

SCOTTISH CONSORTIUM FOR RURAL RESEARCH

Minutes of the 50th Main Board Meeting held on Monday 6th May 2013, in the University of Edinburgh, Raeburn Room, Old College, Edinburgh

Present

Professor Jonathan Seckl (Chairman)
Professor Stuart K Monro (Scientific Director)
Dr Diarmid Campbell
Dr Nick Fraser
Dr Kathy Velandar
Ruth Wolstenholme
Professor Steve Yearley
Dr Alastair A Macdonald (Secretary/Treasurer)

1. Professor Jonathan Seckl introduced himself as the new Chairman of the SCRR, and welcomed members and representatives. Apologies had been received from:

Dr Ian Bainbridge (SNH)
Dr Gordon Machray (SASA)
Professor John Oldham (SRUK)
Professor Brian Austin (Stirling Aquaculture)
Professor Colin Campbell (JHI)
Professor Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)
Professor Valentina Bold (Crichton Campus)
Dr Chris Quine (Forrest Research)
Dr Murdo Macdonald (SRTP)
Professor David Leach (School of Biological Sciences, U of E)
Dr Ron Wilson (School of Geosciences)
Dr Mike Bonaventura (Crichton Carbon Centre)
Professor Martin Price (UHI – Perth)
Professor David Elston (BioSS)
Dr Iain Valentine (RZSS)
Professor Willie Donachie (Moredun)
Dr Simon Shackley (Biochar)

2. **Minutes of 49th Board Meeting held on 3rd December 2012**

Accepted

3. **Matters arising from minutes**

None that will not be covered elsewhere

4. **Centres of Excellence & Networks**

- SNIFFER Networks
Ruth Wolstenholme reported that Sniffer continues to focus on Climate Resilience, with funding for its Adaptation Scotland work from the Scottish Government. The work involves community and citizen science elements and includes arts and humanities in creating resilience. It also includes technical aspects.
- CAMERAS
There has been no recent news.

- Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF)
This now has a co-ordinator, Christine Johnston. Set up largely by SNH with the aim of collecting and sharing biodiversity information more freely. There are two subgroups; data flow and data sharing, the aim being to provide a portal for that data in a uniform way and to link it to national (<http://www.nbn.org.uk/>) and international biodiversity databases (<http://www.gbif.org/>). Visits are being made to seek to include data from amateur and NGO groups. How this data is linked is still being discussed. Amateur and commercial identification requires links to specimens, and it is therefore necessary to have anatomical (e.g. skeletal, skin) reference material. DNA analyses are becoming less expensive, but these too need to be linked to reference specimens of the species/taxon. During discussion the question of the identification of the Scottish Wildcat was mentioned. Road-kill and other naturally dead material is sent by the general public to the museum where it forms a 'library' of current information on a range of species.
- Scotland's Environmental web project
Diarmid Campbell reported that Scotland's Environment Web (SEWeb) aims to bring together information on Scotland's environment so that it is easily available and in a useable form. It can be accessed at (<http://www.environment.scotland.gov.uk/>). The web site is supported by funding from the European Union LIFE+ programme and is part of the Scottish Government's 'Natural Scotland' campaign.
- Other Networks
No additional information.

5. Public policy and science strategy

- Scottish Science Advisory Council
Stuart Monro drew attention to the SSAC Update report March 2013 (<http://www.scottishscience.org.uk/article/update-report-march-meeting>) that was circulated previously. Following publication in January 2012 of the report "Science Education: Enhancing support for Schools through collaboration" the Science Education work programme is drawing to a close. The SSAC Innovation Report "Making the most of our Scientific Excellence" was published on 20 February 2013. Following recent wide ranging discussion on the topic of Genetically Modified Organisms, SSAC will review the current scientific evidence around GMO research and technology and produce a paper considering the potential economic benefits for Scotland. A further short paper will outline the current issues and possible implications of moves towards Open Access Data. Stuart also commented on the request from SSAC for anonymised responses from the SCRR membership of factual questions and concerns regarding science and engineering in Scotland during the next five years. This was briefly discussed.

6. SCRR – membership

- Prospective new members
Stuart Monro reported that he had been in touch with St Andrews University. A number of areas around geosciences had been identified as grounds for collaborative research. The question of how SCRR membership fees might be paid had cropped up. There had also been discussion of encouraging Glasgow University to join the consortium and some relevant parts, like the Veterinary School, the Crichton Campus and Geology had shown interest. BGS are planning a workshop on the topic of the Clyde catchment basin in September, and will thereby attract interest by demonstrating relevance. Willie Donachie had been in touch with veterinary colleagues in the west. Identifying the correct individual to make the appropriate approaches had been the key to growth of the SCRR membership in the past. Jonathan Seckl asked 'what's in it for them?' The SCRR provides opportunities for engaging with like-minded staff from other Scottish research institutes and universities in an informal way. The underlying aim is to help establish collaborative research opportunities. Other areas of expansion seem to lie within Herriot Watt University, Edinburgh Napier University and the various colleges of the University of the Highlands and Islands. SAMS at Oban has links to UHI but maintains a very strong independent research base. SAMS has contributed to SCRR activities on the topic of Public Engagement. There was a brief discussion of the criteria for membership of SCRR – research, rural, coastal - it was felt to be a pity to have some but not all of those working in these areas are members of SCRR. What would the other

organisations want to get out of membership of SCRR, and this should be contributing to the process of expansion of membership.

