



**Helping the  
chemical science  
community  
make the world  
a better place**

**Strategy 2021-2025**

## **Introduction from our CEO**

The chemical science community makes an amazing collective contribution to society: developing vaccines and diagnostics when the world needs them most; keeping our food and water safe, clean and in good supply; creating technologies to generate and store clean energy; inspiring generations of young minds, helping them forge their paths to fulfilling careers and lives.

Our new five-year organisational strategy, developed in close consultation with members and the wider chemical science community, renews our focus on supporting the people who advance the chemical sciences and help to make the world a better place. We want to convey the excitement of chemistry and the extraordinary part that chemistry plays in all of our lives. Our strategy presents an opportunity for the RSC to be forward looking and ambitious, demonstrating leadership within the global science ecosystem, while also achieving a balance with being relevant, sustainable and upholding professional standards.

Underpinning all that we do is a continued focus on building trust within our community and delivering real and measurable impact.

**Dr Helen Pain CSci CChem FRSC, CEO**

## OUR PURPOSE

To help the chemical science community make the world a better place

### OUR VISION IS FOR A WORLD WHERE...



Chemical scientists have adapted, innovated and succeeded in a changing world and ensured chemistry is a force for good



The culture in science supports an inclusive and enabling community for the benefit of everyone



Science infrastructure, funding, policy and regulation enables chemical scientists to continue to drive forward new research and innovation



People worldwide recognise, trust and understand the value of the chemical sciences

### AND OUR MISSION IS...



To enable change in chemical science education and practice to ensure a diverse and skilled workforce



To provide the opportunities and tools for the chemical science community to network, create and exchange knowledge



To recognise and reward innovation, collaboration, teamwork and leadership, and uphold ethical and professional standards



To be a trusted and authoritative voice, ensuring that chemistry has a recognised and influential role in science and society

### THROUGH OUR CORE STRATEGIES WE WILL...

#### ORGANISATION



Be an effective, connected and impactful organisation. All working towards the same clear purpose with shared organisational goals, clear measures for impact, shared understanding of our audiences, our members, our customers, our markets and our priorities

#### PUBLISHING



Be a digital-first publisher focused on delivering high quality impactful, accessible content and an excellent customer experience

#### MEMBERSHIP



Engage, support and grow our membership to reflect the diversity of the chemical sciences and to offer enhanced support across all RSC products and services to better meet the needs of our community

#### EDUCATION



Empower communities to offer an excellent chemistry education to all, driving greater diversity and improving skills in the chemical sciences

#### VOICE & INFLUENCE



Work with our community as leaders, partners, facilitators, and agents of change across the chemical sciences

The chemical sciences are essential to our everyday lives and vital in responding to some of the world's biggest challenges, from biotech and healthcare to energy and climate change.

As an influential learned society, professional body and scientific publisher, the RSC has an important role to play in helping chemical scientists maximise their impact. We exist to strengthen and champion the profession and the discipline of chemistry, in the public interest.

Our strategy clarifies how we will maximise the impact we make for and with the chemical science community. We also need to ensure our sustainability. We do this by maintaining a balance between generating surplus from our business activities and our mission to invest in the future of chemistry and the next generation of chemical scientists.

Our strategy is informed by our Charter, a set of responsibilities that sets out who we are and the impact we need to achieve.



## Our Charter

According to our Charter, the RSC exists for *“the general advancement of chemical science and its application and for that purpose:*

- to foster and encourage the growth and application of such science by the dissemination of chemical knowledge;
- to establish, uphold and advance the standards of qualification, competence and conduct of those who practise chemistry as a profession;
- to serve the public interest by acting in an advisory, consultative or representative capacity in matters relating to the science and practice of chemistry; and
- to advance the aims and objectives of members of the Society so far as they relate to the advancement of the science or practice of chemistry.”

## Where we are now

In 2017, we set out our vision for the RSC under the broad headings of Knowledge, Profession and Voice and we developed our strategy in light of the changes we expected to see in the world by 2030 (see *Future of the Chemical Sciences*).

