NetDRIVE: Second funding call
Announcement and guidance

The UKRI Net-Zero Digital Research Infrastructure Vision and Expertise (NetDRIVE) project will fund community activities through three calls. This call, the second, will fund projects up to a total value of £1m. Of that, £200k is reserved for projects led by early career investigators.

We are also announcing funding for three champions, one in the area of community change and two dedicated for early career stages. Our initial call led to the appointment of eight champions.

Larger projects (£50k upwards) should address at least one topic fully, smaller projects (e.g. hackathons, desk research) may address parts of a topic.

Projects addressing issues outside the topic list may be considered, but applicants must demonstrate a clear contribution to at least two of the three NetDRIVE objectives: immediate progress towards net zero DRI, enhancing community confidence in the roadmap to net zero DRI, and international leadership.

Topics and champion roles are categorised as "open" if no career stage restrictions apply and Early Career when they must be led by an early career investigator.

Submission

For open topics and the open champion role, please fill out the proposal template and email to netDRIVEOxford@gmail.com with "APPLICATION" in the subject line.

For Early Career topics, please apply to join the early career sandpit event. For the early career champion role, you will need to fill out the proposal template but may also opt to attend the sandpit event.

Restrictions

In order to ensure that a broad range of institutions are represented we will limit applications from any single institution (i.e. any single legal entity) to:

- One Community Project application to open topics under headings 1-3, and
- One Community Project application under topic 4 (Uk Compute Roadmap), and
- One Community Project application to early career topics, and
- One Champion application.

Templates

- [NetDRIVE Call 02 Proposal Template.docx](#)
- [NetDRIVE Call 02 Champion Template.docx](#)
- [NetDRIVE Call 02 Early Career Sandpit Template.docx](#)

Schedule

Stage	Date
Announcement of Opportunity	July 31st, 2025.
Drop-in sessions	Aug/Sep
Sandpit Application	September 10th
Sandpit	Week of Sept. 29th
Submissions Close	October 10th
Submission Close (EC)	October 24th
Panel Review	November 10th
Panel Decision	November 20th , 2025
Contracts Issued	January 1st 2026

Community Projects

Topics

The following topics are designed to address targets on the Net Zero DRI roadmap. Each item should require 3-6 staff months of effort, though more could be awarded if clearly justified. Projects may address more than one item. Topics labelled as "Early career" are reserved for teams of early career investigators (C1 and C2 in categories listed in Appendix 1).

1) Supply Chain Sustainability

   a. **Guidelines for Life-Cycle Analysis**: Working with users and domain experts: develop guidelines for life-cycle analysis and approaches to maximising the benefits obtained from services and hardware, particularly with regard to implications for procurement.

      - *Expected Outcomes: Clear, practical, and proportionate guidelines for the life-cycle analysis of footprint of digital services and hardware. Supporting a scalable approach so as to be applicable to small and large procurement challenges.*
      - *Roadmap topics:* 11. Waste and Recycling Policy; 10. Procurement Policy

b. **Facility Action Plans**: Work with a team of early-adopter facilities to develop action plans. The team should include a range of facilities from large national facilities to clusters managed within individual research departments. Action plan should include specific attention to scope one. Three horizons should be addressed: reducing emissions now, reducing emissions through current projects, and developing future projects.

- *Expected outcomes: specific action plans adopted by diverse set of UKRI facilities using a consistent and transparent approach.*
- *Roadmap topics: 2. Facility Action Plans, 3. Scope One Targets*

c. **Understanding Impacts**: Develop a consistent approach to recording and monitoring benefits of displacement offsets, such as export of waste heat, power demand management which achieve benefits without necessarily impacting on the key national reporting metric which is tied to a specified national emission factor for power, and value chain impacts (e.g. potential savings achieved through research into green technologies). **[Early Career]**

- *Expected Outcomes: Greater clarity about overall benefits of a range of activities which are invisible to national reporting system.*
- *Roadmap topics: 1. Policy Review; 22. Emissions Tracking*

2) Monitoring Usage and Impact

a. **Multi-Facility Dashboard**: Develop a multi-facility dashboard to provide users with feedback on resource usage. Should be linked to user accounts to enable provision of individual feedback. Dashboard should be demonstrated to work in at least two multi-facility consortia. Should provide multiple metrics and transparency and methods and assumptions (e.g. footprints based on regional or national power mix, or on the marginal footprint).

