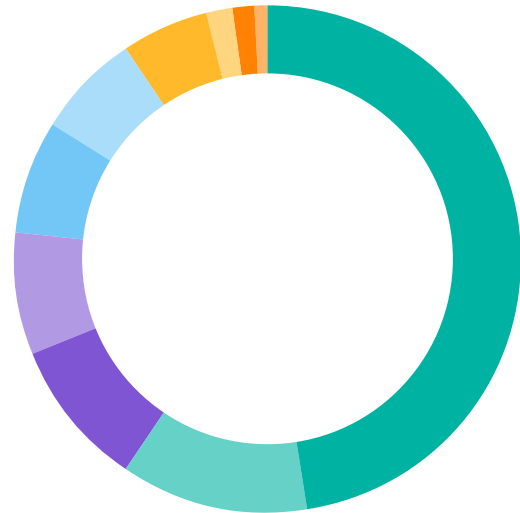
	Financial target £000s	Outturn £000s	Variance £000s
CDEL	3,000	640	2,360
RDEL	–	1	(1)
Total	3,000	641	2,359

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

	Financial target £000s	Outturn £000s	Variance £000s
CDEL	7,500	7,906	(406)
RDEL	30	29	1
Total	7,530	7,935	(405)

Of the total spend in the reporting period the largest proportion was on staff costs (£4.1m). Of this, £3.7m related to directly employed and seconded staff, and £0.4m to expenditure on temporary staff and contractors. The remaining costs were operational set up and running costs for the establishment of ARIA.

Total comprehensive net expenditure by expenditure category



Staff costs	47.1%	£4.1m
Engagement and communications costs	11.9%	£1.0m
IT costs	9.3%	£0.8m
HR, training and recruitment costs	7.8%	£0.6m
Programme management costs	7.1%	£0.6m
Rent and building costs	6.8%	£0.6m
Legal, professional and consultancy costs	5.3%	£0.5m
Travel and subsistence costs	1.6%	£0.1m
Research and development advisory	1.4%	£0.1m
External audit fees	0.8%	£0.1m

Going concern

In line with HM Treasury's Financial Reporting Manual (FReM), the information presented in these financial statements is based on the assumption that ARIA will continue to operate in the future, with no changes to our role or through legislation currently expected. The services currently delivered by ARIA will continue in the future, and as a result, in line with FReM requirements, ARIA considers that it is a going concern.

In common with other non-departmental public bodies across government, ARIA's future funding is to be met by Grant in Aid from its sponsoring department, DSIT. Approval of Grant in Aid for 2024/25 has already been allocated. Based on this information, it has therefore been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of these financial statements.

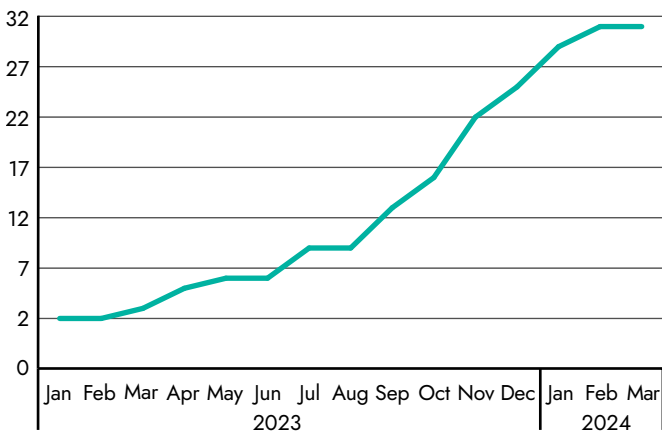
Our people and culture

During the reporting period, ARIA has hired an entirely new team across science, technology, delivery, product, communications, finance, procurement, people and legal as well as implementing its initial governance, systems and processes.

ARIA recognises that a team with a wide breadth of diversity and experience is essential for a working environment that enhances creativity, knowledge sharing, and thoughtful decision making. We are dedicated to creating a safe and inclusive workspace.

Our current team

Number of employees*



* All data is self reported. This team data includes our staff (employees, secondees and contractors) and our outsourced operating partners who work alongside us embedded within our team.

- We are 56% female, 40% male, and 4% non-binary or transgender.
- Our team is aged 25–54. The largest proportion of our team are 25–29 years old (29.2%).
- We have at least six different races, 24 different ethnicities and 13 different nationalities represented.
- At least 26.4% of us are from ethnic minority backgrounds (10.4% of our team have not disclosed).
- At least 10% are LGBTQIA+ (12% of employees have not disclosed).
- We have more than eight different religions and belief systems represented.
- At least 6% have a disability (8% of our team have not disclosed).
- At least 13% are neurodiverse (16% of our team have not disclosed).
- The largest proportion of our team’s career background has been in the private sector (41%).

56%
female

40%
male

4%
non-binary
or transgender

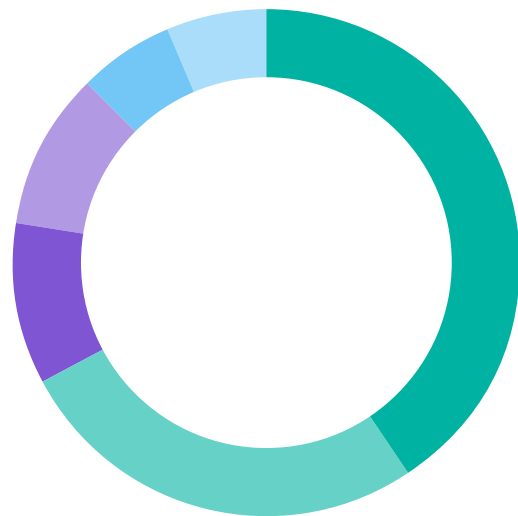
6+
different races

24
different ethnicities

13
different
nationalities

8+
different religions
and belief systems

Primary career backgrounds prior to ARIA:



Private	20
Public	13
Third	5
Other	5
Academic	3
Mixed	3

Our people and culture continued

ARIA is committed to:

- Creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our people are recognised and valued;
- Providing training, development and progression opportunities to everyone;
- Understanding equality and inclusion in the workplace and in our programmes is good management practice and makes sound business sense;
- Creating all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness and inclusion for all;
- Taking steps to ensure equity amongst our workforce such as ensuring that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse range of potential candidates and, where relevant, to groups that have been identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented in ARIA; and
- Ensuring there are no unlawful barriers to accessing our employment opportunities, training, progression opportunities, benefits, and facilities.

ARIA has an established set of ED&I principles and is actively working on an ED&I strategy, involving consultation across the whole organisation. Our primary focus has been on embedding the following within recruitment processes:

- Regular unconscious bias training to panel members;
- Anonymised CVs;
- Diverse interview panels;
- All job adverts go through an inclusive language tool to reduce bias, increase diversity and improve the quality of hire;
- Standardised competency and technical questions at panel interview stage to ensure a fair process for all candidates;
- Standardised presentations/simulations by internal job levelling at panel stage;
- Consistent feedback best practice for all interviews;
- Hiring manager call shortlists include at least one candidate from underrepresented groups; and
- Equal Opportunities survey sent out to all candidates booked for recruiter screens, enabling us to make more data-led sourcing decisions.

Supporting our team

Mental health and wellbeing

At ARIA we want to cultivate a supportive and positive culture which promotes and protects the mental wellbeing of our community. We recognise that mental health, much like physical health, changes over time and many of us will go through periods of poor mental health in the course of our professional and personal lives. That’s why we’ve provided our team with access to an Employee Assistance phoneline, which offers 24/7 professional and confidential support to our team. We’ve also increased our number of mental health first aiders, so that 16% of our organisation has completed or is set to undergo mental health first aid training, ensuring each area of our organisation is supported.

Volunteering leave

Each of our team members are able to take two days of volunteering leave each year. We’re looking forward to running with this initiative and seeing the impact we’re able to create as a team in other organisations by volunteering our time.



Sustainability Report

At ARIA, we are dedicated to integrating sustainable practices into our business operations. During the period since establishment, we have initiated efforts to assess ways that we can minimise our environmental impact in accordance with the Greening Government Commitments (GGCs) and contribute to achieving UK net zero goals.

During the reporting period, organisational policies were developed with sustainable considerations, for example within our expenses and travel policy, which aim to keep ARIA's impact on the environment to a minimum. We will further develop the approach we take to environmental and climate impact, and sustainability, in 2024/25.

Our first sustainability report has been prepared in alignment with the latest HM Treasury guidance for public bodies on sustainability reporting, and will serve as a baseline against which we can benchmark our future progress.

Energy and waste consumption

All our energy, waste and water consumption arises from our office occupation. During the reporting period, we occupied hotdesking facilities within the Alan Turing Institute's occupation of The British Library as well as a small office facility in Cambridge. The environmental impact of the occupation in The British Library is reported in the Alan Turing Institute's annual report and accounts. Our occupation is less than 1% of the building and is not separately metered. Meaningful data for this occupation is therefore not available and, consequently, Scope 1 and 2 emissions data does not feature in our report.

We make no use of consumer single-use plastic. For example, we provide biodegradable or reusable glass and tableware for staff.

Business travel

ARIA operates a hybrid working model where staff are able to balance the benefits of collaboration in the office with the flexibility of working from home. This adoption of smarter and more flexible ways of working, supported by our IT and digital platforms, reduces the need for staff to travel and our overall environmental footprint.

However, some business travel remains essential as we balance the need for regional presence and coverage across the UK. If travel is required, our travel policy encourages staff to assess whether their planned travel is essential. Where a business trip is necessary, then staff are encouraged to use the most sustainable form of transport.

Our business travel measurements during the reporting period both total and per full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, are detailed below.

	Measurement	25 Jan 2023 – 31 Mar 2024
Business travel*	Total miles (per FTE)	214,300 (5,986)
	Tonnes CO ₂ e (per FTE)	36.2 tonnes (1.0)
	Expenditure (per FTE)	£51,050 (£1,426)
	Miles – air travel (per FTE)	147,600 (4,123)
	Tonnes CO ₂ e – air travel (per FTE)	32.8 tonnes (0.9)
	Expenditure – air travel (per FTE)	£22,981 (£642)

* The Scope 3 emissions from ARIA's business travel are calculated by ARIA's travel management company and a report is provided on an annual basis.

IT policy

We align with the GGCs and the associated **Greening government: ICT and digital services strategy**. Our technology estate is provided by outsourced providers. As a new organisation, with no legacy technology, we have taken a cloud first approach to designing our technology infrastructure. We therefore make use of cloud-based hosting and associated applications. This virtual infrastructure ensures we use resources efficiently and supports our hybrid working workforce strategy and reduces the need for unnecessary travel for face-to-face meetings.

Sustainable procurement

The Procurement team has developed and implemented a Social Value Policy, aligning where possible with the Government's wider procurement policy relating to Social Value.

Biodiversity

ARIA has no landholdings and no independent estate. All of our office occupation in 2023/24 was within multi-occupied estates, as a very small proportion of the total office occupation. We do not have a biodiversity action plan given this context.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 8 July 2024

3

Accountability Report

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Corporate Governance Report

Directors' Report

The Corporate Governance Report sets out the governance arrangements of ARIA and comprises:

1. The Directors' Report
2. The Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities
3. The Governance Statement

ARIA was established as an independent non-departmental public body of BEIS by the ARIA Act 2022. In February 2023, a major machinery of government change was announced which redistributed the activities of several existing government departments, including BEIS. DSIT was one of three new departments created as a result of this redistribution. ARIA was designated to DSIT with Accounting Officer responsibilities formally transferred from 1 April 2023.

The following items, required as part of the Directors' Report are included in the Governance Statement on page 20:

- Composition of the ARIA Board
- Disclosure of other interests of the ARIA Board
- Disclosure of personal data-related incidents

Corporate Governance Report continued

Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

The ARIA Act 2022 requires ARIA to prepare a statement of accounts in the form specified by the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State for DSIT has directed ARIA to prepare a statement of accounts for each financial year in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. For the current reporting period, ARIA has been directed to prepare extended accounts for the period 25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of ARIA and of its income and expenditure, statement of financial position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FRoM) and in particular to:

- Observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Secretary of State for DSIT, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- Make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- State whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the FRoM have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts;
- Prepare the accounts on the going concern basis; and
- Confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Principal Accounting Officer for DSIT designated the Chief Executive as ARIA's Accounting Officer.

The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer are set out in Managing Public Money published by HM Treasury. These include responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable to, for keeping proper records, and for safeguarding ARIA's assets.