The world has changed significantly since then and the changes we anticipated over a 10-15-year time horizon have happened more quickly:

- Science is already more global, more interdisciplinary, and more collaborative.
- New technologies mean less work has to be done physically in a laboratory or face-to-face.
- The amount of scientific data has grown enormously, and we have new and better tools to manage, interrogate and analyse it.
- The drive for openness has significantly changed the business models and regulatory frameworks that enable knowledge dissemination, as well as enabling greater collaboration.
- Funding structures and institutions are adjusting to changes in how science is done regionally, nationally and globally.
- Chemical scientists, working in multidisciplinary teams, have made progress in tackling global and societal challenges more quickly than expected.

Our strategy for 2017–2021 enabled us to grow and transform our publishing business, better support our community and achieve significant impact with our work in education, policy and thought leadership.

We have taken a strong stand on inclusion and diversity (I&D), for example, which will drive change for years to come. *Science Horizons* and *Digital Futures* have given us a clear sense of direction, highlighting the potential and needs of scientific research and development in the next 10-15 years.

We have also enhanced our organisational capabilities and made important changes to the way we work.

In developing our new strategy we have considered both internal and external drivers for change, including the impact of COVID-19 and the opportunities arising from the pace of global change.

We have drawn on internal insights and independent market research, as well as the results of surveys with members and our wider community, and our research reports.

## Our purpose, vision and mission

Our heritage spans more than 180 years. We want to ensure that our legacy lasts just as long. We will build on our strengths by being bolder, braver and more forward-looking.

Our Charter defines the nature and roles of our organisation. The purpose statement is intended to support our Charter objective to **advance the chemical sciences** and enhance the role that chemical scientists play in the world.

Our new purpose statement, **to help the chemical science community make the world a better place**, builds on the ambition of our Charter by shifting the emphasis from ‘science’ to ‘the science community’. It emphasises our focus on helping chemical scientists make a positive impact.

Our vision is **a world in which the chemical sciences fulfil their potential as a force for good**, where:

- Chemical scientists have adapted, innovated and succeeded.
- The culture in science is inclusive and enabling of everybody.
- Science infrastructure, funding, policy and regulation enables chemical scientists to drive forward new research and innovation.
- People worldwide recognise, trust and understand the value of the chemical sciences.

### Our mission is:

- To enable change in chemical science education and practice to ensure a diverse and skilled workforce.
- To provide the opportunities and tools for the chemical science community to network, create and exchange knowledge, adapt and thrive.
- To recognise and reward innovation, collaboration, teamwork and leadership, and uphold ethical and professional standards.
- To be a trusted and authoritative voice, ensuring that chemistry has a recognised and influential role in science and society.



### **The chemical science community**

The people that make up our global community have varied backgrounds, experiences and roles.

Research and development scientists, entrepreneurs, innovators, manufacturers, analysts, teachers, technicians, parents, students, librarians, policymakers, funders and regulators all play their part in advancing the chemical sciences. Together they make up the chemical science community and, working with our community, we provide the infrastructure, products, services and standards that help chemical scientists to advance science.

## Our strategy 2021–2025

Our strategy will help us align around our common purpose and work towards shared goals. It will help us be bolder, take informed risks and demonstrate our value.

In developing our strategy, we have considered all those who contribute to the chemical sciences across the spectrum of sectors that they work in. This includes research scientists, entrepreneurs and innovators, teachers, technicians, parents, students, librarians, policymakers and regulators.

Our strength and reputation as a professional body and a global scientific publisher gives us the credibility to be the voice of the chemical sciences. It also enables us to make an impact through our education and community activities, content and resources.

We have three clear lines of business derived from our core roles as defined in our Charter: Publishing, Membership and Education, which are enabled and enhanced by our Voice and Influence work.

We have a significant opportunity to increase our impact and support for our communities through better connecting activities across our organisation and adding value to both our membership and publishing offers.

