

SCOTTISH CONSORTIUM FOR RURAL RESEARCH

Minutes of the 52nd Main Board Meeting held on Monday 30th June 2014, in the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI), The University of Edinburgh, High School Yards, Edinburgh.

Present

Professor Jonathan Seckl (Chair)
Professor Stuart K Monro (Scientific Director)
Dr Kevin O'Donnell (SASA)
Ruth Wolstenholme (Sniffer)
Professor David Elston (BioSS)
Professor John Oldham (SRUC)
Dr Ian Bainbridge (SNH)
Dr Andy Kerr (ECCI)
Professor Willie Donachie (Moredun)
Dr Murdo Macdonald (SRTP)
Dr Chris Quine (Forest Res)
Dr Nick Fraser (NMS)
Dr Alastair A Macdonald (Secretary/Treasurer)

Guest

Daniel Moncrieff (FSC)

1. Professor Jonathan Seckl welcomed members and representatives. Apologies had been received from:

Professor Brian Austin (Stirling Aquaculture)
Professor Valentina Bold (Crichton Campus)
Dr Mike Bonaventura (Crichton Carbon Centre)
Professor Ian Bryden (UHI)
Professor Colin Campbell (JHI)
Professor Diarmid Campbell (BGS)
Dr Alistair Dawson (CEH)
Professor Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)
Professor Laurence Mee (SAMS)
Professor Martin Price (UHI)
Dr Simon Shackley (Biochar)
Professor Janet Swadling (SRUC)
Dr Iain Valentine (RZSS)
Dr Kathy Velander (Napier)
Professor Steve Yearley (Sabbatical)

2. **Minutes of 51st Board Meeting held on 13th January 2014**
Accepted.

3. Matters arising from minutes

None that will not be covered elsewhere.

4. Centres of Excellence & Networks

Sniffer: Sniffer has moved into ECCI and has continued focusing its work on climate resilience and setting up partnerships on climate change and adaptation (Adaptation Scotland).

Cameras: Ian reported that the CAMERAS Rural Affairs and the Environment Evidence Strategy 2016-2021 is now very close to completion. Stuart indicated that he had submitted comment on behalf of SCRR. The follow-up is to develop specific Evidence Plans within that strategy (in the first instance perhaps seven of the 20-30 'evidence needs' proposed). Mechanisms for improving the resourcing of CAMERAS had been discussed. There had also been discussions about the need for an 'over-arching' document to tie together the four CAMERAS strategies: marine, freshwater, monitoring, and rural affairs and environment. The committee looked forward to actions resulting from the planning stage. Ian also mentioned Scottish Government's RESAS Strategy for the funding round 2016-2021. Themes of research may be sought at the next round of consultation, and thus new groupings and ideas not previously considered should be put forward into the process. There was a brief discussion of the need for both a CAMERAS and RESAS strategy. It was suggested by the Chair that the RESAS division head [Susan Davies] should be invited to attend appropriate SCRR meetings to help co-ordinate questions of strategy, etc. Action SKM

Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF): Nick indicated that there was nothing new to add.

Scotland's environmental web project (SEWeb): In correspondence, Colin indicated that the SEWeb project has progressed well and he again recommended it to SCRR members as Scotland's portal for all environmental data; it is doing more and more citizen science and engagement with young people. The interest in environmental data and especially big data also grows and it may be that SCRR and SEWeb could co-organise something. Jo Muse would be the contact within SEWeb. He will sound her and other SEPA, SEWeb partners out.

Colin had also recently heard from JHI staff helping Glasgow to bid for the World Congress of Soil Science that their bid was successful. This will attract potentially 2000 delegates to Glasgow in 2022.

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA): Ian drew attention to the absence of SEPA (<http://www.sepa.org.uk/>) within the SCRR. David Pirie is Executive Director and Peter Singleton is the Emerging Issues Unit Manager responsible for managing overall research and development at SEPA. Stuart indicated that it acted positively to collect into one place data on the Scottish environment. It was suggested that SEPA might be invited to join SCRR. Action SKM

Ecosystem Services Community Scotland (ESCOM): Andy drew attention to ESCOM, a bottom-up collaboration between researchers who were seeking to align Scottish ecosystem services research, maximise value, identify synergies and avoid duplication (<http://escomscotland.wordpress.com/>). There was some discussion of its objectives and 'bottom-up' development by like-minded researchers.