Preparation and audit of the Accounts

The accounts have been prepared under a direction issued by DSIT and are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that ARIA's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

I also confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts are fair, balanced and understandable, and I take personal responsibility for judgements made to ensure that they are fair, balanced and understandable.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 8 July 2024

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement

The Accounting Officer is responsible for maintaining a system of internal control that supports the achievement of ARIA’s policies, aims and objectives, while safeguarding public funds and departmental assets. This is in accordance with the responsibilities assigned in the HM Treasury publication **Managing Public Money**.

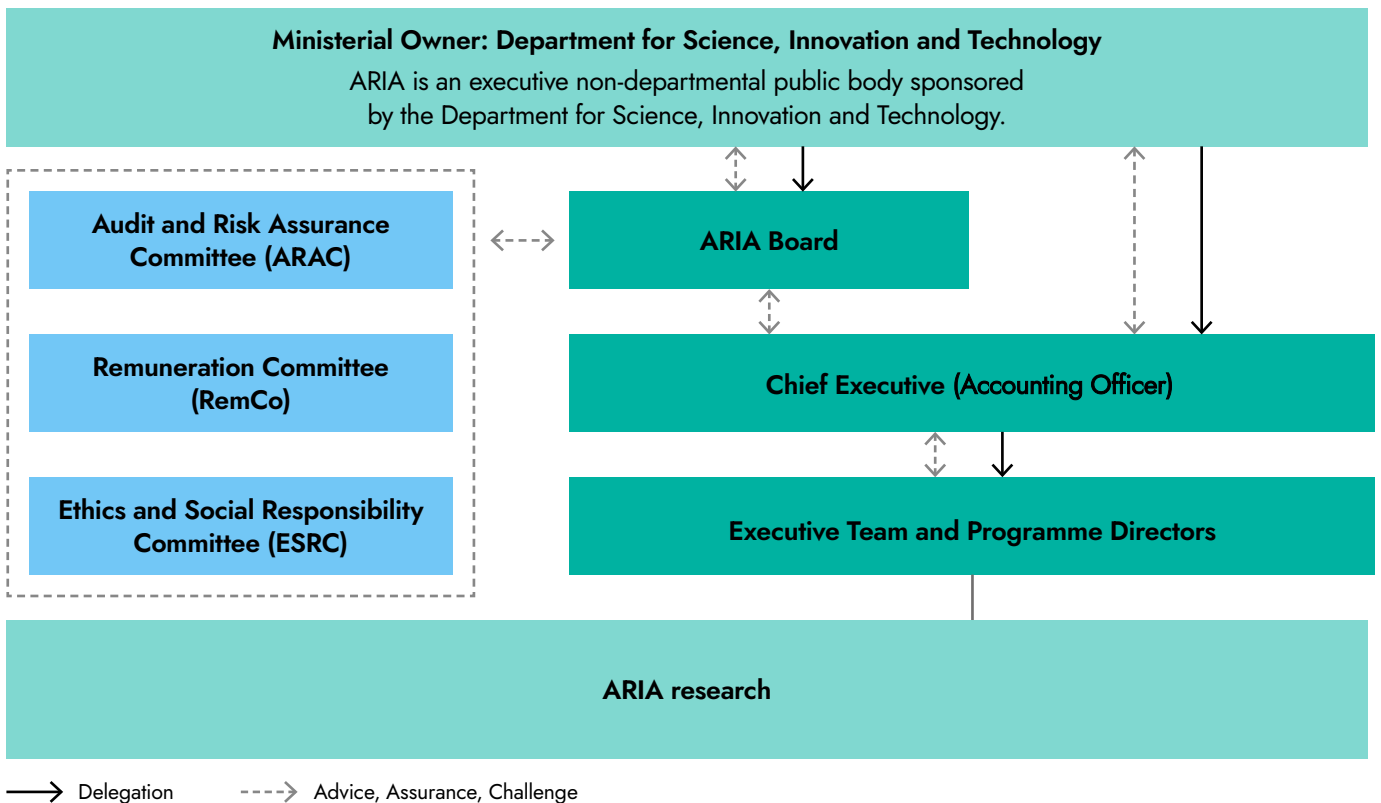
This Governance Statement describes how these duties have been carried out by the Accounting Officer and the supporting structure in place in the reporting period.

The reporting period is one where the governance arrangements and broader controls were developed as ARIA was established. The Accounting Officer ensured that proportionate controls were in place at all times, and that these were applied in a system of effective governance.

Governance structure

ARIA is accountable to Parliament through our parent department, DSIT, for the funds it expends. ARIA’s working relationship and lines of accountability with DSIT are defined in its Framework Agreement and Delegation and Allocation Letter made to the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer. These documents are subject to periodic review. The ARIA Framework Document was reviewed and published in February 2023. ARIA also maintains active engagement and a transparent relationship with its parent department.

ARIA Governance structure



Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement

The Board

The Board is the main body for oversight within ARIA. The key objectives of the Board are as follows:

- Agreeing an annual strategic and operational plan for ARIA;
- Supporting the Chief Executive to help ARIA achieve its objectives, in alignment with those set out in the ARIA Act 2022;
- Ensuring effective stewardship of ARIA's funding;
- Agreeing ARIA's risk appetite and monitoring and supporting optimisation of risk within ARIA to ensure it pursues ambitious research, development and exploitation with a high tolerance to failure, while maintaining effective governance, risk management and internal controls;
- Advising the Secretary of State for DSIT where there are any significant areas of concern that may impact on ARIA's ability to fulfil its objectives; and
- Representing ARIA to help promote its activities and improve its connectivity in the UK and abroad.

The Board comprises the Chair, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, five other Non-Executive Board members and the founding Chief Executive – appointed by the Secretary of State for DSIT – as well as three other Executive Team members, including a Chief Finance & Operating Officer – appointed by the Chair.

Board members and any roles as part of the three sub-committees of the Board as at 31 March 2024 – the Remuneration Committee (RemCo), the Audit and Risk Committee (ARAC) and the Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee (ESRC) – are listed below:

Appointee	Role	Sub-committee	Dates served
Matt Clifford	Chair	N/A	From 15 August 2022*
Ilan Gur	Chief Executive	N/A	From 15 August 2022*
Dame Kate Bingham	Non-Executive Director	RemCo (Chair)	From 25 January 2023
Stephen Cohen	Non-Executive Director	ARAC (Chair)	From 25 January 2023
Sarah Hunter	Non-Executive Director	ESRC (Chair) RemCo	From 25 January 2023
Sir David MacMillan	Non-Executive Director	ESRC	From 25 January 2023
Sir Patrick Vallance**	Non-Executive Director	ARAC ESRC	i) 25 January 2023 to 2 April 2023 ii) 27 June 2023
Dame Angela McLean	Non-Executive Director	N/A	From 3 April 2023
Antonia Jenkinson	Chief Finance & Operating Officer	N/A	From 25 January 2023
Pippy James	Chief Product Officer	N/A	From 25 January 2023
Sarah Hodgetts (interim)	Director of Operations (BEIS Seconded)	N/A	From 25 January 2023 to 31 May 2023
Dan Cole (interim)	Chief of Staff	N/A	From 15 May 2023
Independent Member		Sub-committee	Dates served
Sue Hunt		ARAC	From 21 March 2023

* These appointments were made on designate basis before ARIA was legally created.

** Sir Patrick Vallance was a member of the ARIA Board in his role as Government Chief Scientific Adviser. This terminated when he stepped down from this role in April 2023. He was subsequently appointed an independent Non-Executive Director in June 2023.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement

During the reporting period, the Board held six regular Board meetings. The key areas of focus for the Board during the reporting period included:

- Board and sub-committee terms of reference;
- Development of ARIA Strategy and budgets;
- Approach to risk, intellectual property and funding mechanisms; and
- Financial performance and controls.

Conflicts of interest

All Board members are required to declare any personal or business interests which may influence their judgement in discharging their obligations, or which may be perceived to do so. These interests are published on ARIA's website at: aria.org.uk/transparency.

Board effectiveness

The Board is undertaking its first effectiveness review in 2024 (after the end of the reporting period), having been established in January 2023. The results of this review will be reported in the next Annual Report and Accounts.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is a permanent sub-committee of the Board to support it and the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer in their responsibilities for risk, control and governance. It also oversees internal and external audit arrangements covering both financial and non-financial systems.

The ARAC was formed and met four times in the reporting period to review the ARIA's performance, the framework for assessing and managing controls, fraud and risk and the appointment of internal and external auditors.

The results of the internal audit team's work, including assurance ratings for individual audits and summaries on the progress of the implementation of agreed actions, are reported at each meeting. The ARAC reviewed the external audit planning work and final audit reports, which were delivered by the National Audit Office.

The Chair of the ARAC reported to the Board after each meeting.

Remuneration Committee

The role of the Remuneration Committee is to ensure that remuneration arrangements, including senior pay strategy and succession planning for senior appointments support ARIA's aims and enable the recruitment, retention and performance of the leadership team and PDs. The committee will also support and inform ARIA's wider workforce strategies, including ensuring the organisation attracts, retains and develops diverse people at all levels, and provides an inclusive and equal opportunities working environment.

The RemCo also approves the performance related pay scheme and other remuneration and people related policies and issues. The RemCo met four times during the reporting period.

The Chair of the RemCo reported to the Board after each meeting.

Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee

The Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee was established in March 2024 to support the Board and the Chief Executive by providing additional oversight on issues related to ethics and social responsibility. The ESRC's responsibilities include reviewing and sharing recommendations on the ethical and social responsibility aspects of ARIA's programmes and other funding calls.

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement

Board and Committee attendance for the period 25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

Board/Committee member	Board	Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	Remuneration Committee	Ethics and Social Responsibility Committee (established March 2024)
Total meetings during the reporting period	6	4	4	0
Non-Executive Directors				
Matt Clifford Chair	6	1 By invitation only	2 By invitation only	N/A
Dame Angela McLean Government Chief Scientific Adviser	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dame Kate Bingham Chair of RemCo	6	N/A	4	N/A
Stephen Cohen Chair of ARAC	6	4	N/A	N/A
Sarah Hunter Chair of ESRC	6	N/A	4	0
Sir David MacMillan	5	N/A	0	0
Sir Patrick Vallance	6	3	N/A	0
ARAC Independent Member				
Sue Hunt	N/A	4	N/A	N/A
Executive Directors				
Ilan Gur Chief Executive	6	4 By invitation only	4 By invitation only	0
Antonia Jenkinson Chief Financial & Operating Officer	6	4 By invitation only	4 By invitation only	0
Dan Cole Chief of Staff	6	N/A	N/A	0
Pippy James Chief Product Officer	5	1 As observer	N/A	0
Observer				
Jo Shanmugalingam Director General for Science, Innovation and Growth	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alex Jones Director General for Science, Innovation and Growth	4	N/A	N/A	N/A

Corporate Governance Report continued

Governance Statement

Executive Team

The Executive Team (ET) convenes bi-weekly and is responsible for developing ARIA's strategy, annual plan (strategic objectives and budget) and ensures its delivery, with oversight from the Board. In addition, the ET is responsible for effective governance, financial stewardship, risk management, compliance, stakeholder management and ensuring the organisation has the appropriate culture and policies.

Executive Team member	Position	Date of appointment
Ilan Gur	Chief Executive	25 January 2023
Antonia Jackson	Chief Financial & Operating Officer	25 January 2023
Pippy James	Director of Product	i) 25 January 2023 – 28 February 2023 as contractor ii) Employee from 1 March 2023
Dan Cole	Chief of Staff	15 May 2023

Risk management

ARIA is unique in its attitude to risk and aims to explore bold and innovative approaches to R&D. The ARIA Act 2022 states:

“Ambitious research, development and exploitation: tolerance to failure... In exercising any of its functions under this Act, ARIA may give particular weight to the potential for significant benefits to be achieved or facilitated through scientific research, or the development and exploitation of scientific knowledge, that carries a high risk of failure.”

ARIA recognises that appropriate risk optimisation is vital to achieving its mission and goals. To achieve this approach to risk, ARIA has established its processes to support the effective management and, in certain areas, acceptance of risk. ARIA encourages openness, challenge, innovation and excellence in embedding this approach to support decision making at all levels of the business.

Risk strategy

ARIA has been established to be a “high risk, high reward” research funding agency. This risk appetite relates to its strategic delivery and scientific programmes (and underlying projects); there is lower risk tolerance for its corporate functions and operations such as legal, information management and financial exposure (such as fraud/expenses and compliance). ARIA will assess and closely monitor technical and programmatic risks post Programme Approval, whilst ensuring risk related opportunities are fully explored.

ARIA’s risk and strategic management are closely integrated, with risk considerations integrated into decision making around key areas such as organisational strategy, governance and assurance.