As a not-for-profit organisation, and a UK charity, we invest any surplus income to achieve our charitable objectives in support of the chemical science community and advancing chemistry. Most importantly, we recognise that all the work that we do, whether in support of publishing, membership or education, is all part of our charitable objectives.





## Our science

Building on our recent work to increase our understanding of and impact on the chemical sciences, we will:

- Establish a new Chemical Science Roadmap to identify opportunities for our science and new activities, products and services.
- Develop our cross-organisational scientific content framework (covering journals, books, conferences and communities). This will enable us to identify synergistic opportunities and have a greater impact by amplifying key themes.
- Commission a new piece of research into likely changes within the chemical sciences workforce and the skills needed.
- Draw on insights from our new Science and Innovation Leadership Forum, which brings together leaders representing our subject communities.
- Continue our Strategic Advisory Forums, engaging high-level experts from diverse sectors within and beyond chemistry to identify major trends, challenges and opportunities.

## Our community

For the chemical sciences to prosper, a diverse range of talented people from varied backgrounds must be attracted to join and stay in the profession. As a professional and membership body we have a responsibility to promote inclusivity and accessibility. We must ensure that our activities, products and services meet the needs of our diverse community.

We are now implementing plans to significantly improve our offer to our community. We want to:

- Ensure that all chemical scientists feel that they belong in our community.
- Be clearer about the member proposition for individuals based in industry.
- Work with industry to define the future needs of the profession.
- Work in partnership with established ventures and corporates, particularly relating to policy, evidence and advocacy, I&D and recognition.
- Continue our support for UK-based SMEs, focusing on supporting the journey from chemistry to impact for new and establishing ventures with a chemistry-enabled innovation.
- Increase the profile of the work we do for and with industry.
- Better support technicians and new entrants to the profession.
- Enhance our professional development offer for our members and wider communities.
- Develop broader and more active communities of educators who contribute to and benefit from our wider chemical science community.
- Improve recruitment and retention to increase the size and engagement of our member community.
- Increase support for multidisciplinary collaboration amongst our members.
- Improve the experience of the RSC for members of our communities by connecting different products and services.

## Our international ambition

We are an international organisation serving the global chemical science community. While some of our activity is focused within the UK and Ireland, we work for the good of the global science endeavour.

Our ambition is to stimulate international collaboration and strengthen the reputation and role of UK science. We do this through conferences and events, as well as our membership of International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), European Chemical Society (EuChemS) and Commonwealth Chemistry, and our work with other science federations.

We will continue to convene and nurture the global chemical science community through our programme of conferences and events. We can now do this for a much wider audience thanks to our improved capabilities for hosting virtual events.

We will also continue to partner with others to maximise our impact. For example, we will amplify our community engagement and advocacy by working with other national chemical societies to address our shared ambitions for science culture, I&D and ethical practice.



## Our organisation and people

To fulfil our *mission*, by 2025 we need to be an effective organisation in which everybody works toward the same purpose and has a shared understanding of our goals.

Our organisational priorities are:

- To implement our core business strategies: *Publishing, Membership and Education*.
- To be a trusted and authoritative voice, ensuring that chemistry has a recognised and influential role in science and society: *Voice and Influence*.
- To ensure our long-term financial health.
- To develop our digital expertise, infrastructure and communities to expand our reach and enhance audience engagement.
- To maximise connectivity across our portfolio of products, services and support for the community.

Investment in our people is essential. Our staff and volunteers are critical to the successful delivery of our strategy. We will make sure we have the right people in place, and support and motivate them to achieve our shared goals.

We are committed to a safe, enabling and productive work environment that prioritises inclusivity, diversity and the health and wellbeing of our employees and where every member of staff is valued and can develop to their full potential.



# Publishing

**We are a global publisher with a mix of hybrid journals (that contain both traditional subscription and open access articles), open access journals, books and data products.**

The publishing programme delivers our Charter objective to disseminate chemical knowledge. In addition, the journal portfolio generates the surplus that funds many other RSC activities. We operate in a mature global market, but there is uncertainty due to:

- Changing customer demands.
- A shift to digital products and services.
- A shift to Open Access business models and a drive for Open Science.
- Changes in research assessment and funding policies.

