

SCOTTISH CONSORTIUM FOR RURAL RESEARCH

The 116th meeting of the SCRR Executive Committee was held at James Hutton Institute, Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen AB15 8QH on Monday 19th August 2013

Present:

Ian Bainbridge	(Chairman)
Stuart Monro	(Scientific Director)
Ruth Wolstenholme	
Colin Campbell	
Willie Donachie	
Alastair A Macdonald	(Secretary/Treasurer)

1. **Welcome & Apologies**

Apologies were received from Nick Fraser, Martin Price and Kathy Velander.

2. **Minutes of 115th executive meeting**

Accepted as accurate, but in item 10, change 'Scottish tree health meeting' to 'Scottish tree health summit'. Stuart Monro commented that the 'Ash die-back disease' exhibit prepared by the RBGS had been on show at Dynamic Earth and that two copies of this were available for presentation by Consortium members. There was also a 'smaller version' available. Contact Pete Hollingsworth for details (P.Hollingsworth@rbge.org.uk).

3. **Centres of Excellence and Networks: update on all networks**

Sniffer

Ruth Wolstenholme reported that the work of Sniffer continued to be focused on the expansion of adaptation/climate resilience initiatives in relation to climate change. Sniffer is working with public sector, particularly local authorities including taking a risk approach to climate change, as well as private sectors and community-facing organisations and a place-based approach with Climate Ready Clyde. The adaptation conference on the 9th September aims to raise awareness of the broad range of adaptation initiatives underway in Scotland and elsewhere; engage a wide range of stakeholders on adaptation policy developments; and network across sectors to develop new ideas, projects and partnerships, and inspire action (<http://www.sniffer.org.uk/news-diary/calendar/scotlands-adaptation-conference/>).

James Hutton Institute

Colin Campbell reported that the 'Potatoes in Practice' event had been very successful as a knowledge exchange event as had the 'Best Soil in Show' display at the Highland Show (see SCRR Newsletter 77, 2013). The genomics of barley continued to attract the attention of the whisky industry. He also drew attention to the recently published UK Strategy for Agricultural Technologies (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-agricultural-technologies-strategy>). This will include a £70 million government investment in an Agri-Tech Catalyst that will provide a single fund for projects, all the way from the

laboratory to market including £10 million to deliver international development objectives, and £90 million of government funding for Centres for Agricultural Innovation.

He also reported that discussion was continuing to create an alliance of organisations with an interest in Scottish Food Security and that partnerships between the James Hutton Institute and the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee comprised part of this. These universities had expressed the potential attraction of membership of SCRR and this shall be explored further.

Action CC/SKM

Moredun

Willie Donachie reported that Moredun was also prominent at the Highland Show (as was SRUC) and that Moredun also had various 'Road Shows' to disseminate knowledge. Internationally, there had recently been testing in Australia of a new vaccine against *Haemonchus contortus*, the red stomach worm, one of the most pathogenic nematodes of ruminants. Interest had also been shown in South Africa and South America. A vaccine is also being tested against Sheep Scab, a form of allergic dermatitis caused by the highly parasitic scab mite *Psoroptes ovis*; the aim is to eradicate this problem. He also drew attention to the various research developments that are ongoing on the Easter Bush campus as a consequence of BBSRC investment. Finally he mentioned the research links being formed between Moredun and Lincoln University in New Zealand following the appointment of Dr Andrew West as vice-chancellor there (formerly Chief Executive of AgResearch Ltd).

CAMERAS

Ian Bainbridge indicated that five seminars of CAMERAS' members had taken place as part of the Rural and Environmental Science Strategy development and that feedback and discussion was currently being worked on. The strategy document will likely follow the format of previously published Strategies, such as those for Scottish Marine Science

(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/02092716/0>) and Scottish Environmental Monitoring

(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/12/05085553/0>).

A Centre for Plant Health, including both forestry and other plants, was being discussed.

The Centre for Environmental Risks and Futures (CERF) is based within Cranfield University's School for Applied Sciences, and its horizon scanning activity forms part of a £1.8m project funded by a partnership of 12 organisations. The CAMERAS partnership are part of this and the CAMERAS Board is in the process of establishing a formal horizon scanning workstream and group, to look at the best way to integrate horizon scanning and futures activity across the CAMERAS partner organisations.

4 Events in 2012-2013

Stuart Monro reported that in 2013 the Researching Scotland's Ruralities Workshop in March had been a success. He reiterated that BGS were interested in having a workshop in the west, but that there was a need for further discussion. The Forum to be held on Wednesday 2nd October is to focus

on Environmental and Agricultural Metagenomics. Eventbrite has sent out invitations to all members of the SCRR and beyond (<http://scrrmetagenomics.eventbrite.co.uk/>). A Giant Panda Research meeting had been arranged by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland to be held on the 11th and 12th of September and a Cairngorms Research meeting had been arranged for 14th November. Details for both of these are on the SCRR website (<http://www.scrr.ac.uk/events.php>). There had been a demand for a further 'Tourism Research' workshop and it was planned that this be held in January of next year. An additional Workshop on Science Communication was also under consideration for 2014 as was a future SCRR seminar to share knowledge of how to encourage well-structured data-collection and other practice (so called 'citizen science'). There was growing experience of the latter within members of the Consortium and the considerable experience of SNH and others linked to the encouragement from SEPA would seem to provide a sound foundation.