- *Expected Outcomes: A working dashboard for a range of UKRI DRI institutions, demonstrating how a dashboard for the full range of services might work.*
- *Roadmap topics: 22. Emissions Tracking; 23. Impact Dashboard*

b. **Green Scheduling**: Review existing approaches to green scheduling and power management, including displacing work to regions with low current generation footprint, displacing work to other times of day, and exploiting on-site power storage, potential for use within the DRI, potential benefits, and barriers to wider adoption.

- *Expected Outcomes: Understanding of opportunities and barriers; what is the scale of potential gains and how would these convert into progress towards net zero.*

　　　　　　　▪ *Roadmap topics: 24. Green Scheduling; 7. Impact Metrics and Allocation Tools*

c. **Metrics and Tools**: Metrics and tools to aid aligning of code to hardware. Best practice guide on achieving optimal use by avoiding unnecessary barriers associated with data movement or compute bottlenecks.

　　　　　　　▪ *Expected Outcomes: Improved support for users migrating code onto complex platforms and architectures.*

　　　　　　　▪ *Roadmap topics: 13. Provision of Training; 18. Standard for Computational Research*

d. **Open Research**: Addressing the challenging aspects of Open Research which go beyond FAIR data and Open Publication. How can we incentivise the open and inclusive sharing of ideas that we want and reduce or remove incentives for unwanted behaviour such as hoarding data? Promote benefits of Open Research. **[Early Career]**

　　　　　　　▪ *Expected Outcomes: Practical steps which can be taken to enhance open research collaboration and incentivise individuals to work for shared goals.*

　　　　　　　▪ *Roadmap topics: 15. Open DRI; 9. Understanding Behaviour Change*

e. **User Carbon Footprinting Tools**: Review and make recommendations on carbon footprint tracking tools for users. Develop a framework for evaluating infrastructure scope three emissions associated with user access. **[Early Career]**

　　　　　　　▪ *Expected Outcomes: Better support for evaluating the impact of personal choices in day-to-day use of digital research infrastructure.*

　　　　　　　▪ *Roadmap topics: 14. Usage Metrics; 8. User Toolkit*

3) Training and User Behaviour

a. **User Training Modules**: Develop short format online user training modules for independent learning. Each module should require 10 to 30 minutes to complete and conclude with a series of questions for unsupervised assessment. Topics should be selected to span a range of challenges and opportunities facing DRI users.

　　　　　　　● *Expected Outcomes: a collection of 6 to 12 short videos for inclusion in a UKRI training platform covering a range of topics.*

　　　　　　　● *Roadmap topics: 13. Provision of Training;*

b. **Research Practise**: Training in sustainability: engage with organisations to embed training in research practise; peer-learning on developing sustainability plans for projects; recommendations for sustained

resourcing of training; peer-learning on tools to support decision making in the context of competing sustainability concerns (such as desire to avoid idle equipment vs. avoiding unnecessary power draw).

- *Expected Outcomes: a community which is empowered and informed, with increased confidence in our pathway to net zero.*
- *Roadmap topics: 13. Provision of Training; 17. Career Pathways*

c. **User Stories**: Develop a portfolio of DRI professional (user, provider etc) user stories. Exploit a panel of experts with representation from natural, social and formal science, from the humanities, from theology, and from enabling roles. Recruit and follow a user group over the course of the project, collecting their views, experiences and recommendations.

- *Expected Outcomes: Greater clarity about the diversity of skills and roles within the DRI; an agreed terminology for defining the whole range of roles.*
- *Roadmap topics: 9. Understanding Behaviour Change; 17. Career Pathways*

d. **Incentives**: Community approach to amplify reward feedback and reduce, replace and refine negative drivers **[Early Career]**

- *Expected Outcomes: Recommendations for new rewards and incentives which can create a more collaborative, inclusive, and effective research culture.*
- *Roadmap topics: 9. Understanding Behaviour Change; 15. Open DRI.*

e. **International Communities**: Sustainable approaches to building and maintaining international networks and communities **[Early Career]**

- *Expected Outcomes: An understanding of how sustainable digital communications can enhance the global reach of our research, reducing dependence on aviation fuel.*
- *Roadmap topics: 17. Career Pathways; 15. Open DRI*

4) UK Compute Roadmap

a. **NSS**: Sustainable implementation and use of the national supercomputer service

b. **AIRR**: Sustainable implementation and use of the AI Research Resource

These projects will work with key stakeholders to align communication and practise related to the UKRI Net Zero DRI roadmap, looking at aspects related to procurement, metrics, impact, training and user behaviour.