All of these trends have been amplified and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Market volatility will continue throughout 2021, and likely 2022–23, although underlying market conditions appear to be stabilising with no large-scale structural changes owing to the pandemic.

Our mission is to be a digital-first publisher focused on delivering high quality impactful, accessible content and an excellent customer experience. To achieve this, we will:

- Increase our reputation for quality and impactful content.
- Accelerate our transition to Open Access (accessible content).
- Invest in our key regional markets to defend and develop both revenue and content.
- Re-define our digital data business ambition.
- Rejuvenate our books business via digital models.
- Increase our focus on digital services and customer experience.

# Membership

**We have an active and committed membership who value the benefits, support and services they receive. Equally, our members' voluntary contributions and perspectives amplify our reach and enhance our impact.**

By developing a larger and more diverse membership, we can directly support a greater proportion of the chemical sciences community, and more effectively enable members to collaborate and support each other through member networks.

We can also have a more powerful, informed and representative voice. We can more effectively help communities of members to collaborate and innovate, support each other in their professional practice, and develop their science.

Our mission is to engage, support and grow our membership to reflect the diversity of the chemical sciences and to offer enhanced support across all RSC products and services to better meet the needs of our community.



To achieve this, we will:

- Increase recruitment and retention, with a focus on ensuring our membership reflects the diversity of the chemical science community.
- Increase support for multidisciplinary collaboration amongst our members.
- Transform support for professional skills development including e-learning, tracking and careers support.
- Improve awareness of professional standards and recognition for the future workforce, resulting in enhanced professional and ethical conduct.
- Prioritise members within the communities supported by the RSC.

# Education

**Chemistry education is fundamental not only to the future of the profession, but also to support understanding of scientific issues and challenges in the population.**

Our new education strategy will enable us to enhance our support and impact within education communities.

It provides clarity and direction to our education teams as we develop more integrated ways of working across the organisation.

Our mission is to empower communities to offer an excellent chemistry education to all, driving greater diversity and improving skills in the chemical sciences.

We aim to achieve:

- Broader and more active communities of educators who contribute to and benefit from our wider chemical science community.
- An unbroken chain of subject experts teaching students throughout their education.
- Entitlement and access to high quality subject-specific professional development for teachers of chemistry throughout their career.
- Chemistry curricula, assessments and qualifications that are accessible, inclusive and encourage development of relevant knowledge and skills.
- Greater engagement with chemistry and positive outcomes for all learners.
- Increased awareness of vocational and technical routes into careers using chemistry.

Areas of focus for our teams are:

- To increase our impact with under-represented and marginalised groups.
- To support COVID-19 recovery for students and new teachers.
- To champion contexts, careers and diverse role models to ensure that young people are clear about the purpose of science and recognise pathways to careers in the chemical sciences.
- To partner with STEM and education-focused organisations where this will increase our influence, reach or impact.
- To increase our impact and reach in educational communities through digital transformation.

## Voice and influence

We play a significant role in the global science ecosystem. We work directly with our community as leaders, partners, facilitators and agents of change across the chemical sciences.

We have a proven reputation as a leader in driving change resulting in significant impact for our science and our communities. We want to convey the excitement of chemistry and the extraordinary part that chemistry plays in our lives.



## Building on our success

During the 2017–2021 strategy period, our thought leadership and work in policy, evidence and advocacy, in combination with our independence, our reputation and our convening power, were highly effective vehicles for forging partnerships and facilitating change across the chemistry community and beyond.

The approach we have established begins with identifying issues or challenges where we are uniquely placed to take the lead, either alone or in partnership, in areas that matter to our science and to our community – such as inclusion and diversity, open science and sustainability.