Scottish Forum on Natural Capital: Andy indicated that this is a new initiative bringing together public, private and voluntary sector organisations to protect and rebuild Scotland's natural capital (<http://naturalcapitalscotland.com/>). It will calculate the monetary value of Scotland's natural capital and the cost of depleting it. It will also communicate to a broad range of businesses and other stakeholders the risk of depleting Scotland's natural capital and the huge economic value from protecting and

enhancing it. It will set up collaborative projects to deliver tangible action to protect and enhance Scotland's natural capital. 'A broker of impact for the researcher.'

Andy suggested that it could be sensible for SCRR to be linked to both of these. Ruth asked if these two organisations were planning to be linked to one another in some way.

Action SKM, AK

Edinburgh Plant Science: Stuart drew attention to this group of 600 plant scientists and social scientists, formally launched recently, who collectively provide wide-ranging expertise and capability in food security, environmental sustainability and related policy (<http://www.edinburghplantscience.co.uk/>). It was suggested that Karen Halliday should come to SCRR to introduce the consortium members to how this group is developing. During discussion it was felt that this group would eventually grow to become Scottish Plant Science.

Action SKM

Centre for Science, Knowledge and Policy (SKAPE): Kevin indicated that this Centre within the University of Edinburgh is concerned with the interface between Science and Policy (<http://www.skape.ed.ac.uk/>). Notions of knowledge exchange, impact, evidence-based policy and smart regulation all imply that policy should be informed by expertise. The increased interest in knowledge for policy has created a need for critical reflection on how different forms of knowledge are produced, applied and legitimised in policy-making, and how such processes in turn shape political discourse and practice. SKAPE has been set up to help address this need. Christina Boswell and Steve Yearly are co-Directors.

John asked if there were any national networks, like SCRR, in other countries outside the UK. The Welsh Government, CEH and Bangor University sponsor the Wales Environment Research Hub (WERH). It was suggested that perhaps Nordic countries, the Netherlands or Canada might have something more comparable to SCRR.

Action AAM, SKM

5. **Public policy and science strategy: Scottish Science Advisory Council**

Stuart reported that the Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC) was looking for new members; there does not appear to be anyone representing rural science. Prof Muffy Calder is moving back to Glasgow University at the end of December, as Vice Principal and Head of the College of Science and Engineering. There will be the need to appoint a new Chief Scientific Advisor for Scotland. The Chair drew attention to the positive impact of New Zealand's integration of science, by means of science advisers, in all government ministries. Stuart felt that promoting science-based economic activity outside government was also important. SSAC produces a regular update report (<http://www.scottishscience.org.uk/article/ssac-update-report-4>).

6. **SCRR – membership**

Stuart reported that Glasgow University had joined the SCRR, and that approaches had been made to the Field Studies Council and to archaeological sciences in Scotland. Daniel Moncrieff of FSC briefly described the work of the FSC and the facilities at the revamped Millport research centre (<http://www.field-studies-council.org/centres/scotland/millport.aspx>). Stuart recommended FSC making research contact with Heriot-Watt University. FSC provides specialist courses for research staff from a number of Consortium members as well as for many high schools, universities and other groups of general public.

There was discussion of the wide and relatively thin distribution of archaeologists throughout universities and local government in Scotland, and the idea to access that community via offering SCRR membership to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

Action SKM

7. **SCRR fora & workshops**

Stuart reported that the website illustrates the trend to hold meetings in collaboration with Consortium members (<http://www.scrr.ac.uk/events.php>). We are currently in discussion about another Metagenomics meeting in the autumn of this year. ESCOM and Edinburgh Plant Science give other opportunities for collaborative and cost-effective meetings. Working jointly with SKAPE may offer access to insight and different perspectives on policy issues of relevance to Consortium members and the rural environment. John asked how we might increase SCRR linkage to industry. He asked if there might be potential for arranging a workshop together with industry bodies, e.g. whisky industry. Action SKM, JO

8. SCRR Annual Lecture - 2015

Stuart reported that discussions were taking place with the Society of Biology (SOB) and the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) concerning the details of the shared financial commitment to the annual Peter Wilson lecture. The next Annual lecture will be on the 9th February 2015. There was a brief discussion of the lecturer for 2016, but it was decided to wait until later in the year.