Risk management continued

Risk appetite

ARIA's risk appetite reflects the ambition to take on bold and high-risk R&D ventures, whilst retaining strict oversight and diligent approach to environmental, financial and security risks.

High risk

Strategic delivery

ARIA is set up to take an experimental approach, and in its startup phase it will place a high value on iterative learning. This means that we may take on operational risk if the value of fast learning (and potentially failing) merits doing so in pursuit of a more optimal long term solution.

Expected programme and project results

The nature of the work ARIA funds is highly innovative and uncertain. In many cases, the programme proposals will be taking what looks like a "leap of faith" in terms of what's possible. This will be acceptable to ARIA so long as the societal benefit is both material and well articulated, and progress is well managed and evaluated.

Medium risk

Budgeting

Budgeting risks denote the possibility of underspend/overspend each year which can have knock-on effects to funding elsewhere in the department and HM Treasury. The ARIA model relies on giving programme managers freedom to cut projects and reallocate funds at short notice, optimising the likelihood of portfolio success at any given moment.

Commercial

In commercial undertakings, we will exercise good business practice to protect the business and its ongoing growth and development. We will be prepared to take some risk where the strategic or scientific return merits this.

Communications

In support of its strategic and programme goals, ARIA may decide to communicate in a manner perceived to be different or provocative, to engage a community or encourage ideas.

Reputational risk

ARIA will deliberately seek to protect its reputation and brand as a trusted public body with all relevant stakeholders, recognising that ARIA's reputation and brand should reflect the higher risk appetite described in other parts of this framework.

Low risk

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety of all people (employees, contractors, visitors or members of the public) is paramount, and ARIA will mitigate these risks in line with all applicable legislation, taking into account shared best practice with similar research organisations.

Security

ARIA will be an outward-facing Intellectual Property (IP) generating public sector research organisation that works in an international arena and is subject to security threats. ARIA will manage cyber, personnel and building security by continually monitoring these respective policies, processes, training and systems.

Financial

ARIA will operate robust financial control systems to protect against fraud and other financial losses. ARIA will endeavour to minimise risks of fraud associated with financial transactions.

Compliance with legislation

ARIA will operate strictly in accordance with all laws at all times. Any non-compliances identified will be addressed as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Protection of the environment

ARIA will not take significant risks with regards to damage to the environment.

Risk management continued

Accountability and responsibility framework for risk management

Group	Responsibility	Frequency
ARIA Board	· Review and approve ARIA's risk appetite.	Annual review
	· Monitor ARIA's risks	Quarterly review of most critical risks
ARAC	· Review, oversight, assurance and challenge around ARIA's risks	Quarterly
ESRC	· Ethical and social responsibility risks	Three times a year
Executive Team / Functional Leads / Programme Directors	· Ownership and management of risks, opportunities and issues	Continuous, alongside quarterly deep dives and calibration

Key strategic and operational risks

ARIA defined its risks in the following categories, based on areas of impact:

- Safety and Security
- Trust with Stakeholders
- Team and Culture
- Operational Excellence
- Focus

Risk management continued

ARIA's current top strategic and operational risks are:

Risk description	Risk areas (primary and secondary)	Mitigations enacted	Risk appetite	Latest risk movement
Top three strategic risks				
Designing ARIA products, controls and processes may take longer than stakeholder expectations affecting future funding allocations	Trust with Stakeholders Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Communication with DSIT · Recruitment and empowering the PDs as quickly as possible 	Medium	→
PD attrition/dissatisfaction may lead to challenges with retention and recruitment	Focus Trust with Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Rigorous selection process · Portfolio of mechanisms designed to maintain and improve PD satisfaction 	Medium	→
Solicitations do not elicit good quality bids	Focus Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Feedback from diverse eco system incorporated into processes · FAQ funding page available · Ongoing communications engagement and support 	Medium	→
Top three operational risks				
Cyber attack/malicious action from internal or external party	Safety and Security Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Portfolio of mitigating measures including Cyber Security Essentials certification, established policies and procedures, training and partnerships with IT providers 	Low	↑
Internal or external fraud, or misuse of funds	Operational Excellence Trust with Stakeholders Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Policies, processes and systems in place · Fraud Risk Assessment and training for all staff 	Low	→
Systems/ways of working are not differentiated or not agile enough	Operational Excellence Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Portfolio of mitigating measures in form of working guides, training sessions, and ongoing tailoring of systems to meet ARIA's needs 	Medium	↓

Assurance

ARIA's control environment is managed across three lines of defence: operational functions and support functions, functions that oversee or who specialise in compliance or the management of risk such as Legal or Finance, and functions that provide independent assurance such as Internal Audit.

Counter-fraud, anti-bribery and anti-corruption

ARIA is committed to creating a transparent environment and has a policy framework in place covering counter-fraud, bribery and corruption. This policy provides guidance to staff and is reviewed regularly for relevance and clarity.

A fraud response plan, which involves regular fraud risk assessments, was developed during the reporting period to review the effectiveness of controls in place to give an accurate picture of the fraud risk across ARIA.

Counter-fraud continues to be promoted by the finance team through workshops and internal communications, with alignment with the Cabinet Office Government Functional Standard for Counter Fraud (GovS 013).

There were no instances of fraud, bribery or corruption reported during the reporting period. ARIA maintains a Gifts and Hospitality register to record all gifts or hospitality received or given.

Internal audit

Mazars was appointed to provide ARIA's internal audit services in April 2023. An internal audit plan was formed that comprised a risk-based programme of work across a range of key control areas. The ARAC receives reports from the internal audit provider on the progress of its audits, final internal audit reports, including ARIA's management response to the findings (where appropriate) and the progress made in addressing any issues identified during the audits.

During the reporting period, four internal audits – on core financial controls, procurement, governance and data privacy – were undertaken. Three of these reports concluded with ratings of Substantial Assurance, with data privacy being scored as Moderate Assurance. This gave rise to 16 action points assessed as low priority by Mazars. At the end of the reporting period, five actions were completed, with 11 not yet due for completion. The overall opinion on the design of framework of governance, risk management, and control was Substantial in its overall adequacy and effectiveness.

Health and Safety

A Health and Safety policy was implemented during the reporting period which sets out ARIA's approach to managing its responsibilities for Health and Safety throughout the organisation. Key to this is ensuring that all levels of the organisation understand the importance of Health and Safety and the role that each individual plays in contributing to this. All staff and contractors are required to complete mandatory Health and Safety awareness training, with additional support provided to encourage safe office and home working in the form of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) training and assessments.

ARIA conducts regular six-weekly Health and Safety review meetings, which monitors the level of incidents during the reporting period, examines training statistics and DSE referrals, and updates the Health and Safety risk log with any related mitigations. Several ARIA staff members have received first aid training and are acting as designated first aiders for the office. We also have a small contingent of mental health first aiders with more individuals to receive training in 2024. Fire Marshals have been established to ensure that all ARIA staff, operating partners, contractors and visitors are safely evacuated from the office premises in the event of a fire, after which the British Library's general evacuation process becomes active. Health and Safety risk assessments have been completed for both of ARIA's office facilities. Regular Health and Safety inspections are conducted in order to proactively identify and resolve any risks. There were no reportable injuries during the reporting period.

Assurance continued

Information security

Policies and procedures were implemented during the reporting period to manage information security and data protection effectively. These controls include access management protocols that restrict sensitive data access to authorised personnel only. Audits and monitoring mechanisms ensure compliance with security policies and regulatory requirements. Encryption methods are employed to safeguard data during transmission and storage. Additionally, employee communications and training programmes are conducted to emphasise the importance of data security and provide guidance on best practices.

Incident response procedures are in place to promptly address any security breaches or vulnerabilities, minimising potential damage. Continuous evaluation and improvement of these internal controls are undertaken to maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of ARIA's data.

ARIA continues to enforce a robust security posture across its devices and systems. Devices are managed centrally with remote provision and wiping available when required. New app or system requests are passed through a rigorous internal assessment process to ensure that data residency and processing is kept within the UK/EEA when required and that ARIA's security requirements are met.

During the reporting period, ARIA was awarded with Cyber Essentials Plus certification. Future audits will be conducted to ensure that ARIA retains this recognised standard going forward.

Data protection

ARIA has embedded data protection into our processes and systems by design and default, such that personal data is managed proactively, thoughtfully and in compliance with our legal obligations. ARIA's Data Protection Officer is a visible champion of the issue within the organisation, including through onboarding and periodic training.

ARIA has adopted a comprehensive set of data protection policies which set out ARIA's approach to data protection at an organisational level, the technical and organisational measures that personnel must deploy in their role, data retention and handling, when and how data protection impact assessments and transfer risk assessments must be carried out, and the proper handling of data subject access requests.

Whistleblowing

ARIA has a whistleblowing policy which is available to all staff and operating partners. No whistleblowing claims were received during the reporting period.

Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration policy

ARIA maintains fairness and transparency in all aspects of remuneration, with appointments made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. During the reporting period, ARIA has established its initial recruitment policies and processes which have been overseen and approved by the RemCo.

The remuneration of Non-Executive Directors appointed to the ARIA Board and the Chief Executive is set by the Secretary of State for DSIT in accordance with the ARIA Act 2022.

The RemCo advises the Chair who determines the overall remuneration package for Executive Directors (excluding the Chief Executive) after consulting with the other Non-Executive Directors and with the consent of the Secretary of State.

The RemCo also advises the Board on the overall remuneration package for PDs.

In reaching its recommendations, the RemCo has regard to the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified people to exercise their different responsibilities, the evidence it receives about wider economic considerations and the affordability of its recommendations.

The remuneration of those who serve on the ARIA Board is disclosed within this report.

Service contracts

As per the ARIA Act 2022, the first Chief Executive is appointed by the Secretary of State for DSIT. Thereafter the appointments of the Chief Executive and the Executive Directors are to be proposed by the Chair after consulting with the Non-Executive Directors, and with the consent of the Secretary of State, which can only be withheld in the interests of national security.

The Chief Executive is on a two-year fixed term contract that has been renewed for at least a further year. The other Executive Directors are on open-ended appointments.

The notice period for the Chief Executive and Chief Financial & Operating Officer is three months and one month for other Executive Directors. Each Executive Director remained in post from the date of their appointment to 31 March 2024.

Remuneration – audited information

The following table shows the remuneration of Executive Board members on an annual basis and during the reporting period, including the details of their salary, allowances, performance related pay and pension entitlements.

Annual values – for the 12 months to 31 March 2024

Name	Start date	Salary & allowances in bands of £5,000	Performance related pay in bands of £5,000	Pension benefits to nearest £1,000	Total remuneration in bands of £5,000
Ilan Gur* Chief Executive	25 January 2023	385–390	45–50	19	455–460
Antonia Jenkinson Chief Finance & Operating Officer	25 January 2023	180–185	20–25	9	215–220
Pippy James Chief Product Officer	1 March 2023	145–150	20–25	7	175–180
Dan Cole Chief of Staff	15 May 2023	120–125 (full-year equivalent 135–140)	15–20	6 (full-year equivalent 7)	140–145

* Note that salary and allowances for Ilan Gur includes travel allowance of £5–10k.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Account period values – for the reporting period 25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

Name	Start date	Salary and allowances in bands of £5,000	Performance related pay in bands of £5,000	Pension benefits to nearest £1,000	Total remuneration in bands of £5,000
Ilan Gur* Chief Executive	25 January 2023	470–475	85–90	23	580–585
Antonia Jenkinson Chief Finance & Operating Officer	25 January 2023	215–220	25–30	11	255–260
Pippy James Chief Product Officer	1 March 2023	160–165	20–25	8	185–190
Dan Cole Chief of Staff	15 May 2023	120–125	15–20	6	140–145

* Note that salary and allowances for Ilan Gur includes travel allowance of £10–15k. Ilan Gur's employment with ARIA began on 25 January 2023 and his previous employment with BEIS as Chief Executive for ARIA is to be counted as continuous employment from 15 August 2022, therefore, travel allowance and accrued performance related pay is for the period from 15th August 2022 to 31 March 2024.

Salary

Salary includes gross salary and travel allowances.

Performance related pay

ARIA'S performance related pay policy has been approved by the ARIA Board and DSIT. Performance Related Payments (PRP) are discretionary (non-contractual), subject to available funding and require RemCo approval every year.

The performance related pay for Executive Directors is calculated, as with all staff, in accordance with performance against agreed objectives, skills and behaviours and evaluated on an annual basis in line with the financial year. For the Chief Executive these objectives are determined by the Chair of the ARIA Board, with recommendations from the Remuneration Committee. The Chief Executive sets the objectives for other Executive Directors.