Research and evidence are critical to our understanding of the issues we seek to address. The insights from our research frequently highlight systemic issues, requiring action both by the RSC and others. This way of working has enabled us to achieve demonstrable impact in the following areas:

- Equality of opportunity (see *Breaking the Barriers* and *Chemistry for All*).
- Creating a more sustainable planet (see *Scarce Elements* and *Sustainable Plastics*).
- The direction, potential and needs of our science (see *Science Horizons* and *Digital Futures*).
- Ensuring that the ways we reward and recognise excellence are fit for purpose (see *Re-thinking recognition: Science prizes for the modern world*).
- Inspiring the next generation (see *Making the Difference*).



Our Voice and Influence strategy builds further on our values-based thought leadership, supported internally by a more joined-up approach across the organisation and externally by engaging more effectively with our community and working with partners.

We will:

- Develop a roadmap for the chemical sciences, building on the *Future of the Chemical Sciences*, *Science Horizons* and *Digital Futures*.
- Facilitate solutions to chemistry-based problems by leveraging our convening power to bring together diverse stakeholders, identify actions and drive change.
- Influence decision makers, responding to the political environment while drawing on expertise, evidence and insights from across our community.
- Advocate for our community (across all sectors) and increase the visibility of how the chemical sciences make the world a better place.
- Scale our impact by forging partnerships and strategic alliances to deliver our purpose.
- Increase the diversity of people choosing the chemical sciences and fulfilling their potential for a truly inclusive community.
- Incentivise and celebrate an increasingly inclusive and collaborative science culture by driving the modernisation of recognition and reward.
- Support our core lines of business through evolving narratives, thought leadership and campaigns that demonstrate our values, maintain our reputation and exemplify our impact.

## Public engagement and outreach

We have redefined our ambition for public engagement and outreach to focus on engaging with students and families. Our aim is increase the diversity of people choosing the chemical sciences for further study, and entering chemistry careers, including through vocational and technical routes.

We recognise our limitations in having impact in this space when we work alone, so we will partner with trusted intermediaries, particularly when providing science engagement opportunities for underserved communities.

# Inclusion and diversity

Inclusion and diversity are about equality and equity of opportunities. Diverse perspectives and innovative approaches have been shown to lead to better science.

We are a global leader on inclusion and diversity in the chemical sciences. We take an evidence-based approach, listening to the lived experiences of our communities – and we act.

We have adopted a bold approach, demonstrating thought-leadership and our long-term commitment to drive change in the culture of chemistry and its ethical practice. We have designed and developed multiple interventions to help attract, retain and develop talented people from right across the globe.

This has shone a light on how perceptions of the chemical sciences can dissuade some from joining or progressing in the profession. We also know that chemists from different backgrounds can have a wide range of experiences of their profession purely because of their identity. Both factors result in exclusion for some, and at every career stage.

This strategy and the *I&D Strategic Plan* will push us harder and further than ever before. They require a fundamental shift in how we approach everything we do. Just as inequality sadly permeates all of science, our belief in equality will permeate every project, event, process, policy and message.

Through our focus on I&D and we will increase the diversity of people choosing the chemical sciences and fulfilling their potential for a truly inclusive community.

Our commitment and approach to I&D are central to our role as an employer. We will continue to ensure an inclusive workplace where opportunities are open to all, regardless of any individual's attributes, and ensure that barriers to career progression are removed at every available opportunity.



## Sustainability

Chemistry has a central role to play in solving global challenges described in the *UN Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs). A major concern for our community is that the key role that the chemical sciences play is not sufficiently recognised by governments, the general public and young people choosing their careers.

We will also use our thought leadership, corporate narratives, public engagement, marketing and digital engagement to highlight chemistry's role in addressing global challenges. For example, taking part in the *UN Climate Change Conference*, COP26.

As well as enabling and advocating for change externally, we will make our own operations much more sustainable and environmentally responsible. This includes participating in the UN Race to Zero (RTZ) programme. Our initial commitment is that:

- The RSC will reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 at the latest.
- Actions will begin with an interim target of a minimum 50% reduction in emissions by 2030.


We will review these targets in 2022 with a view to tightening them when we have a clearer assessment of the impact of the pandemic on our activities going forward and we have completed a detailed analysis of the budgetary and strategic risk implications.

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