9. Minutes of Executive Committee meetings 119 & 120

Ian indicated that most of the matters in these minutes had been mentioned already. In the latter of the two meetings it was suggested that there might be a way of distributing the content of the Newsletter more widely by notifying everyone on an email mailing list when the next issue of the Newsletter was available electronically. Firstly, it would be important to ask of Consortium member organisations, who within their organisations would want to be on an email notification list to receive notice of the each SCRR Newsletter as it is published; these names and email addresses could be sent to the Secretary. A similar note could be put into the Newsletter itself. In addition, a counter could be put on the 'Publications' part of the SCRR website to monitor how effective this attempt to expand Newsletter readership might be. If any member required extra printed copies, these could be supplied if notification was sent to the Secretary.

It had also been agreed that several pop-up display screens advertising SCRR would be appropriate publicity expenditure. The designs should perhaps have the map of Scotland with dots of membership location, very few words and good images. The possibility of having QR codes on the pop-ups linking to the latest Newsletter was suggested. Other ideas and suggestions would be welcomed. Action AAM

10. Matter arising

None.

11. Membership of the SCRR Executive

Ian reported that from the 1st August Steve Yearley will resume the Chair of the Executive Committee, and he will retain normal membership of the Committee.

12. Scientific Director's report

Stuart indicated that all matters had been covered elsewhere on the agenda. He added that one public role that the Scientific Director can play is to attend meetings around Scotland that pertain to the rural community e.g. the Highland Show. The Chair drew attention to the small number of women at Board meetings.

13. Finances & Secretary's report

Finances 2013-2014

The Secretary/Treasurer reported that the finances were in good shape and that on the 4th April SCRR had almost £34,500 in the bank. The policy was to maintain an amount

almost equivalent to the annual income to take care of fluctuations in cash flow, as had recently been experienced. There had not been any large expenditure recently and so money was available to pay for extra copies of the Newsletter, pop-ups and to provide support for future meetings e.g. with ESCOM. The invoices for the year 2014-2015 will be going out in August. The accounts will be going for inspection at about that time too.

SCRR Website & Newsletter

The website is receiving updates of news and details of events regularly. Adverts of events that are being organised by Consortium members are put onto the website if notification comes early enough.

The summer edition of the Newsletter has been published (1200 copies were printed) and has been distributed to the mailing list and to the Highland Show (<http://www.scr.ac.uk/publications.php>). Material for the next issue is requested before the middle of September. The work done by Damien in presenting the SCRR in such a good light was emphasised and acknowledged.

Damien is already giving some thought to the designs for the pop-ups.

Ian asked for Consortium members to provide website links that can then go onto the SCRR website to make it more effective. Stuart emphasised that there was SCRR money available to support meetings for the membership of the Consortium.

14. Any other business

Doors Open Days is Scotland's largest festival celebrating heritage, architecture and civic pride. It has run since 1990 and involves communities throughout Scotland. Over 65,000 people take advantage of the chance to get into sites normally off limits to visitors. Kevin mentioned that 'doors open' days this year will be 27th and 28th September in Edinburgh, and that some Edinburgh-based Consortium members will participate on one or both of these days. Please send details to the Secretary so that these can be put onto the SCRR website.

Andy asked how it might be possible to attract more social scientists to attend SCRR Board meetings. There was discussion of the increased participation of social scientists in the work of Consortium institutions. Steve usually makes those connections, and the 'Ruralities' meeting he organised in Perth last year brought together many social scientists to discuss rural issues. Ian suggested that SCRR should have rural social science workshops regularly. Ruth suggested that a 'light touch' GAP analysis might be helpful; knowing what areas of research interest were covered by the Directors might be helpful to identify what is missing from SCRR Board membership. The question 'what should SCRR cover?' was raised e.g. gender, social science topics, industry associations. John presented a brief overview of the external and internal application of social science expertise within the Scottish Rural College, and the mutual benefit that accrued to both natural and social scientific staff as a consequence. Chris indicated that Forestry and UHI also had staff engaged in 'pragmatic' social science. It was agreed that there should be consideration of the balance of the membership of the Executive/Board.

Action SKM, AAM

John reported that positive discussions are continuing between SRUC and the University of Edinburgh regarding the possibility of forming a closer liaison. Governance and other issues are the current focus of attention.