The projects will be funded at 80% FEC. Total funds available in second first call are £1m (100% FEC value). Of these funds, £200k is set aside for the early career topics.

Expected Outputs

Projects should deliver clear outputs, such as:

- Demonstration or prototype services;
- Reports and digital content developed through open, transparent, and inclusive processes (including recommendations, guidance, standards, training material, hackathons, literature reviews, surveys, interviews, creative output);
- Peer reviewed publications;

Assessment of Community Project Proposals

Proposals will be assessed against three criteria by a review panel:

1. Excellence: is the proposed work breaking new ground and changing the way in which we view sustainability within the DRI.
2. Fit to objectives: will the proposed work produce substantial impact in the selected domain? Do they clearly address the UKRI Sustainability Strategy, the NetDRIVE aims listed above, and the selected topic?
3. Ability to deliver: is there a clear plan of work? Have the proposal team thought through the process well enough to deliver the project? Is there a clear approach to knowledge translation planning?

All proposals should include clear knowledge translation plans.

Champions

Topics

The second call for champions will fund two early career champions and one community change champion with qualifications and experience in the social sciences.

The appointees will join the eight champions appointed in the first call and will, collectively, provide leadership across all aspects of technological advance and community transformation.

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

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

Community Change Champion

Applicants should have a track record in research on community change associated with the transition to net zero and an understanding of the UK research community. The Community Change Champion will work closely with the Integration Lead (a full-time role, to be advertised in September) to monitor, review, and foster, positive attitudes towards the transition to net zero.

Early Career Champion for Motivating Change

Applicants should have social science qualifications relevant both to empowering and motivating individual actions addressing the transition to net zero and to analysing the social and psychological barriers to change. They should bring an enthusiasm for working collaboratively, building networks, working across disciplinary boundaries, and embracing new ways of working with digital technology.

Early Career Champion for Transition to Sustainable Computing

Applicants should have social science qualifications relevant to the transition to net zero and bring an enthusiasm for working collaboratively, building networks, working across disciplinary boundaries, and embracing new ways of working with digital technology.

Champion Tasks

1) Advice and Guidance

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

2) Outreach, Dissemination and Engagement

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

3) Strategic Direction

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

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

Travel Costs

Travel costs generally need to be included in champion budget. The champions will work together to make best use of travel, with champions taking on a regional role to attend meetings within an easy travel distance and reduce the need for long journeys and overnight stays. Two exceptions are:

1. Travel and accommodation costs for meetings hosted by the core team will be paid for out of the central budget: including the annual Network meeting, champion team building event.
2. Costs for attending NetDRIVE focus meetings to represent the core team and assist in running the meeting will be met out of the meeting budget.

Assessment of Champion Proposals

Applicants will be assessed on their knowledge and understanding of their selected thematic focus, on their ability to communicate and engage, and on their vision for delivering the objectives. We will be seeking a balance across themes and career stages and will appoint

the strongest candidates in each theme and each career stage. After an initial assessment based on the submitted application there will be online interviews in November (further details available on request).

Contract

For academic institutions the award will cover 80% of costs calculated on an FEC basis. The contract will be a collaboration agreement between Leeds University and the host institution. Staff costs should be Directly Incurred, not Directly Allocated. The funds originate from the UKRI DRI programme and have been awarded to Leeds on grant *UKRI910: NetDRIVE2 - Network for sustainable Digital Research Infrastructure Vision and Expertise*.

We do not expect there to be any IPR restrictions. All project outputs should be open.

Appendix 1: Career Stages

We have identified four career stages by merging categories used in engineering, or professionals in areas relevant to organisational change:

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

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

References

Juckes, M., Bane, M., Bulpett, J., Cartmell, K., MacFarlane, M., MacRae, M., Owen, A., Pascoe, C., & Townsend, P. (2023). Sustainability in Digital Research Infrastructure: UKRI Net Zero DRI Scoping Project final technical report. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8199984

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