PRPs reflect performance levels attained as assessed during the appraisal process. Payments are non-consolidated and non-pensionable. Amounts shown are estimated and accrued and will be paid in 2024/25.

Pension benefits

Pension benefits are employer only, as accrued during the reporting period, in ARIA's defined contribution scheme.

Benefits-in-kind

No Executives covered by this report received any benefits in kind during the reporting period.

Expenses

All staff are reimbursed for reasonable business expenses incurred in line with ARIA expense policy.

Fair Pay disclosure – audited information

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid Director in their organisation as shown above, and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the organisation's workforce. This is shown on page 33.

Total remuneration includes salary, allowances and accrued performance-related pay. It does not include employer pension contributions.

As this is the first year that ARIA is in operation, it is not possible to include all disclosures such as the prior year comparatives in respect of the highest paid Director, nor the changes year on year in respect of the pay ratio.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Annualised figures for the 12 months from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 are shown for greater transparency.

£000s	2023/2024	
	Total remuneration	Ratio to highest paid Director's remuneration
Remuneration banding for highest-paid Director	£435,000 – £440,000	
75th centile employee	£138,875	3.2:1
Median employee	£103,750	4.2:1
25th centile employee	£73,500	6.0:1
Remuneration range	£57,000 – £57,500 to £435,000 – £440,000	
		Salary component
		£380,000 – £385,000
		£123,750
		£94,500
		£66,000
		£45,000 – £50,000 to £380,000 – £385,000

In 2023/24, no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest paid Director. Annualised total remuneration ranged from £57k–£57.5k to £435k–£440k.

Pension benefits

Employees of ARIA are eligible to participate in a defined contribution pension scheme, which is managed on ARIA's behalf by Smart Pension. Employees are automatically enrolled in the pension scheme on their first day of employment unless they decide to opt out. The employer makes a basic contribution of 5%. Employee contributions are made via salary sacrifice arrangements at a minimum rate of 3%.

For the reporting period ending 31 March 2024, employer contributions of £104k were paid.

No Non-Executive Member received a pension benefit from ARIA during the reporting period under review.

Life assurance

We have implemented a life assurance policy for all our employees as this does not form a part of the ARIA defined contribution pension scheme benefits.

Remuneration of the Board and independent member – audited information

Membership details of the Board and the independent member are detailed in the Governance Statement.

Below are the annual fees paid to the Non-Executive Board members and the independent member in the reporting period to 31 March 2024.

	25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024 in bands of £5,000	Full year equivalent in bands of £5,000
Matthew Clifford	30–35	25–30
Stephen Cohen	15–20	15–20
Sarah Hunter	15–20	10–15
Sir David MacMillan	15–20	10–15
Sir Patrick Vallance	5–10	10–15
Susan Hunt	5–10	5–10
Dame Angela McLean	—	—
Dame Kate Bingham	—	—

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Staff report

Staff numbers – audited information

The FTE number of persons at 31 March 2024 was as follows:

Category of staff	Number of staff	FTE
Permanent	25	25
Fixed-term	6	5.6
Secondees	4	3.2
Temporary / Contractors	2	2
Total staff	37	35.8

The average number of FTE staff during the reporting period to 31 March 2024 was as follows:

Staff	25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024 Total	12 months to 31 March 2024 Total
Permanent	9.2	11.2
Fixed-term	4.6	5.5
Secondees	5.1	5.0
Temporary/Contractors	3.4	3.6
Total	22.3	25.3

The number of staff-in-post (headcount) by gender as at 31 March 2024 was as follows:

Staff	Male	Female	Non-binary	Total
Executive members of the Board and its committees	2	2	0	4
Directors (excluding executive members of the Board)	2	2	0	4
Other	10	17	2	28
Total staff	14	21	2	37
Non-Executive Directors of the Board and its committees	4	4	0	8

Staff, as set out above, includes employees (permanent and fixed term), secondees and temporary/contractors.

Early departure costs – audited information

There were no early departures or compulsory exits in 2023/24.

Remuneration and Staff Report continued

Staff costs – audited information

Staff costs consists of the following:

	25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024			2023/24		
	Permanently employed staff £000	Others £000	Total £000	Permanently employed staff £000	Others £000	Total £000
Wages and salaries	1,290	2,192	3,482	1,249	1,887	3,136
Social security costs	160	191	351	156	168	324
Pension costs	53	144	197	52	118	170
Total	1,503	2,527	4,030	1,457	2,173	3,630
Non-Executive Director fees			108			93
Total staff costs	1,503	2,527	4,138	1,457	2,173	3,723

'Permanently employed staff' comprises staff employed on a permanent basis. 'Others' includes staff employed directly on a fixed term basis, agency staff and inward secondments.

Sickness absence data

Data is only available from the date of launching our full HR Information System in December 2023 (prior to this date any sickness absence was minimal).

The total FTE days lost through staff sickness absence in the reporting period was 15.5. The average working days lost per employee during the reporting period was 0.53 FTE; these were all short-term sickness absences of five days or less.

Off payroll engagements

The tables below present data on our off-payroll engagements. Off-payroll engagements refer to workers who are paid off-payroll, without deducting tax and national insurance at source, typically contractors.

Highly paid off-payroll worker engagements as at 31st March 2024, earning £245 per day or greater

Number of existing engagements as at 31st March 2024	1
Of which, number that have existed:	
Less than 1 year	1

All highly paid off-payroll workers engaged at any point during the reporting period ended 31st March 2024, earning £245 per day or greater at ARIA

No. of all off-payroll workers engaged during the reporting period ended 31st March 2024	7
Of which, not subject to off-payroll legislation	0
Of which, subject to off-payroll legislation and determined as in-scope of IR35	1
Of which, subject to off-payroll legislation and determined as out-of-scope of IR35	6
No. of engagements reassessed for compliance or assurance purposes during the reporting period	0
Of which, No. of engagements that saw a change to IR35 status following review	0

Expenditure on consultancy

Expenditure on consultancy in the reporting period to 31 March 2024 was £684k. This expenditure primarily relates to legal and communications consultancy services.

Parliamentary Accountability and Audit Report

Regularity of expenditure – audited information

We have considered all our activities during the reporting period and confirm that they are in accordance with the legislation authorising them.

Losses and special payments – audited information

There were no losses or special payments that need to be reported in accordance with Managing Public Money.

Remote contingent liabilities – audited information

In addition to contingent liabilities reported within the meaning of IAS 37, Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets, ARIA discloses, for parliamentary reporting and accountability purposes, liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of a contingent liability. As at 31 March 2024 there are nil to report.

Audit fees – audited information

The accounts of ARIA are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General under the ARIA Act 2022. The audit fee charged was £60,000. The auditors did not provide any non-audit services.

The auditors have been provided with all relevant audit information necessary to complete their audit and the Accounting Officer has taken all of the necessary steps to ensure that the auditors are aware of any relevant information.



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 8 July 2024

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency for the period ended 31 March 2024 under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

The financial statements comprise the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's:

- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2024;
- Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Statement of Cash Flows and Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the period then ended; and
- the related notes including the significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in the preparation of the financial statements is applicable law and UK adapted International Accounting Standards.

In my opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and its comprehensive net expenditure for the period then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022 and Secretary of State directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects, the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom (2022). My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2019. I am independent of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK. My staff and I have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Advanced Research and Invention Agency is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual, which requires entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it is anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

Other information

The other information comprises information included in the Annual Report but does not include the financial statements and my auditor's certificate and report thereon. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament continued

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion the part of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit have been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions made under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022; and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial period for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance Report and Accountability Reports.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the Advanced Research and Invention Agency or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual have not been made or parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited is not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records;
- providing the C&AG with access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- providing the C&AG with additional information and explanations needed for his audit;
- providing the C&AG with unrestricted access to persons within the Advanced Research and Invention Agency from whom the auditor determines it necessary to obtain audit evidence;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022;
- preparing the annual report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022; and
- assessing the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Advanced Research and Invention Agency will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Advanced Research and Invention Agency.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament continued

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations including fraud

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud. The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud is detailed below.

Identifying and assessing potential risks related to non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, I:

- considered the nature of the sector, control environment and operational performance including the design of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's accounting policies.
- inquired of management, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's policies and procedures on:
 - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations;
 - detecting and responding to the risks of fraud; and
 - the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations including the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's controls relating to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency compliance with the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022 and Managing Public Money;
- inquired of management, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's head of internal audit and those charged with governance whether:
 - they were aware of any instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations;
 - they had knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud;
- discussed with the engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, I considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the Advanced Research and Invention Agency for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in the following areas: posting of unusual journals, complex transactions and bias in management estimates. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), I am required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override.

I obtained an understanding of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency's framework of authority and other legal and regulatory frameworks in which the Advanced Research and Invention Agency operates. I focused on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency. The key laws and regulations I considered in this context included the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Act 2022, Managing Public Money, and relevant employment, pensions and tax legislation.

Audit response to identified risk

To respond to the identified risks resulting from the above procedures:

- I reviewed the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with provisions of relevant laws and regulations described above as having direct effect on the financial statements;
- I enquired of management and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- I reviewed minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the Board and internal audit reports; and
- I addressed the risk of fraud through management override of controls by testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements on estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

I communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential risks of fraud to all engagement team members including internal specialists and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament continued

Other auditor's responsibilities

I am required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Gareth Davies

Comptroller and Auditor General

Date: 11 July 2024

National Audit Office
157–197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London
SW1W 9SP

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Financial Statements

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Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

for the period 25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

	Note	31 March 2024 £000
Staff costs	2	4,138
Other operating expenditure	3	4,408
Depreciation and loss on disposal	4	30
Net operating expenditure		8,576
Finance income		—
Finance expense		—
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		8,576

The notes on pages 46 to 50 form part of these financial statements

Statement of Financial Position

as at 31 March 2024

	Note	31 March 2024 £000
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	4	96
Total non-current assets		96
Current assets		
Trade and other receivables	5	169
Cash and cash equivalents	6	1,726
Total current assets		1,895
Total assets		1,991
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	7	(1,192)
Total current liabilities		(1,192)
Total assets less current liabilities		799
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves		
General fund		(799)
Total equity		(799)

The notes on pages 46 to 50 form part of these financial statements



Ilan Gur

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Date: 8 July 2024

Statement of Cash Flows

for the period 25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

	Note	31 March 2024 £000
Cash flows from operating activities		
Total comprehensive net expenditure		(8,576)
Adjustments for non-cash items:		
Increase in Trade and other receivables	5	(169)
Increase in Trade and other payables	7	1,192
Depreciation	4	29
Loss on disposal of non-current assets	4	1
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(7,523)
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of Fixed Assets	4	(126)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(126)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Grant-in-aid received from sponsoring department		9,375
Net cash inflow from financing activities		9,375
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		1,726
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year		–
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	6	1,726

The notes on pages 46 to 50 form part of these financial statements

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity

for the period 25 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

	General reserve £000	Total reserves £000
Balance at 25 January 2023	—	—
Grant in aid from DSIT	(9,375)	(9,375)
Net expenditure for the period	8,576	8,576
Balance at 31 March 2024	(799)	(799)

The notes on pages 46 to 50 form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

ARIA is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below.

1.1 Basis of accounting

These financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by HM Treasury which is updated annually. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of ARIA for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by ARIA are described below. We have applied these policies consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling and rounded to the nearest £000.

1.2 Grant in aid

In line with the FReM, grant-in-aid for revenue purposes from DSIT (the controlling body) are recognised as a financing flow and thus credited to the General Reserve and is recognised in the reporting period in which it is received.

1.3 Plant and equipment

Plant and equipment comprises single assets and are capitalised at cost on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefit associated with the item will flow to ARIA. A capitalisation threshold of £500 is applied to all asset classes. Expenditure below this value is charged as an expense in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

1.4 Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on a straight line basis over the estimated useful life of the asset as follows:

Asset class	Useful life
Computer equipment	3 years
Fixtures and fittings	3 years

Depreciation is charged in full in the month of acquisition on the date it was brought into service.

1.5 Leased assets

ARIA has adopted IFRS 16, in line with FReM requirements. At the inception of a contract ARIA assesses whether a contract contains a lease. A contract contains a lease if the contract conveys the right for ARIA to control the use of an identified asset for a period of time in exchange for consideration. To assess whether a contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset, ARIA assesses whether:

- The asset is greater in value than ARIA's capitalisation threshold, which is £500.
- The contract involves the use of an identified asset, which is physically distinct or represents substantially all of the capacity of a distinct asset and there are no substantive substitution rights.
- The contract conveys the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from use of the asset throughout the period of use.
- The lessee has the right to direct the use of the asset.

