



Scottish Consortium  
for Rural Research

**MINUTE OF THE 54<sup>TH</sup> MAIN BOARD MEETING (ANNUAL BOARD MEETING) OF THE SCRR HELD ON MONDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2015, AT SRUC, ROSLIN INSTITUTE, EDINBURGH.**

**Present:**

Prof Steve Yearley (Chair, and Chair, Executive Committee)  
Prof Stuart K Monro (Scientific Director)  
Prof Geoff Simm (SRUC, Host)  
Prof Willie Donachie (Secretary and Treasurer)  
Prof Martin Price (Centre for Mountain Studies, UHI)  
Dr Kathy Velander (Edinburgh Napier University)  
Prof David Elston (BioSS)  
Prof David Gray (School of Biological Sciences, University of Edinburgh)  
Dr Alistair Dawson (CEH)  
Dr Chris Quine (Forest Research)  
Dr David Douglas (RSPB)  
Dr Nick Fraser (National Scottish Museum)  
Prof David Miller (James Hutton Institute)  
Prof Kevin O'Donnell (SASA)  
Dr Simon Shackley (School of GeoSciences, University of Edinburgh)  
Prof Ian Bryden (UHI)

**Apologies:**

Prof Jonathon Seckl  
Dr David Kerridge (BGS)  
Prof Colin Campbell (James Hutton Institute)  
Prof Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)  
Dr Phil Wookey (Heriot Watt University)  
Prof Julie Fitzpatrick (Moredun Research Institute)  
Prof Lee Innes (Moredun Research Institute)  
Dr Ian Bainbridge (SNH)

1. **Welcome:** Prof Yearley, assuming the role of Chair in the absence of Prof Seckl, welcomed the members to the meeting.
2. **Minutes of the 53<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Main Board:** These were accepted as a record of the meeting.
3. **Matters arising:** The matters arising from the 53rd Meeting were noted as action points in the minutes.

Item 4.3: SCRR secretariat and EPS to maintain contact (SM,WD). This has been addressed.

Item 4.5: SRUC to inform SCRR secretariat of meetings of the Cross Party Group on Rural Policy for wider dissemination. (SRUC) Sarah Skerrat

Item 6: Progress further membership of SCRR. (Stuart Monro). This is reported on later in the meeting

Item 7: Explore potential of joint meeting with Rural Policy Centre. (Stuart Monro). Reported in latest Newsletter

Item 8: Suggestions for speakers for 2016 Peter Wilson Lecture. (All) See later in minutes.

#### 4. Centres of Excellence and other networks:

4.1. **SNIFFER**: The report given at the 124<sup>th</sup> meeting of the SCRR Executive Committee is the most recent update.

4.2. **CAMERAS (SM)**: There is now a new secretariat and Fiona Comrie has been seconded to the group to lead this. The funding for this post has been derived from CAMERAS members and will be for 3 years. KOD reported that there is a real sense that CAMERAS now has to work. Fiona Comrie attended the 124<sup>th</sup> Executive meeting at SASA.

4.3. **National Biodiversity Network (NF)**: The death of John Sawyer, Head of the NDN, was noted. He was responsible for putting together the Atlas of Living Scotland but there are now concerns about this going forward.

4.4. **Cairngorms research Network (MP)**: Meeting took place in October. There will be a report in the SCRR Newsletter.

4.5. **New Scientific Posts (SM)**: Two of the member organisations SRUC and the James Hutton Institute, are currently recruiting new Directors/Chief Executives. The closing date for the SRUC has passed and the closing date for the JHI is the 30<sup>th</sup> November.

4.6. **RESAS (GS)**: New Scientific Programme bids have been submitted but various scenarios for possible reductions in funding have now been requested and the research organisations are currently working on these.

4.7. **RBGS (SM)**: SM reported on a Visiting Group to RBGS which went well. One issue which arose was the sustainability of the living collections. This may be the subject of a future SCRR meeting Encompassing other collections and databases held by members.

5. **Scottish Science Advisory Council:** Prof Stuart Monro informed the meeting that the Scottish Government is progressing its search for a new Scientific Advisory Council. SM together with Ian Ritchie were invited to attend a meeting to discuss how this might be arranged. There was a meeting of minds at the meeting about how the SSAC should work in future and what the CSA role should be. The person specification should include the ability to see outside their own silo, looking at science in universities, institutes and industry. A major consideration from SM and IR was that the CSA should have access to the First Minister.

The call has gone out for the recruitment of members for the SSAC with a closing date end of November and with interviews early in December. There will be a Chair for the SSAC which the CSA will attend. It is intended that the appointments will be for 3 years. Council should be in place before the appointment of the CSA.