Approaches will be made to appropriate universities in Scotland

Action SKM

- Web-publication of minutes of meetings

This had been discussed in the Executive meetings and, as it allows for increased transparency and communication, it had been approved and was being implemented. It matches policies within the University of Edinburgh.

Action AAM

SCRR fora & workshops

- Future forum and workshops

Stuart Monro reported that the planned forum on Environmental and Agricultural Metagenomics would now take place on Thursday October 2, at the Battleby Conference Centre, Redgorton, Perth. A workshop on the geological mapping, 3D modelling, ground-water surveys, geochemistry and evolution of the Clyde catchment will be hosted by BGS on the 9th September, probably in the West of Scotland. An ecotourism and rural tourism workshop will be organised by Edinburgh Napier University and held early in November; it aims to link researchers, consultants and NGOs directly with government authorities, local communities and businesses. Research in the Cairngorm National Park will be the topic of a workshop, also later in the year, the date for which has not yet been finalised. There has also been a request for a further workshop on science communication, and this will probably take place in the spring of 2014. This year we have already had workshops on ecotourism in Scotland, and a larger one on Researching Scotland's Ruralities: social science perspectives on current issues in rural Scotland. These represent a welcome extension of the SCRR research base into the Social Sciences.

There was a brief discussion of the land and sea-embracing nature of the term Rural within the title of the consortium. Its importance in providing a suitable forum recently for the Social Scientists was pointed out. The term 'environmental' was deemed to be so broad as to lead to the loss of SCRR's current distinctiveness.

7. SCRR Annual Peter Wilson Lecture – 2014

Stuart Monro reported that the Executive had discussed the European Dimension and he had contacted Prof Ann Glover for suggestions. A 'good speaker' was an important attribute of the lecturer. There was a short discussion of the names suggested, and of the nature of the topic's relationship to Scotland. Policy issues in a Nordic country might have more relevance to Scotland in 2014 than an EU (French or Belgian) perspective. Innovation in agriculture was another potential topic for further consideration, as was the notion that transformational research applied to rural problems would be of interest to the Consortium. Stuart Monro will seek suggestions of appropriate names of speakers.

Action SKM

8. Minutes of Executive Committee meetings 114 & 115

Accepted.

9. Membership of the SCRR Executive

Two members of the Executive, Jeremy Bradshaw and Gordon Machray had reached the end of their 3-year term. Ian Bainbridge has come onto the Executive committee as Chairman while Steve Yearley is away for a one-year research sabbatical; Steve will resume Executive Chairmanship on his return. Stuart Monro suggested that Ian Bainbridge remain on the committee and that Kathy Velandar come on as the other new member of the Executive Committee. This was agreed. The composition of the committee was briefly discussed and the need to keep under review the geographical and research spread of its members was agreed. Again, the need to make approaches to the institutes in the west was expressed.

10. Science outreach

- Year of Natural Scotland (2013)

Stuart Monro reported that the way that was easiest for the SCRR to take this forward was through the SCRR Newsletter and website.

- Beltane
Stuart Monro reported that in a response to obtain an update on Beltane he had invited Prof Mary Bownes to give this. However, she is in Canada at the moment and will either come to a future meeting or contribute to the SCRR Newsletter. Stuart indicated that Beltane continues, and has made appointment to a couple of Fellows recently (<http://www.beltanenetwork.org/>).
Stuart also drew attention to the Scottish Crucible (<http://www.hw.ac.uk/scottishcrucible/aims/>). He thought that it was a very good initiative, helping participants discover skills and attitudes likely to make their research more innovative. He encouraged distribution of information about the Scottish Crucible to all consortium members (<http://www.hw.ac.uk/scottishcrucible/media/Scottish%20Crucible%20Poster%202013.pdf>). There has been very positive feedback from one of the BGS attendees.

11. Scientific Director's report

The material has been covered elsewhere in the agenda.