ARIA has assessed all of its contracts and determined that it does not have any leases as defined by IFRS 16.

1.6 Grants payable

Grant expenditure is recognised in the period in which eligible activity creates an entitlement in line with the terms and conditions of the grant.

No grants were awarded during the reporting period.

1.7 IFRS 17 Insurance contracts

ARIA has determined that it has no contracts that will be impacted by the implementation of IFRS 17, which requires insurance contract liabilities to be calculated as the present value of future insurance cash flows with a provision for risk.

1.8 Value added tax

ARIA is not registered for VAT as it does not provide taxable supplies. All expenses are therefore presented inclusive of VAT.

1.9 Currency

The functional and presentational currency of ARIA is sterling.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

1.10 Pensions

Employees of ARIA are eligible to participate in a defined contribution pension scheme, which is managed on the Agency's behalf by Smart Pension. Employees are automatically enrolled in the pension scheme on their first day of employment unless they decide to opt out. The costs of ARIA's employer's contributions to this scheme is recorded as expenditure in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

1.11 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash in hand held with the Government Banking Service, which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to insignificant risk of changes in value and have an original maturity of three months or less.

The carrying amount of these assets approximates their fair value.

1.12 Trade and other payables

Trade payables are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of business from suppliers. Accounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less (or in the normal operating cycle of the business if longer). If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities.

Trade and other payables are non-interest bearing and recognised initially at fair value.

Other payables represent money owing to third parties at the reporting date.

1.13 Provisions

ARIA makes provision for liabilities and charges in accordance with IAS 37 where a legal or constructive liability (i.e. a present obligation arising from past events) exists, the transfer of economic benefits is probable, and a reasonable estimate can be made.

Provisions for liabilities are based on reliable estimates of the expenditure required to settle future legal or constructive obligations that exist. Provisions are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and released when the transfer of economic benefit to settle the obligation is made.

1.14 Foreign exchange

Transactions designated in foreign currencies are translated into pounds sterling at the rate of exchange prevailing at the transaction date. Monetary assets and liabilities designated in foreign currencies are translated at the rates prevailing at the reporting date with the resulting profit or loss recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the reporting period.

1.15 Segmental analysis

A segment is a distinguishable component of the organisation that is engaged either in providing products or services (business segment), or in providing products or services within a particular economic environment (geographical segment), and is subject to risks and rewards that are different from those of other segments.

ARIA has no separate reportable business segments and all its funding is received from one UK source, therefore, no analysis of ARIA's activities has been presented.

1.16 Corporation tax

ARIA is subject to corporation tax on taxable profits from trading activities. No corporation tax is payable as ARIA did not undertake any trading activities during the reporting period.

1.17 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

The Chief Executive, in his capacity as Accounting Officer, uses judgement in making estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the accounting period in which the estimate is revised, and if the revision also affects future periods in these periods as well. In reviewing these estimates, we consider the extent to which these could possibly vary and whether such a variation could indicate the need for a material adjustment to the accounts. There is nothing in the current review to indicate that a variation of a material amount could arise.

Critical judgements that have the most significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements are considered to be accrued expenditure.

1.18 Financial instruments

A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Financial assets and financial liabilities would be recognised in the balance sheet if ARIA became a party to the contractual provisions of an instrument.

ARIA has no borrowings and relies on grant in aid from DSIT for its cash requirements and is therefore not exposed to liquidity risks. All material assets and liabilities are denominated in sterling so it is not exposed to significant currency risk.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

2. Staff costs

	Permanently employed staff £000	Other £000	31 March 2024 £000
Wages and salaries	1,290	2,192	3,482
Social security costs	160	191	351
Other pension costs	53	144	197
Total	1,503	2,527	4,030
Non-Executive Director fees			108
Total staff costs	1,503	2,527	4,138

3. Other operating costs

	31 March 2024 £000
HR, training and recruitment costs	637
Legal and professional costs	450
IT costs	791
Rent and building costs	580
Engagement and communications costs*	988
Programme management costs**	603
Travel and subsistence costs	139
External audit fees	60
Internal audit fees	40
Research and development advisory costs	120
Total spend	4,408

* Engagement and communications costs include outsourced strategic communications advice and support, as well as costs incurred in hosting events and workshops during the reporting period.

** Programme management costs relate to specialist support to ARIA's Programme Directors, in the form of expertise and personnel to develop and deliver research solicitation design and grant/contract awards.

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

4. Property, plant and equipment

	Fixtures and fittings £000	Computer equipment £000	Total £000
Cost			
At 25 January 2023	—	—	—
Additions	1	125	126
Disposals	—	(1)	(1)
At 31 March 2024	1	124	125
Depreciation			
At 25 January 2023	—	—	—
Charged in year	—	(29)	(29)
Disposals	—	—	—
At 31 March 2024	—	(29)	(29)
Carrying amount at 31 March 2024	1	95	96

5. Trade and other receivables

	31 March 2024 £000
Prepayments	165
Deposits	4
Total receivables	169

Prepayments predominantly comprise software licences.

6. Cash and cash equivalents

	31 March 2024 £000
Balance at 25 January 2023	—
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	1,726
Balance at 31 March	1,726
The following balances were held at 31 March	
Government banking service	1,726
Total cash and cash equivalents	1,726

Notes to the Financial Statements continued

7. Trade and other payables

	31 March 2024 £000
Trade payables	71
Accruals	957
Social security and other taxation	155
Other payables	9
Total trade and other payables	1,192

Accruals include accrued expenditure in respect of amounts due to operating partners for the provision of communications, programme management and legal services, and fees for seconded staff, as well as other operating expenditure accruals, including employee benefits accruals in respect of performance related pay and untaken annual leave.

ARIA considers the carrying amount of trade and other payables approximates to their fair value.

8. Commitments

Capital commitments

ARIA has no contractual capital commitments as at 31 March 2024.

Other financial commitments

ARIA has no non-cancellable contracts as at 31 March 2024.

9. Contingent assets and liabilities

ARIA has no contingent assets or liabilities.

10. Related party transactions

ARIA is an Arm's Length Non-Departmental Body sponsored by DSIT, which is regarded as a related party.

During the reporting period, ARIA had various material transactions with DSIT and other entities within the DSIT group, including Innovate UK and UK Space Agency. These transactions primarily relate to information technology services and personnel on secondment to support ARIA's initial launch of operations. In accordance with the FR&M IAS24 Related Party Disclosures interpretation, details of these transactions are not disclosed.

No Board member, key management personnel or other related party has undertaken any transactions with ARIA during the year, except for remuneration as disclosed in the Remuneration and Staff Report.

11. Events after the reporting period

These accounts have been authorised for issue by the Accounting Officer on the date the audit certificate and report were signed by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

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E03098343

Advanced
Research
+ Invention
Agency

ARIA

Annex 3: Engineering Ecosystem Resilience website extract

Opportunity space

Opportunity seeds

Programme development

[Home](#) / [Engineering Ecosystem Resilience Programme Development](#)

Engineering Ecosystem Resilience

Living organisms underpin our food, climate stability, and materials – ecological collapse threatens the foundations of civilisation. By pairing advanced monitoring with resilience-boosting interventions, we could halt biodiversity loss and enable people and nature to thrive.



Opportunity space

Opportunity seeds

Programme development

Programme development

Within opportunity spaces, we build multi-year R&D programmes designed to advance complex, large-scale ideas that require coordinated investment and management across disciplines and institutions.

Read the programme thesis below for our current thinking and discover some of the ways we've shaped our programme direction. Subject to approval, this programme is expected to launch in February 2026.

Read the programme thesis: Accelerated Adaptation

- As humans change the environment faster than wild species can naturally adapt, 1 in 4 animals and plants face extinction within a century.

Opportunity space

Opportunity seeds

Programme development

- This emerging programme will explore potential pathways to accelerate adaptation, including supercharging natural mechanisms and molecular engineering.
- Alongside technical research, the programme will explore the ethical and governance implications of potential interventions from the outset.

[Read the programme thesis](#)

Resources

[Read the programme thesis \(accessible version\).](#)

[Share your thoughts and sign up for teaming.](#)

 re-programme discovery projects

Opportunity space

Opportunity seeds

Programme development

Discover the projects



Meet the programme team

Our Programme Directors are supported by a core team that provides a blend of operational coordination and highly specialised technical expertise.



Opportunity space

Opportunity seeds

Programme development



Yannick Wurm

Programme Director

Yannick joins ARIA from Queen Mary University of London, where he is Professor of Evolutionary Genomics & Bioinformatics. Yannick pioneered the use of molecular tools to assess pollinator health, has built startups to commercialise genome analysis software, and created a real-time network for pollinator monitoring.

Alex Smith

Programme Specialist

Alex is a project management professional with experience in complex transformations. He recently streamlined national public service infrastructure for the Nursing and Midwifery Council and has led strategic initiatives at the London School of Economics, including delivering programmes, establishing governance and replacing legacy systems. Alex supports ARIA as an operating partner from Pace.

James Johnston

External Technical Advisor

James is a computational ecologist at the intersection of ecosystem modelling and environmental policy. His background includes complex ecosystem dynamics and the development of analytical tools to understand biological systems. He has extensive real-world field experience. He was a Research Fellow at DEFRA, and a PhD researcher at Cambridge.



Annex 4: Engineering Ecosystem Resilience proposed programme thesis

Programme Thesis

Accelerated adaptation

v0.4

Yannick Wurm, Programme Director

CONTEXT

This document presents **A DRAFT** of the core thesis underpinning a programme that is currently in development at ARIA. We share an early formulation and invite you to provide feedback to help us refine our thinking.

This is not a funding opportunity, but in most cases will lead to one – sign up [here](#) to learn about any funding opportunities derived or adapted from this programme formulation.

An ARIA programme seeks to unlock a scientific or technical capability that

- + changes the perception of what's possible or valuable
- + has the potential to catalyse massive social and economic returns
- + is unlikely to be achieved without ARIA's intervention.

Pending approval, we aim to launch a funding call for projects within this programme in February 2026 (tentative budget £50m). A call for Opportunity Seeds outside this programme will close 2nd February.

PROGRAMME THESIS, SIMPLY STATED

An overview of the programme thesis, accessible & simply stated

Over 25% of assessed animals and plants risk extinction within a century [1]. This potentially cataclysmic loss is shaped by the rapid acceleration of human-driven changes in land use, movement of species and their pathogens, pollution, and climate change. Indeed, our activities create **environmental pressures that now exceed the abilities of many species and ecosystems to adapt** sufficiently to persist [2], and we have surpassed seven of nine proposed biophysical limits linked to stable life on Earth [3]. These environmental changes put under existential threat the irreplaceable benefits every nation needs from nature [4], including pest control, carbon sequestration, clean water, and the production of food and materials [5].

Nature conservation typically focuses on protecting habitats. Such efforts, and those to reverse environmental pressures, are unlikely to be able to scale at the pace needed to prevent breakdown of our ecosystems and the services they provide. Furthermore, traditional nature protection has often been unable to consider the mechanistic bases of an ecosystem's resilience – in particular the interacting genetic, epigenetic, and environmental effects on behaviour, physiology, and symbiosis that are key to species' survival in new conditions. Genomics, assisted selection, and biotechnology have transformed agriculture and human health, but have rarely been applied to wild species [6,7]. We thus lack the tools needed to accelerate adaptation and help vulnerable populations acquire beneficial traits, to prepare them for known challenges, or to build resilience to less predictable environments.

Recent advances in high-throughput genomics, precision biology, robotics, and AI are converging, unlocking a new pathway that can complement and enhance traditional nature stewardship approaches. We can now identify molecular bases for vulnerabilities, rear species and measure phenotypes, and develop interventions that work alongside or accelerate natural processes of adaptation.

This ARIA programme aims to create the tools for accelerated adaptation in wild species and ecosystems and to deliver example case studies in confined settings. To achieve this, we will unite cross-disciplinary teams of experts in ecology, evolution, biological engineering, conservation, robotics, and AI. Applications could focus on strategically chosen vulnerable species, such as English oak [8], which support hundreds of other species [8], and/or critical functional groups such as pollinators or soil nutrient cycles that underpin ecosystem services [9].

Alongside technical research, we will incorporate ethical and governance dimensions from the outset. While this programme will not deploy novel interventions in the wild, the research conducted under this framework has the power to transform conservation and ecological engineering approaches, expanding traditional stewardship with proactive genetic, physiological and functional tools. Ultimately, this programme will help create a future where both humanity and biodiversity can persist and flourish.

