



Scottish Consortium
for Rural Research

MINUTE OF THE 56TH MAIN BOARD MEETING (ANNUAL BOARD MEETING) OF THE SCRR HELD ON 16TH NOVEMBER 2017, AT ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDEN EDINBURGH.

Present:

Prof Jonathan Seckl (Chair)
Prof Steve Yearley (Chair, Executive Committee)
Prof Stuart K Monro (Scientific Director)
Prof Willie Donachie (Secretary and Treasurer)
Prof David Elston (BioSS)
Prof Nick Fraser (NMS)
Simon Gilmour (Society of Antiquaries)

Prof Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)
Prof David Miller (James Hutton Institute)
Prof Mark Stevens (Roslin Institute)
Prof Alastair Stott (SRUC)
Prof Des Thomson (SNH)
Dr Kathy Velandar (Edinburgh Napier University)

Apologies:

Prof David Argyle (RDSVS, UoE)
Prof Diarmid Campbell (BGS)
Prof Colin Campbell (James Hutton Institute)
Prof Alastair Dawson (CEH)
Prof Julie Fitzpatrick (Moredun Research Institute)
Prof Gavin Gibson (Heriot Watt University)
Prof David Gray (UoE)
Dr Carol Hill (University of Glasgow)
Prof David Hume (Roslin Institute)
Prof Lee Innes (Moredun Research Institute)

Murdo Macdonald (CoS)
Prof Josephine Pemberton (UoE)
Prof Martin Price (Centre for Mountain Studies, UHI)
Prof Wayne Powell (SRUC)
Dr Chris Quine (FR)
Prof Simon Shackley (UoE)
Prof Geoff Simm (UoE)
Dr Antony Weir (Heriot Watt University)
Prof Jeremy Wilson (RSPB)
Ruth Wolstenholme (Sniffer)

- 1. Welcome:** The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.
- 2. Minutes of the 55th meeting of the Main Board:** These were accepted as a record of the meeting.
- 3. Matters arising:** The matters arising from the 55th Meeting were noted as action points in the minutes.

Centres of Excellence and other networks:

3.1. SEFARI (Scottish Environment, Food and Agricultural Research Institutes) (AS)

This comprises 6 research institutes with Graeme Cook appointed as Director of SEFARI. The main aim is provide a cross SEFARI communication forum. The interim SEFARI website is available at www.sefari.scot.

A fellowship programme has been launched to help integrate the research of the institutes and also to initiate closer collaboration with external bodies such as CAMERAS members.

3.2. Coordinated Agenda for Marine Environment and Rural Affairs Science; CAMERAS (DT):

A new Chief Scientist has still to be appointed and following that there is likely to be changes in how CAMERAS will operate.

The discussion following this item indicated there is a move within Government to rationalise the landscape relation to research providers with more integration of operations.

The delay in appointing a new Chief Scientist was disappointing and could have a negative impact on the development of rural science strategies in Scotland.

The SCRR provides a safe place to talk and discuss the above issues and would be more effective if it was more comprehensive in its membership and include organisations not traditionally associated with it. It is also important that SCRR links to other networks to reduce duplication in efforts.

3.3. SSAC: (SKM) Public Policy signposts particular issues for SCRR activities, especially those relating to rural affairs. Keeping an eye on what is happening in the Scottish Parliament is crucial.

The discussion on this item discussion on the purpose and role of SCRR in the future identified a number of possibilities including

- Promote SCRR as a club which is non-threatening with views on science and policy
- Maintain independent nature, not associated with any single body
- Use the Peter Wilson Lecture to stimulate debate and get government officials to attend.
- Align with Government timetables on such things as rural development policy, celebration of 100 years of Forestry in 2019 and the journey of Agricultural Champions.

4. Scientific Director's Report (SKM)

- The newsletter continues to be well received, especially by Government officials, and reaffirmed the decision to retain a printed version.
- Workshops are an important, and this year we held one to discuss the impact of the Science Strategy on school level education especially with regard to STEM issues.
- Two other workshops are in the planning stage
 - Coastal environmental Issues: brings together SCRR members with interests in this area.

- Biological Collections: there are a large number of such collections held by SCRR members and this workshop will enable sharing of ideas on best practice as well as highlighting developing areas.
- The Peter Wilson Lecture went down well again and we will continue to ensure that we have topical and challenging talks. Roger Crofts lecture will present an interesting view of land reform in Scotland.
- SCRR have joined forces with the Scotia Club to fund and launch an Essay Competition for school pupils. This has been welcomed by teachers and we will see whether it fulfils expectation in 2018.
- Prof Monro indicated his desire to retire from the post of Scientific Director and encouraged the Consortium to think constructively about the process of appointing a new Director.

The Chair thanked Prof Monro on behalf of the SCRR membership for his contribution over the nine years of his Directorship.

5. SCRR membership (SM):

The only member of SEFARI not in the SCRR is the Rowett Institute and contact has been made with the Director to make him aware of the benefits of being a member.

The National Trust for Scotland remains a possibility although organisational restructuring may have hindered the membership process.

Other potential members who should be contacted include the Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scotland's Moorland Forum, University of Dundee, University of Strathclyde, University of Aberdeen.

The absence of industry members who conduct research was highlighted as an issue.

6. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting (SY)

The minutes of the Executive Committee are posted on the website. The main items on the Agendas for the Executive are reports from Networks and members and the planning of workshops and lectures.

7. Membership of the SCRR Executive:

The membership has changed over the year with the appointment of Des Thompson and the resignation of Ruth Wolstenholme. A replacement for Ruth is being pursued. There is a possibility of moving the day for Directors' lunches and therefore the Executive meetings to Wednesdays to encourage better attendance at both meetings.

Re-election of Executive Committee members: Nick Fraser, Martin Price, Steve Yearley, Stuart Monro and Willie Donachie all agreed to serve another term. Prof Jonathan Seckl also agreed to serve for another term from June 2018

The recruitment process for a new Scientific Director is informally underway. It was agreed that the position should be advertised and a robust process applied. The job description will be updated to reflect the current duties but also to encourage new thinking. SKM indicated he was happy to continue in post until a successor is found.

8. Finances & Secretary's report

- **Finances 2016-2017:** Copies of the Audited Accounts for the 2016-17 financial year were circulated to the attendees. They were accepted by the meeting
- **SCRR Website and Newsletter:** The website is still being redesigned and updating is ongoing.
- **Future Directors' meetings:** To be arranged. There is a possibility that attending by video conferencing could be arranged if so desired by any members.

9. News from members:

- SNH (DT): Conference of Biodiversity at the RSE was successful. Rosanna Cunningham will be announcing formation of new groups including Grouse Moor Management and Deer Management in the Lowlands.
- James Hutton Institute (DM): Clare Committee about to report on research spend by the Scottish Government. There is an interesting lack of information on how to measure the impact of Scottish Rural Science. Is there a role for SCRR to access this information from members and inform the Government and the public.
- BioSS (DE): David Elston will be retiring from his position as Director of BioSS in 2018. The Chair on behalf of SCRR members wished David happiness in his retirement.

10. Date of next Board meeting: A date in November 2018 will be sought.