

Esteemed scientist and academic leader Sir Leszek Borysiewicz named as government's preferred candidate for UKRI Chair

1.4.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Science Secretary Liz Kendall has named Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz as her preferred candidate for Chair of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

- Science Secretary Liz Kendall names Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz as choice for Chair of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- Sir Leszek will help ensure record public investment in research and innovation supports economic growth and strengthens the UK's global competitiveness
- Sir Leszek brings a wealth of leadership experience in science and research from the charity sector, academia and previous senior public research roles

Science and Technology Secretary Liz Kendall has named Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz as the government's preferred candidate for Chair of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

He will help steer UKRI as it supports research and innovation across the UK, helping to ensure public investment drives economic growth, strengthens the UK's global competitiveness and improves lives.

Sir Leszek has held senior leadership roles across research, medicine and higher education. He served as Chair of Cancer Research UK from 2016 to 2023, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge from 2010 to 2017, and Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council from 2007 to 2010.

Last year, he was awarded a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire for services to cancer research, clinical research, medicine and charities.

Science and Technology Secretary Liz Kendall said:

Britain's researchers and innovators are one of our greatest strengths, and their discoveries are transforming everything from health and clean energy, to how we work and keep our country safe. UKRI has a vital role in backing their work so it delivers for the whole country.

Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz will help ensure our record public investment in research and innovation supports economic growth, backs the industries of the future and improves lives across the UK.

Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz said:

I am delighted to be the preferred candidate as Chair of UKRI to help the UK effort to promote growth as well as being an international leader across the whole spectrum of

research and innovation.

I look forward to engaging with the myriad of research communities in all sectors, as well as supporting UKRI in delivering this exciting agenda of driving economic growth, strengthening the UK's global competitiveness and improving lives.

UKRI is the UK's largest public funder of research and innovation, investing £9 billion each year on behalf of the government. It brings together the 7 research councils, Innovate UK and Research England, and is developing a new strategy, due to launch this summer, setting out how it will advance knowledge, improve lives and drive growth.

Sir Leszek is expected to take up the role later this summer and will succeed the current UKRI Chair, Sir Andrew Mackenzie. The Science and Technology Secretary thanks Sir Andrew for strong and steady leadership over the last 5 years, where he has championed prioritisation, efficiency and value for money and maintained support across Parliament, government and the research community.

UKRI CEO Professor Sir Ian Chapman said:

Borys's depth of knowledge, experience and leadership will be of huge value to UKRI as we seek to deliver for the UK's public on our mission to advance knowledge, change lives and drive growth. I am very much looking forward to working with him to realise our shared ambition for UKRI.

I would also like to thank Sir Andrew Mackenzie for his service as Chair of UKRI. It has been a pleasure working with him and I wish Andrew the best for the future.

Outgoing UKRI Chair Sir Andrew Mackenzie said:

Borys is an outstanding choice. He is a hugely experienced and admired leader in the R&I community who will greatly strengthen UKRI's governance, key relationships, and impact. The role of UKRI Chair is an extremely fulfilling privilege: it is a real pleasure to pass it on to such good hands as his.

The post is subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee which is expected to take place in April.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/esteemed-scientist-and-academic-leader-sir-leszek-borysiewicz-named-as-governments-preferred-candidate-for-ukri-chair>