Action SKM

Annual lecture 2014

Stuart Monro reported that he had taken advice from Ann Glover, Chief Scientist for the EU and had sent an invitation to Alan Belward, Unit Head for Land Resource Management at the JRC's Institute for Environment and Sustainability in Ispra (<http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/index.cfm?id=6450>), inviting him to give the Annual Peter Wilson Lecture in 2014. He indicated that he thought he could provide a more international dimension, including rural areas overseas, poverty alleviation, etc. and was a brilliant speaker, as may be deduced from this youtube video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVTLB1yeRCs>

Forum 2013

Invitations for the Metagenomics forum in Battleby had been sent out and further marketing efforts were planned for the coming weeks. The promotional role of Consortium Directors in bringing this Forum to the attention of their staff, postdocs and research students was very important in making it a success.

Action SKM, AAM, WD & CC

Highland Show, etc.

Stuart Monro reported that the SCRR Newsletter had been distributed around various stands at the Highland Show, and had attracted interest. As a form of outreach it had proved to be a cost-effective way of promoting SCRR. He also commented upon the positive reaction among postdocs to the Scottish Crucible and the Heriot Watt equivalent, about which there was discussion and general agreement. There was brief discussion of the move of BGS to Heriot Watt University and the coincidental changes in Geology at Edinburgh University.

Directors' Lunches

Stuart reiterated that it might be helpful if he was in contact with the host institutes in advance of the Directors' Research Lunch that they would be hosting in order to assist the development of the Research Lunch concept. It had been said at an earlier meeting that it might be useful to the rest of the SCRR membership if there were abstract proceedings, in a conversational style, to highlight the talks etc. that followed the lunch.

Action SKM & AAM

5 **Membership**

The Secretary reported that the terms of office of Jeremy Bradshaw and Gordon Machray had come to an end, that Ian Bainbridge had joined the executive and taken over the Chair while Steve Yearley was on academic sabbatical, and that Kathy Velander had also joined the Executive.

Stuart Monro reported that as part of the consideration of the proposed expansion of the Consortium membership he had drawn up a simple table that allowed the size of an institute to be acknowledged, as well as the scale of its involvement in the research of the Consortium to be recognised. He would circulate this draft table and include comments from the Executive with it prior to it being presented to the Board for approval. Action SKM

Stuart Monro also reported that had been making approaches to St Andrews University and that there had been positive contacts with both Dundee University, Glasgow University and SAMS. The position of Millport was briefly commented upon. During discussion the question was raised whether SEPA and the Field Studies Council should also be approached with respect to membership. It was agreed that this should be given further consideration and explored. Action IM/SKM

There was discussion of the importance of keeping aware of who came to the meetings arranged by SCRR and in particular the numbers of 'new faces' who were present at the 'Ruralities' meeting. Action AAM

Colin Campbell reported that one of the benefits of the latter was the local Scottish network formed in anticipation of the European Society for Rural Sociology congress coming to Aberdeen City and Shire in 2015. The XXVI ESRS Congress 2015 is being organised by a working group from the Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Group of the James Hutton Institute, with assistance from the VisitAberdeen Convention Bureau. Dr Lee-Ann Sutherland, a senior social scientist at the Institute and long-time participant in European Society for Rural Sociology congresses, chairs the group.

6 **Finances**

The Treasurer indicated that the Board had approved the fees for 2013-2014 and that invoices would be going out soon. BioSS would be sent its own invoice. Action AAM

7 **Contacts**
SSAC

Stuart Monro reported that the Research Questions related to independence that had been submitted by members had been passed on in an appropriate form to SSAC. These included questions on Finance and the role of the Research Councils in Scotland. There was some discussion of Codes of

Governance. He drew attention to the helpful updates available on the SSAC website and commented upon the study of 'current scientific evidence around synthetic biology' and Open Access Publishing and Open Access Data'.
(<http://www.scottishscience.org.uk/article/ssac-update-report-1>)

8 Publicity and Communications

The Secretary reported that Stuart Monro and he had learned how to add material to the website, and that as a result were placing selected pieces of news and minutes of Executive and Board meetings there. The Secretary would call for material for the next issue of the Newsletter in the coming week or so with publication due late in September or early in October. The newsletter will continue to carry a Year of Natural Scotland theme in 2013.

9 Residual matters from the minutes of the 115th meeting.

None.

10 Any other business.

None

11 Date and place of next meeting.

Date and place of next meeting: 28th October, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Bush Estate, Edinburgh