This programme thesis is derived from ARIA's [Engineering Ecosystem Resilience](#) opportunity space.

PROGRAMME THESIS, EXPLAINED

A detailed description of the programme thesis, presented for constructive feedback

Why this programme

Nature's services and resources are essential to our existence. Our relationship with natural living systems has historically been extractive. Until now, the intrinsic resilience of species and ecosystems has enabled them to respond and continue to provide for our needs.

However, the environmental challenges we see today are substantially more acute and diverse than in the past, now outpacing nature's ability to buffer, adapt, or evolve. Indeed, seven of nine biophysical thresholds associated with stable life on Earth during the Holocene have now been crossed—four in just the past 15 years [3]. Over 25% of assessed animals and plants are at risk of extinction over the next 10–100 years [10], creating widespread dangers that span biomes and raising the risk of cascading collapses, where small-scale losses can lead to large-scale unravelling of ecosystems as we know them [11].

The accelerating pace and scale of biodiversity loss threaten our way of life. Over half of global GDP depends on ecosystem services and the natural systems that generate many of these services are under severe threat [5,12]. For example, pollinator decline alone puts ~£630 million of annual UK crop production at risk [13], predator insects annually contribute at least £145 million pounds to producers of three key UK crops annually by consuming pests [14]—global extensions of such **threats to agricultural ecosystem services undermine food sovereignty** worldwide [9]. Furthermore, most medicines originate from plant compounds [15], meaning that preserving biodiversity keeps future bioactive drugs discoverable [16]. Wild spaces and the plants, animals, and fungi they contain are also vital for mental health and wellbeing, cultural identity, and have intrinsic value [17,18]. Both moral imperatives and practical necessity compel us to preserve Earth's living heritage and maintain ecosystem function [18].

Humanity's most urgent challenge is thus to halt and reverse human-controlled drivers of detrimental environmental change. Large scale interventions such as restoring natural landscapes, transitioning from agricultural monocultures, curtailing use of pesticides and fertilisers, eliminating plastic and chemical pollution, reducing the international movement of plants, animals, and their pathogens, and restoring atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations to pre-industrial levels are all crucial to alleviate the pressures facing our ecosystems. The realisation by World Economic Forum leaders that over the next 10 years, four of the top five global risks are environmental [5] supports our perspective that we now need radical and proactive programmes to support nature.

Nature does know best. But the pace of environmental change today by far exceeds nature's abilities to adapt, and could even push biological systems into counterproductive and ultimately maladaptive changes. Thus a mantra of "let nature be" is impossible (we don't do that now), but more concretely is a risky and potentially unethical form of inaction.

We pragmatically recognise that the large-scale transformations required to reverse environmental pressures are unlikely to materialise fast enough to halt ongoing losses. Species losses and degradation of ecosystem functions will thus continue, increasing risks of cascading disruption, unless we undertake targeted interventions.

Recent technological breakthroughs offer a pathway that complements direct conservation and policy efforts—accelerated adaptation—which can significantly reduce the risk of ecosystem collapse even as environmental conditions continue to shift. In alignment with ARIA's mandate to advance science and technology "at the edge of the possible", this programme seeks to explore what is necessary to develop and harness this compelling parallel approach. Research on new interventions will occur exclusively in controlled laboratory settings and contained environments. By responsibly applying accelerated adaptation under robust governance, ethical oversight, and appropriate social licence, we can forge a more mutualistic relationship with nature while efforts continue to slow and ultimately reverse the underlying drivers of decline.

Accelerated adaptation is now within reach

Recent scientific and technological progress across multiple disciplines has converged to enable accelerated adaptation to become a reality:

- + **Commoditisation of robotics + hardware + electronic engineering**
Custom incubators + growth chambers, and robots to automate handling can now be created at scale, enabling high-throughput experiments to screen, prime, or select for adaptations in individual species or communities.
- + **High-throughput genomics**
Genome-wide study is now possible in almost any species, revealing vulnerabilities and potentially guiding breeding and assisted gene flow efforts. Fundamental genomics research has clarified the constraints and trade-offs that shape adaptation and evolutionary innovation [19,20].
- + **Precision molecular + cellular biology**
Peptides, hormones, RNAs, vaccines, probiotics and transient viral vectors enable targeted yet reversible and non-heritable interventions. Molecular and cell-culture approaches enable enhanced micropropagation, grafting, and breeding to support populations at scale. Targeted heritable alterations (e.g., gene editing) offer new research pathways for candidate traits.
- + **Artificial intelligence + machine learning**
New AI/ML techniques enable rapid analysis and synthesis of existing literature and novel datasets, which previously would have been infeasible or required substantial labour by human experts. The ability to detect previously hidden patterns can enable new decision-making approaches.
- + **Ecosystem sensing + modelling**
New sensor technologies provide high-resolution near-real-time data on biodiversity and ecosystem dynamics. These data enable direct measurement or inference of traits and functions, facilitate new modelling paradigms, and ultimately create the ability to better predict ecosystem responses to potential interventions and identify high-leverage points for maximising resilience benefits.

Key assumptions and framing

- + Many critical ecosystem functions are delivered by assemblages, not individual species (pollination, carbon sequestration, soil health...).
- + Ecosystems are composite networks of interdependent species and abiotic conditions, with uneven levels of connectedness and redundancy. Disruption to highly connected species or to critical functions can trigger cascading losses.
- + Assemblages of species that have long co-existed provide more resilient foundations than those involving species that are new to an ecosystem.
- + Every species loss constitutes a reduction in overall resilience and a loss of deep evolutionary history.
- + For most species, we still lack basic knowledge of needs, interactions, and adaptive capacity within and across generations. This creates substantial challenges to predicting responses to environmental changes.
- + All models have blind spots: satellite-data models are species-blind, ecosystem-level models are blind to evolution and genetics, evolutionary models are blind to ecological complexity and often disconnected from empirical data estimation.
- + Not all species can move to more suitable environments fast enough (trees...); some may struggle even if moved (due to difficulty in local adaptation, competition for niches/nesting sites...), or have multiple requirements (e.g., breeding vs overwintering locations).
- + Techno-optimists argue that 50 to 200 years from now, limitless renewable energy will have resolved challenges related to greenhouse gases, that dense vertical farming will have freed most of our land for rewilding, and that the other major environmental pressures will similarly have been reversed. If one accepts these utopian views, the remaining challenge is to keep as many species alive and ecosystems functional as possible until then. If these utopian predictions fail to materialise, this programme is even more essential.

What we hope to accomplish: Accelerating adaptation for resilience

This ARIA programme seeks to unlock the capability of dramatically accelerating the adaptation of non-domesticated species to new environmental conditions. The resulting transformative paradigm for conservation and ecological engineering will complement traditional environmental protection and stewardship strategies. By accelerating adaptation of key ecosystem members or functions, we aim to help preserve ecological interactions and maintain or recover important functions and services despite environmental changes.

Application contexts for this capability include:

- + **Preservation of species that many other species rely on** for food, habitat, or both, such as trees or reef-building corals, which have long generation times and cannot disperse or otherwise handle dramatic changes in seasonal environmental extremes. For example, some tree species support over 1,000 other species [8], but are vulnerable to anticipated climatic changes [21]. Pre-adapting such species to known threats could help preserve local species assemblages and thus help maintain ecological resilience.
- + **Preservation of priority functional groups** such as pollinators, soil nutrient cyclers, or predators facing diverse challenges such as habitat fragmentation and exposure to pollutants. Accelerated adaptation of the species contributing to a functional group could ensure critical ecosystem functions persist under stress, providing cascading benefits across the communities of species they interact with.
- + **Post-disturbance recovery.** Acute disturbances including deforestation, pollution, storms, heatwaves, wildfires, and disease outbreaks can significantly destabilise local ecosystems. Accelerating the ability of key pioneer functional groups, such as bioremediating fungi or soil-binding plants, to rapidly establish and function under post-disturbance stress could significantly boost natural regeneration and the recovery of ecosystem functions and resilience.
- + **Supporting strategically selected at risk species** (e.g., those with cultural significance). Enhancing population viability by facilitating appropriate adaptation of characteristics such as fertility, genetic diversity, movements and their plasticity, or the ability to survive through specific environmental challenges to substantially reduce extinction risks.

Species and ecosystems can be supported through diverse interventions that vary in technological sophistication, risk, cost, ethical complexity, and controversy. Traditional conservation approaches are essential. They complement the aims of this programme, which focuses on “edge of the possible” research [22] where transformative impact is possible but tools are lacking.

Two major directions of technical innovation can enable accelerated adaptation. The relevance and feasibility of the two directions, and the whether both are needed, varies across study systems:

- 1) **Supercharged natural adaptation.** This can include assisted migration, breeding, fertilisation or hybridisation. It can include physiological priming through controlled exposure to environmental challenges (e.g., chemicals, future climatic conditions, inactivated pests/pathogens) which may lead to epigenetic or microbiome-level changes. It can include directed evolution under exposure to environmental challenges, and may use tricks such as shortened days, altered seasons, grafting, hormonal treatment, or *in vitro* gametogenesis to reduce generation times.
- 2) **Engineered molecular adaptation.** This can involve temporary changes to an organism, for example through injections or topical applications of RNA or peptides, the use of cell lines, or manipulating symbionts to achieve a particular goal (e.g., enhancing near-term survival, reproduction, or growth). Heritable genome modification can also be considered.

By responsibly applying accelerated adaptation under robust governance, ethical oversight, and appropriate social licence, we could reverse our extractive approach and forge a mutualistic relationship with nature, while simultaneously working to slow, and ultimately reverse, the underlying drivers of biodiversity decline.

What we expect to fund

To develop the capability of accelerating adaptation of wild species at scale, we will fund three types of teams:

- + **System-focused teams** that will aim to increase resilience of their study system or the ecosystems it contributes to,
- + **Platform-focused teams** that will support system-focused teams and build capabilities essential for scaling the newly developed approaches, and
- + **Theory & modelling-focused teams** that will help ensure judicious application of accelerated adaptation capabilities.

System-focused teams are the core of our programme. A study system might be a single, highly connected species where cascading functional benefits are likely. Alternatively, a study system may be a group of species that are related functionally (e.g., pollinators, soil nutrient cyclers, insect predators), taxonomically, or ecologically (e.g., grassland). It may also be that a study system has cultural value. We anticipate funding teams working on complementary systems that aim to protect or enhance function delivery under known or unknown environmental changes.

These teams should:

- + Use existing evidence to explain why their chosen system should be prioritised, with a focus on its functional importance and ecological/community context.
- + Embed social, ethical, and governance considerations from day one, including stakeholder engagement and social-license assessment.

These teams may:

- + Need to identify the genetic basis of vulnerability, and/or determine whether the target function needs directional support in the face of specific environmental challenges (e.g., specific climatic condition, pollutant, pathogen, or parasite), or more generic support to become more resilient to perturbations in general (e.g., through increased fertility, genetic diversity, recombination rates, broader immune defences, or plasticity).
- + Focus on accelerated natural processes or engineered molecular adaptation, or combine both.
- + Propose multi-species designs when functions depend on multiple species.

We will consider any well-justified study system and can fund worldwide. However, we will prioritise systems with strong relevance to the UK, systems with clear diagnosable vulnerabilities, and systems in which measurable progress on the pathway towards success or failure is feasible within two years. Traditional conservation approaches are utterly central to strengthening ecosystem resilience, but are out of scope. While there is much potential for new technologies to reduce the impact of invasive or pest species, direct work on invasive-species is out of scope. Similarly, while genetic rescue efforts are within the scope of this programme, efforts to revive long-extinct species are not [23].

Annex 1 provides a speculative list of example ideas we would consider to be within scope. These are not requests; the examples aim to stimulate creativity by illustrating a breadth of possible approaches.

We expect **System-focused teams** to achieve specific targets:

- + **Meeting metrics for increased resilience**
Teams must aim to achieve demonstrable increases in resilience using one of the three metrics below, or a justifiable alternative. Measurement capabilities may in some cases need to be developed. By default, teams should target outcomes that exceed nature's best-case, i.e., ≥ 99 th percentile of unaided natural processes under matched stress scenarios.
 - **Improved function:** Examples: increased survival, growth, or fecundity, or faster recovery under or after stress.
 - **Increase in indicators of adaptability:** Examples: increased effective population size or related genetic metrics.
 - **Improved robustness of ecological function:** Rescue or maintenance of ecosystem service provision under conditions of environmental stress. Examples: pollination, predation ability, carbon sequestration, pest control.
- + **Demonstrating sufficient persistence:** System-focused impacts should remain useful without excessive fitness costs over ecologically relevant timescales. While benefits should be long-term, the mechanisms to obtain them may be temporary.
- + **Exhibiting scalability:** Newly developed protocols should be applicable across sites, populations, species, and ideally systems.
- + **Identifying milestones + risks:** Teams will provide clear metrics and quarterly milestones for tracking project progress. Plans will list early warning signs of failure and identify potential risks, including those that should trigger project cessation.