12. Finances & Secretary's report

- Finances 2012-2013
The finances of the consortium had to rely heavily on its reserves while the Bank processed the change in the consortium's name from 'Edinburgh Consortium for Rural Research' to 'Scottish Consortium for Rural Research'. The process was still not complete and had taken more than six months so far. The delay this had caused to sending out membership invoices had held up the receipt of these funds, which were now coming in. Expenditure had been kept within target, and although all the final figures were not yet available, there appeared to be no cause for concern. The Accounts will be drawn up and sent for independent examining in time to be presented at the next Board meeting. Action AAM
Concerns expressed about the charitable status of the SCRR will be investigated with the Finance Department of the University of Edinburgh. Action AAM
The Executive committee had requested a discussion paper to be passed round (Appendix 1) illustrating the effects on income of possible changes in subscription fees. It showed the current income and three scenarios for 2013-2014; raising levels by 1%; raising levels by 1% and adjusting the two lowest payment bands to either £350 or £400. The aim is to maintain an annual income stream that is about the same as annual expenditure, and retain a reserve that is approximately the same as one year of expenditure. It was noted that JHI had agreed to increase their subscription to the same level as SRUC, in part by including the subscription of BioSS. The suggestion was made that Heriot Watt and Edinburgh Napier Universities should contribute more. UHI had already indicated that it was unable to pay more. There was a brief discussion of the way, some time in the past, in which the complexity of charges had arisen. There was further discussion of how to simplify the bands of membership such that larger units paid more and smaller outfits paid less. Retaining the spread of membership was seen as important. The difficulty of linking the fee to the size of the institution and/or to the number of staff active in SCRR-type research was recognised, and the views of UHI Perth, Stirling Aquaculture and Edinburgh Napier were examples in this regard. Edinburgh University has a greater diversity of Schools and Institutes contributing than any other member. This picture may change when/if universities such as Glasgow, Aberdeen and St Andrews participate. 'Level of engagement' was seen to be the factor deciding appropriate subscription level. It was decided that further clarity of description of the 'level of engagement' was required, together with identification of what that represents for each current and prospective member. It was decided that there would be no reduction in the number of fee levels in 2013-2014; that discussion with potential new members continue; and that invoiced amounts remain at 2012-2013 levels. Action SKM, AAM
- SCRR Website & Newsletter
The Secretary reported that the website is running smoothly; Stuart Monro and he had been shown how to make modest additions to its contents, such as News items and the Minutes of meetings. The newsletter continues to be well served by the membership, who supply attractive and interesting text and pictures. My thanks go out to them. A request has gone out for material for the next Newsletter, which will be published in time for the Highland Show. Action AAM
- SCRR Logo
Stuart Monro presented the logo designs created about three years ago for the prospective SCRR, and these were discussed. It was decided that the logo as used in the website was more appropriate.

- Future Directors' meetings
These will be placed on the website as soon as dates are finalised. The next Executive and Directors' meetings are at the James Hutton Institute, Dundee on August 19 and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology on October 28. The next Board meeting will be held at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies on January 13, 2014. Invitations have been received from Moredun Institute and Heriot-Watt University to visit these institutions early next year. Exact dates still have to be finalised. Action SKM, IB, AAM

13. Any other business

None

14. News from members

No further news

15. Date of next meeting – December 2013/January 2014

Appendix 1

| Invoice no. | Institution | Invoice 2013 | Invoice 2014 | Invoice 2014 | Invoice 2014 | Invoice 2014 |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | | "status quo" | 350 option | 400 option | Agreed |
| 1 | Uni Edinburgh | 10000 | 10000 | 10000 | 10000 | 10000 |
| 2 | SRUC | 1880 | 1900 | 1900 | 1900 | 1880 |
| 3 | RBGE | 940 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 940 |
| 4 | BGS | 940 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 940 |
| 5 | Roslin | 940 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 940 |
| 6 | CEH | 940 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 940 |
| 7 | Forest Res | 940 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 940 |
| 8 | Moredun | 940 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 940 |
| 9 | SASA | 940 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 940 |
| 10 | SNH | 940 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 940 |
| 11 | Heriot Watt | 470 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 470 |
| 12 | St Andrews | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | Napier | 470 | 950 | 950 | 950 | 470 |
| 14 | Aquaculture | 470 | 475 | 350 | 400 | 470 |
| 15 | UHI | 470 | 475 | 350 | 400 | 470 |
| 16 | JHI | 940 | 1900 | 1900 | 1900 | 1880 |
| 17 | BioSS | 470 | See JHI | See JHI | See JHI | See JHI |
| 18 | Millport | 235 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 235 |
| 19 | NMS | 470 | 475 | 350 | 400 | 470 |
| 20 | RSPB | 470 | 475 | 350 | 400 | 470 |
| 21 | Sniffer | 470 | 475 | 350 | 400 | 470 |
| 22 | SRT Project | 235 | 235 | 350 | 400 | 235 |
| 23 | RZSS | 235 | 235 | 350 | 400 | 235 |
| 24 | Crichton | 235 | 235 | 350 | 400 | 235 |
| | Total | 25040 | 27330 | 26450 | 26900 | 25980 |