6. **SCRR membership:** Prof Stuart Monro reported on the continual desire to widen membership of SCRR while retaining its mission as a consortium of organisations active in research into land, freshwater, coastal and marine resources, and their uses – including farming, forestry, aquaculture and recreation. Two approaches have been made; 1. The University of St Andrews, 2. The National Trust for Scotland. However neither organisation has formally committed to join as yet. SM and WD are continuing to communicate with both and hopefully will secure their membership soon.

KV and MP offered to help with recruiting NTS. An opportunity for further discussions will arise at the Land Use Workshop to be held in Perth in January 2016.

MP suggested that the Centre for Scotland's Land Futures based at Stirling and Dundee may be interested in becoming a member of SCRR.

7. **SCRR fora and workshops:** Prof Stuart Monro reported that the pattern of engagement across the Consortium continues to focus on the Directors' Research Lunches, which present the latest research in the hosting organization, and facilitates future collaborations.

Since the last AGM the following events have been held or attended.

- P Wilson Lecture, February, RSE, – Tim Benton
- Microbiome Forum, February, held at Dynamic Earth, jointly with University of Edinburgh. This was very well attended.
- EPS Spring Network Event, May, Edinburgh University. SCRR funded refreshments.
- Round Table Workshop held jointly with SRUC, June, Stirling University.
- Royal Highland Show, June. SM and WD attended this and distributed the Summer Newsletter.

Future events include:

- Round table workshop on Land Reform: 15 January 2015, jointly with Royal Scottish Geographical Society, at UHI Perth. This will be followed by a larger meeting to be held later in the year.
- Peter Wilson lecture 2016; 25 February 2016, Prof L.A. Glover; RSE

- April 2016: Life in the Extremes, Edinburgh International Science Festival. A number of different aspects will be discussed here including life in soils (JHI), early life on earth (St Andrews) and the potential for life outwith earth in terms of astrobiology (Edinburgh). No specific date as yet but it will be in Summerhall, Edinburgh. SY enquired whether the event could be replicated elsewhere to further communicate the information. We are hoping to have a workshop for researchers later in the year.
- Forum on collections and data: There are a number of organisations in SCRR with substantial scientific collections and data relevant to their interests. These are nationally and internationally important and SCRR has been asked by some members to hold a workshop bringing together all interested parties to discuss issues such as the curation and sustainability of the collections. This has the potential to be a large event and will need careful managing. Possible date is late 2016.
- Scotia Agricultural Club: There is interest in some joint events. SM will follow up on this.

**8. SCRR Annual lecture:** The Peter Wilson Lecture for 2016 is to take place in the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015 when Professor Anne Glover will give a talk entitled “Lost in Transmission”

As a result of the Biology Society withdrawing from funding the Peter Wilson Lecture SCRR and the RSE will fund future lectures between them.

For 2017 the suggested theme is “Evidence Based Conservation”. If members have other suggestions for 2017 and beyond let SM know.

**9. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting 122, 123 and 124:** The minutes of these meetings were noted.

**10. Membership of the SCRR Executive:** Ian Bainbridge had announced his retiral from SNH at the last Executive meeting and with this his retiral from the Executive. Three new members have since been appointed. Professor Lee Innes from MRI and Dr Pete Hollingsworth from the RBGS are new members. Professor David Miller has become the official representative for JHI as Colin Campbell stepped down due to increased work responsibilities at JHI.

**11. Finances 2014-15.** Prof Willie Donachie reported that the finances were in good shape with a small surplus having been recorded. The budget for the coming year was also projecting a small surplus. Monies have been allocated for anticipated meetings but further allocations could be made when proposed meetings are suggested by members. The principle adopted has been to have sufficient funds in the bank to cover a full year’s worth of expenses. A suggestion for a SCRR science prize to be awarded annually was discussed. This could be for the best essay associated with the Edinburgh International Science Festival event, “Life in the Extremes”. SM to consider options.

**12. SCRR Website and Newsletter:** Prof Donachie reported that the web site was regularly updated and the format for both is working well. The Autumn /Winter 2015 issue of the Newsletter was distributed to the members present.

**13. Future Directors' meetings:**

18 January 2016: Executive Committee and Directors' Lunch; Roslin Institute

14 March 2015: Executive Committee and Directors' Lunch; BioSS,JHI Invergowrie

**14. Date of next Board meeting:** A date in November 2016 will be sought.

**ACTIONS:**

Item 7.0. Scotia Agricultural Society: Investigate potential for joint events (SM)

Item 11. SCRR Student Prize: Options for this to be investigated and reported back to Executive. (SM, WD)