Platform-focused teams. System-focused teams may include the collaborators and/or service suppliers that cover all project needs. However, we will also support purely platform-focused teams across several aims:

- + To support system-focused teams, by developing solutions and expertise that can be shared across systems during the programme.
- + To synthesise learnings from across different systems.
- + To reduce redundancy across teams and increase efficiency of systems-focused teams.
- + To enable scaling developed approaches during the programme, and for post-programme success and impact.
- + To independently verify claims of system-focused projects through standardised approaches and metrics.

Platform-focused teams may be new or existing entities including core facilities, contract research organisations, design studios, research labs, frontier research contractors [24], or collaborations among diverse entities.

Platform-focused teams will focus on scalable delivery of one or more of the following:

- + Genomic vulnerability mapping + molecular engineering (including cell culture, in-vitro phenotyping, design and synthesis of RNA, vectors, peptides or proteins, performing gene edits, creating transgenic lines).
- + Automatic rearing + phenotyping. This includes:
 - + Robotics for automated rearing in climate-controlled conditions (e.g., incubators, ecotrons, climate-temperature chambers/vivaria/terraria).
 - + Sensors and algorithms for automated phenotyping of plants and animals.
- + Ethics, governance, stakeholder engagement, and systemic risk assessment (participatory methods, multi-criteria mapping, social-license frameworks). Platform-focused teams in this area should answer the question: how will the new capability be harnessed and regulated?
- + Impact catalysis. This involves integration and synthesis across all teams during the last 18 months of the programme, to ensure that discoveries, tools, and insights translate into tangible outcomes (workshop convening, engaging and establishing partnerships with government, NGOs, investors).

Theory or modelling-focused teams. Given limited resources, we will need to improve our ability to identify priority functions, species, and communities where support can be the most impactful, to understand how to trade off different manners of supporting them, and to understand which levels of support are sufficient. For example, what level of genetic diversity + gene flow is needed and when? What are the impacts and risks of different interventions on resilience? We anticipate that a combination of empirical work with theoretical, simulation or modelling efforts can help improve that prioritisation. New models may focus on one level (e.g., genetic diversity), or span levels (genes-species-ecosystems). Empirical studies could involve large-sample-size studies with particularly tractable empirical systems, or piggy-back off natural or incidental experiments.

Cross-team collaboration

The long-term success and impact of this programme depends critically on dynamic collaboration among teams. We will strive to attain the outcomes of existing best practices for collaboration and data sharing (e.g., SORTEE [25], FAIR [26]). Where possible, we expect:

- + **Shared standards and metrics** to be developed collaboratively and adopted programme-wide.
- + **Code** to follow best practices in software engineering for reuse and reliability.
- + **Rapid sharing** with data approaches, protocols, and analytical frameworks to flow between teams. Successful and unsuccessful approaches in one system should inform and improve interventions in others.
- + **Integrated ethical oversight** with governance frameworks to be co-developed across teams.

These sharing and centralisation approaches will be coordinated by representatives of the platform teams.

Success criteria

By programme end, we expect to demonstrate:

- + **Generalisability indicated by** measurably increased resilience in at least two distinct study systems, with persistence across an ecologically relevant or representative timescale (e.g., ≥ 3 -5 generations for short-lived organisms) under simulated stress.
- + **Scalable infrastructure indicated by** platform tools adopted and validated across multiple teams, and development of relevant ethical + governance toolkits. Stretch goal: clear financial and technical pathways towards real-world deployment.
- + **Regulatory pathway development indicated by meaningful progress toward new frameworks or revision of established frameworks.** Current regulations largely address domesticated species and omit many of the approaches and outcomes we discuss, including assisted migration, hybridisation, physiological/epigenetic priming, release of populations of wild species after directed evolution, or resilience-focused ecosystem modification. As part of ensuring that appropriate regulation and governance exist, we aim for constructive engagement with relevant UK pathways (e.g., Genetic Technology Act for plants; ACRE guidance on precision breeding), and international organisations (e.g., IUCN) and we aim to produce white papers outlining options for wild systems in both controlled and real-world settings. Stretch goal: draft guidance accepted.
- + **Ecosystem impact indicated by demonstrated functional benefits in confined space** that are due to increased resilience focal system(s). Stretch goal: demonstrate community-level functional benefits in a large contained mesocosm/greenhouse with local stakeholder support and interest in real-world deployment.

Ethics

Interventions in wild populations raise profound ethical questions that cannot be resolved through technical excellence alone. This programme recognises multiple, sometimes conflicting, value systems: the intrinsic worth of species, their cultural significance, ecosystem integrity, and human dependencies on nature's services. We will combine clear guardrails with built-in ethical considerations, and independent oversight.

Each funded team must include ethics expertise from the outset.

The cross-cutting platform team focused on ethics, governance and stakeholder engagement will ensure learnings are shared across all funded teams.

We will create an **independent external ethical oversight council**, including diverse stakeholder representatives (UK + overseas, academia, industry, charities, statutory corporations, government). This council will report to the programme director and ARIA management ahead of funding and at key go/no-go decision points. The council's function is to assure that all research and implementation of this work is ethically sound, has minimal risk, benefits society equitably, and achieves the desired aims of this programme.

Guardrails (during the programme)

- + All work within this programme's timeframe will be performed in **self-contained controlled facilities**—laboratories, climate chambers, ecotrons, glasshouses, or mesocosms. This confinement allows us to develop and test interventions while limiting risks to real-world environments.
- + No releases to the wild will occur during the funding period.
- + Nonetheless, teams must still design work with eventual real-world application in mind, ensuring their research trajectory aligns with principles and standards that would govern any future deployment.

Ethical principles

We acknowledge that ethics are not static—what is acceptable may shift as evidence accumulates and public discourse evolves. Nevertheless, all projects must adhere to the following principles, both for the research they do in contained facilities during the programme and in planning for potential future real-world deployment:

Precaution and reversibility: Teams must demonstrate that **inaction carries greater risk than intervention**, particularly where irreversibility is inherent to an approach. Risk assessments must consider both the immediate ecosystem and effects on longer temporal scales (e.g., 50+ years / 10+ generations). Teams must identify early warning indicators (unexpected population dynamics, range expansion beyond target areas, non-target species declines) that would trigger suspension or reversal of an intervention.

Ecosystem integrity: Interventions must assess and mitigate risks of harm to non-target species and ecosystem function, including:

- + Possibility of loss of genetic diversity or locally adapted alleles within target species, which could make the species more vulnerable to other environmental challenges.
- + Risk that enhanced resilience enables a target species to outcompete other native species, converting a vulnerable species into a pest.
- + Possibility that changes in the abundance or chemical composition of one species may affect others in the trophic cascade.
- + Risk that increased population size or range could increase the likelihood of disease transmission to other species.

Transparency, consent and social license: Research that may eventually affect specific ecosystems requires meaningful engagement with local communities, indigenous peoples where relevant, and other stakeholders—even for contained/conceptual work that may only eventually affect those ecosystems years later. Teams must explain how their work will influence society. Teams must secure social license beyond regulatory compliance, acknowledging that some interventions may be technically feasible yet ethically or socially unacceptable.

Equitable access: Every team will explain how their work will influence society, and how its benefits will be distributed equitably.

Responsible development: Techniques developed here could be misapplied to disrupt ecosystems or enhance pest species. Teams must consider misuse potential and propose safeguards.

Non-maleficence: No project may aim to increase extinction risk, reduce genetic diversity without compelling justification, or knowingly harm non-target species. Teams must explicitly consider worst-case scenarios.

Governance

Robust governance is essential to ensure responsible development and deployment of accelerated adaptation capabilities. Our governance framework operates at three levels:

Each project-level team must:

- + Establish a stakeholder advisory group including conservation practitioners, local community representatives, and domain experts.
- + Conduct risk assessments that explicitly model unintended consequences (ecological, evolutionary, social).
- + Implement staged decision-making with defined go/no-go criteria at each phase.
- + Maintain public registries of interventions, including negative results.

At the programme level, ARIA will:

- + Convene an independent external ethical oversight council including ethicists, indigenous knowledge holders, conservation biologists, regulatory experts, and social scientists.
- + Require cross-team review of high-risk interventions.
- + Commission independent assessments of programme-level risks and benefits.

Furthermore, we will proactively engage with:

- + UK regulators, government agencies, public bodies and stakeholder representatives (including JNCC, SEPA, DEFRA, Environment Agencies, ACRE and other devolved administrations and public bodies) to explore pathways for contained trials and eventual deployment.
- + International bodies (e.g., IUCN) to align with emerging guidance on interventions in conservation.

Our platform teams focusing on ethics and governance will lead development of white papers on these governance gaps and work with regulators to propose frameworks.

Governance structures will evolve as we learn. Annual reviews will assess whether our frameworks remain fit-for-purpose, and we will adjust in response to emerging evidence or stakeholder concerns.

Safety and compliance

All funded work must be aligned with applicable international and UK frameworks.

No real-world releases of supported organisms will occur during this programme. All work will be carried out under contained and controlled conditions with institutional oversight and, where applicable, the GMO (Contained Use) Regulations 2014—noting that GMO rules will only apply in some cases depending on the organism and activity. Day-to-day compliance will follow ASPA/3Rs, Nagoya ABS, CITES, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (including relevant licensing and conservation-translocation codes), and the appropriate UK regimes for chemicals/products (PPP, BPR, VMR, UK REACH), with environmental protection agency permits where relevant. Beyond this programme's funding term, if downstream translation involves environmental release or transboundary movement, teams would then enter the newly developed frameworks, and established regulatory pathways.

Intellectual Property and Access

ARIA's standard IP terms will apply to research we fund. To improve access to findings, protocols, code and data assets, we do ask recipients to share what they can in an open manner in accordance with their organisational structure.

Application process, stage gating + financial structure

This draft programme thesis is a science-focused component of the ARIA programme approval process. We very much welcome commentary and constructive critique & feedback that can help us to improve and revise this document.

If programme funding is approved—hopefully late January 2026—we will follow ARIA's standard solicitation process [<https://www.aria.org.uk/funding-opportunities/applicant-guidance>]. After review of concept-papers of full proposals, we may request changes to team composition or proposal scope.

To align risk and ambition levels with ARIA's mandate, only some of the teams that begin the programme will continue for the full four years. We will initially fund teams for 12-24 months (depending on team type), and subsequently provide follow-on funding to the teams with the most promising progress (Table 1).

What we are still trying to figure out

This is a draft programme thesis. During its development, we have engaged in hundreds of conversations and obtained feedback from diverse stakeholders. However, it remains a draft, and we eagerly invite constructive feedback.

- + Which intellectual-property framework would best support the goal of fostering resilient ecosystems?
- + What financing pathways can sustain the long-term impact of the capabilities developed?
- + What head-turning, high-impact demonstration of accelerated adaptation could we showcase during the programme?
- + Are there situations where release into the wild may be desirable, feasible, and ethically appropriate during the duration of the proposed programme?
- + What constitutes "enough data" to justify intervention?
- + As far as we understand, there is no clear regulatory pathway for release of adapted wild organisms, or with regards to targeted treatments of wild organisms. New regulations should likely be established for such interventions.

- + Similarly, if adaptation (e.g., via forced hybridisation and directional selection) happens in a different country, should the Cartagena Protocol for international movement of genetically modified organisms apply?
- + How should 'acceptable risk' for wild populations or ecosystems be defined?
- + Who should be responsible for, and will fund, the essential, difficult, and expensive long-term monitoring of interventions?
- + How do we define "sufficient" persistence in complex communities and/or long-lived organisms during a short programme?
- + Which factors make particular interventions more or less acceptable to different stakeholders?

Table 1) Sample funding structure showing approximate team numbers, phasing, and stage-gates. Project costs are averages, and team counts per stage are illustrative rather than targets. Example here: eight systems-focused teams start across six systems; after two years, four receive additional funding. Teams can engage external contractors, consultants, or lab space to accelerate progress when internal capacity is limited or recruitment delays risk slowing delivery.

Team type	Team	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Stage 1 Costs (m)	Stage 2 Costs (m)
Systems-focused	1	System A				£16	£18
	2	System A					
	3	System B					
	4	System C					
	5	System D					
	6	System D					
	7	System E					
	8	System F		System F ++			
Platform-focused	9	Genomics				£7	£8
	10	Genomics					
	11	Automation,					
	12	Automation,	rearing + phenotyping				
	13	Ethics, police + governance					
Modelling-focused	15	Approach i				£4	£5
	16	Approach ii					
	17	Approach iii					
	18	Approach iv					
Impact catalysis	19			Catalysis (6 months)		£0.2	£0.25
	20			Catalysis (6 months)	Catalysis		

Annex 1

The following examples illustrate potential interventions that span two broad modes of innovation.

“**Supercharged Natural Adaptation**” approaches harness and intensify processes such as inducing phenotypes through environmental exposure, or selection across generations. In contrast, “**Engineered Molecular Adaptation**” approaches involve direct molecular or genetic modification of the target organism or its biological partners.

These examples are **not proposed projects**, but **thought experiments** designed to provoke discussion about the kinds of interventions that could yield transformative outcomes.

Target System	Approach Type	Intervention	Expected Outcome
English Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	Supercharged Natural Adaptation	Place saplings in climate-controlled chambers to projected 2100 conditions (heat, drought, late frosts); select 2% survivors for planting.	Oak trees physiologically primed to future UK climate extremes, and with genetic variants that likely help their ability to cope. These saplings should directly have greater survival chances, and increase the prevalence of alleles useful for survival in the oak genepool.
Dragonflies/damselflies (<i>Odonata</i>)	Supercharged Natural Adaptation	Multi-generation selection in gradient of pesticide concentrations using shortened photoperiods + seasons to accelerate generations.	Increased pesticide-resistance of species that are important predators of agricultural pests [14]
Dung beetles (<i>Geotrupidae, Scarabaeidae</i>)	Supercharged Natural Adaptation	Multi-generation selection for greater aeration of livestock faeces, fecundity, and persistence in excrement from medically treated livestock (e.g., ivermectin used to treat parasites is toxic to beetle larvae).	Maintain >£360m annual benefit to cattle industry through reduced pests & parasites, and increased soil nutrients [27]. Can decrease methane emissions 10-20% [28] from faeces.
Diverse target plants	Supercharged Natural Adaptation	Vaccinate plants ahead of an advancing wave of pest fungus or insect. Take key proteins from pest fungus or beetle, or specific plant hormone like salicylic acid, and use drones to automatically inoculate plant's phloem or xylem ahead of the pest arrival. This should prime the plants through triggering the systemic acquired resistance response and protect against pest damage.	Precision protection of key plant species, e.g., oak, ash, heather, bog mosses that have an oversized role in supporting other species. Reducing damage by pests, will retain services to native species that depend on them.
Successionary pioneer species	Supercharged Natural Adaptation	Selection experiments to accelerate the ability of early colonising species to stabilise environments after disturbance, e.g., waste contamination, physical disturbance, salt-water intrusion.	The equivalent of biological early response teams could be deployed to the site of disturbances to allow rapid recolonisation by stabilising species.

At-risk amphibians, e.g., great crested newts (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>)	Engineered Molecular Adaptation	Develop species-specific adenovirus vector which exposes newts to harmless ranavirus proteins, thereby vaccinating the newts against actual ranavirus.	Survival in the face of a widespread and highly detrimental ranavirus.
Bumblebees (<i>Bombus</i> spp.)	Engineered Molecular Adaptation	Develop species-specific adenovirus vector delivering RNA interference against parasite (e.g., <i>Crithidia</i> , <i>Nosema</i> , or <i>Syntretus</i>).	Immunity to otherwise impactful parasites that suppress survival or reproduction. These parasites are cosmopolitan and can be spread among bumblebee species.
Bog mosses (<i>Sphagnum</i> spp.)	Engineered Molecular Adaptation	Application of receptor-matched peptides that induce physiological changes that lead to greater heatwave/drought resistance.	Greater heatwave survival, and thus bog persistence / peatland foundation.
Vulnerable solitary bees (e.g., <i>Adrena</i> , <i>Megachile</i> spp.)	Engineered Molecular Adaptation	Provide engineered probiotics - so the gut microbiome has neonicotinoid degradation capacity.	Pesticide tolerance without genetic modification of the host.
Red squirrel (<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>)	Engineered Molecular Adaptation	CRISPR-mediated introduction of squirrelpox resistance genes from grey squirrels.	Eliminate a key threat faced by the susceptible red squirrels when they encounter the asymptomatic carrier grey squirrels.

Lexicon

This draft lexicon provides a set of working definitions for concepts used in our programme thesis. The goal is to establish a shared, operational vocabulary to ensure clarity in this interdisciplinary work.

The definitions presented here are starting points. Please challenge, critique, and propose improvements to these definitions.

Adaptive alleles: Variants that are beneficial under the conditions of interest due to the fitness advantage they confer, typically by altering protein structure, enzymatic efficiency, or *cis*-regulatory elements in response to a specific environmental pressure. An allele's adaptive value is typically contingent on specific environmental pressures; some alleles beneficial in certain environments may go to fixation, others may remain polymorphic (for diverse reasons).

Bioactive compounds: Substances including molecules, peptides or proteins that have a biological effect on other living organisms; these can form the basis for medicines.

Biodiversity: In public discourse, biodiversity is often equated with species richness. Scientifically, the term spans genetic, species, functional, and phylogenetic dimensions across scales.

Biodiversity measurements: This is a concept that spans multiple organisational levels and spatial scales. At the species level, alpha diversity quantifies richness within habitats, beta diversity measures compositional turnover between habitats, and gamma diversity captures landscape-scale richness. Additional metrics characterise evenness (abundance distributions), functional diversity (trait variation), phylogenetic diversity (evolutionary distinctiveness), and genetic diversity within populations. These measurements can target compositional, structural, or functional aspects of biological systems depending on conservation or management objectives.

Conservation biology: An applied, interdisciplinary science that aims to diagnose and mitigate anthropogenic threats to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

Ecological tipping point: A critical threshold in a system parameter at which a small perturbation can induce a nonlinear state shift to an alternative stable state due to positive feedback mechanisms. Reversions post tipping are likely hard, if not impossible. Post-tipping-point states are typically considered less desirable than prior states.

Ecosystem: A spatially and temporally bounded system comprising interacting organisms and their physical-chemical environment (substrate, hydrology, climate), characterised by flows of energy and materials, biogeochemical cycling, and emergent properties arising from biotic-abiotic feedbacks. Explicitly includes abiotic context as determinants of interactions and processes.

Ecosystem engineering for conservation: Encompasses deliberate interventions in ecological systems to achieve conservation, restoration, resilience, or climate adaptation objectives.

Ecosystem services: The suite of benefits derived from natural capital, categorised as provisioning, regulating, supporting, and cultural services.

Functional group: A set of species that collectively deliver a focal ecosystem process (e.g., pollination), often interchangeable to some extent, conferring functional redundancy and resilience.

Functional redundancy: The capacity for multiple, taxonomically distinct species within the same ecosystem to perform equivalent ecosystem processes. Greater redundancy increases resilience.

Genetic diversity: The total genetic variation within (and among) populations of a species, commonly quantified by molecular metrics (nucleotide diversity, allelic richness, heterozygosity). Adaptive potential for a specific trait is instead quantified by its additive genetic variance (variance in the heritable component of the phenotype that responds to selection).

The total genetic variation within a population or species that enables adaptive evolution, quantifiable either as molecular variation (nucleotide diversity, heterozygosity). Alternatively, variance in breeding value (ie. the heritable component of the phenotype that responds to selection).

Genetic erosion: The stochastic or directional loss of alleles from a gene pool, leading to a reduction in genetic diversity and a subsequent decrease in the population's adaptive potential to future environmental change.

Genetic resilience: A population's capacity to persist through environmental perturbations without a state shift. Fundamentally dependent on standing genetic variation and resulting phenotypic plasticity.

Holocene: The Holocene is the current geological epoch, beginning after the last major Ice Age, a marked period of relative climatic stability when human civilizations, agriculture, and most modern ecosystems developed.

Natural world: The Earth's biosphere and its integrated abiotic systems, considered exclusive of anthropogenic constructs and modifications.

Populations: A group of individuals forming a reproductive community that is characterised by a shared gene pool and a specific demographic trajectory.

Pre-adaptation: The process of adapting an organism or to an anticipated environmental challenge.

Species: Another common biological term with a fuzzy meaning. An evolutionary lineage or group of individuals, typically defined through the "biological species concept" of being reproductively isolated from others.

Symbiont engineering: Transplantation of existing or novel microbes to a host in order to modify the phenotype of the host.

Synthetic biology: An engineering-driven discipline focused on the *de novo* design and construction of synthetic genetic circuits, metabolic pathways, and orthogonal biological systems based on principles of modularity and standardisation.

System: The explicitly bounded operational unit of study, ranging in scale from a species to a global biome, defined to encompass the interacting components and processes relevant to a specific scientific question.

Vulnerable species: A formal IUCN Red List category for a species determined to have a high probability of extinction in the medium term, based on quantitative analysis of population size, geographic range, or rates of decline.

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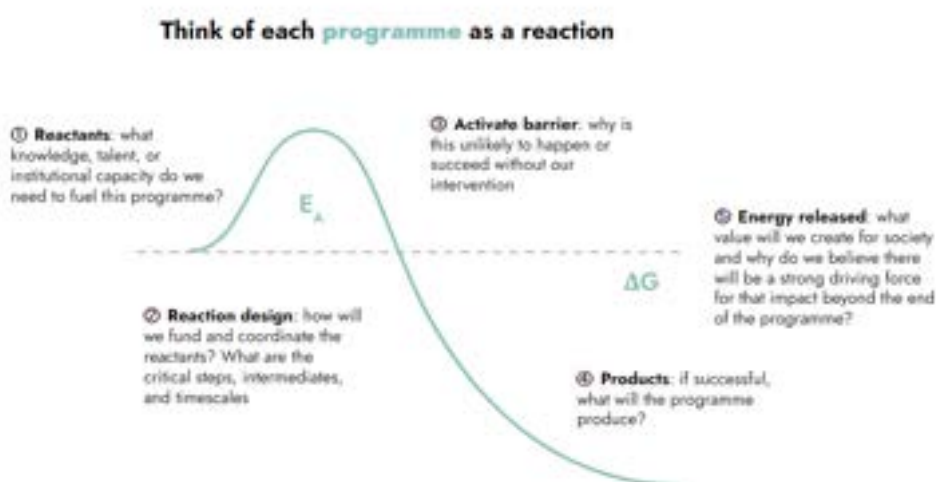
Engage

Our next step is to launch a funding opportunity derived or adapted from this programme formulation. Click [here](#) to register your interest, or to provide feedback that can help improve this programme thesis.

Success in the programme requires multidisciplinary teams. For groups or individuals needing assistance in building these teams, you can register your capabilities and missing expertise to ARIA's teaming tool via the feedback form linked above, allowing us to support matching with other registered teams.

PROGRAMME THESIS, REACTION DIAGRAM SUMMARY

We can metaphorically think of an ARIA programme as a chemical reaction. We present a simple reaction diagram to summarise the key elements of the imagined programme.



1. There are technological solutions and expertise distributed across robotics, ecology, evolution, biological engineering, conservation, and AI that are not yet being brought to bear on conservation problems. The UK has world-class capability in these areas, with leading research in these areas with advanced research poised to transform conservation if united under a shared mission. The UK stands to lead globally in applying emerging technologies to strengthen biodiversity and resilience, having already laid the groundwork through Environment Act 2021 targets for 2042, measures such as the Biodiversity Net Gain market.
2. This programme will fund the development of platforms, systems, and models that innovate, translate, and scale tools for inducing rapid adaptation and resilience in natural systems. Our approach will overcome current limitations that prevent widescale adoption by integrating scientific, technical, and societal expertise. All discoveries and operations will be rooted in community consultation and ethical frameworks to ensure that solutions address both ecological integrity and community priorities.
3. Existing barriers are technical, economic, regulatory, and societal. Current research and funding mechanisms remain siloed by discipline and risk appetite, leaving cross-sector technologies underdeveloped for conservation use. ARIA's intervention is essential to de-risk high-potential approaches, overcome fragmentation, and integrate technical, ethical, and governance considerations that conventional programmes cannot.
4. This programme will catalyse a new innovation economy around ecological resilience, expanding the UK's leadership in bioengineering and AI to new sectors while directly protecting the natural capital that underpins economic and societal stability. Successful projects will deliver direct returns in existing markets, such as breeding programmes for conservation, and open adjacent markets in agriculture, fisheries, and human health.