



Scottish Consortium
for Rural Research

MINUTE OF THE 57^H MAIN BOARD MEETING (ANNUAL BOARD MEETING) OF THE SCRR HELD ON 14TH NOVEMBER 2018, AT FOREST RESEARCH, EASTER BUSH, EDINBURGH

Present:

Prof Jonathan Seckl (Chair)	Dr Jackie Hughes (SASA)
Prof Steve Yearley (Chair, Executive Committee)	Mr Ed Mackie (SNH)
Prof Stuart K Monro (Scientific Director)	Prof David Miller (James Hutton Institute)
Prof Willie Donachie (Secretary and Treasurer))	Mr James Pendlebury (FRS)
Prof Mark Brewer (BioSS)	Prof Stefan Reiss (CEH)
Prof Nick Fraser(NMS)	Prof Sarah Skerratt (SRUC)
Prof Julie Fitzpatrick (Moredun)	Prof Geoff Simm (UoE)
Simon Gilmour (Society of Antiquaries)	Mrs Mary Anne Smythe (CRC)
Prof Karen Halliday (Edinburgh University)	Prof Mark Stevens (Roslin Institute)
	Dr Kathy Velandar (Edinburgh Napier University)

Apologies:

Prof David Argyle (RDSVS, UoE)	Prof Lee Innes (Moredun)
Prof Colin Campbell (James Hutton Institute)	Prof Martin Price (UHI)
Prof Gavin Gibson (Heriot Watt University)	Prof Eleanor Riley (Roslin)
Prof David Gray (UoE)	Dr Chris Quine (FR)
Prof Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)	Prof Des Thomson (SNH)

- 1. Welcome:** The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.
- 2. Minutes of the 56th meeting of the Main Board:** These were accepted as a record of the meeting.
- 3. Matters arising:** The matters arising from the 56th 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) (DM)

The knowledge exchange arm of the Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme (SRP) has had its budget confirmed until 2021 and has appointed Professor Charles Bestwick as interim Director. The mid-term review of the SG SRP took place in Summer 2108 and will now continue until 2021. The next stage is that consultations on the next SRP 2021-26 will begin in January 2019 with a start date in April 2021.

Upcoming events: 14 November 2018 – Science at the Parliament; November 2018 - Land Use Conference, Dynamic Earth ; 2019 - Forestry Conference to mark 100 years of the Forestry Commission

There followed a discussion on funding of rural research in Scotland. Maintaining high levels of innovation was identified as essential for future sustainability. Huge opportunities are there but have to be grasped.

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

There have been no meetings in 2018. It is uncertain whether it will continue. The Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum has published 24 detailed recommendations relating to biological recording and structure. This is about the modernisation of wildlife recording, the collection, management, interpretation and use of information to provide a complete more up to date evidence base as we look towards the future.

In the discussion following this report it was proposed that a meeting with Prof Andrew Miller who has been appointed as the New Chief Scientific Advisor for Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources and SCRR should be arranged.

Another point raised was how to deal with the proliferation of networks associated with Rural Research. These need to be rationalised.

3.3. SSAC: (SKM) The website is static. The SSAC is largely invisible to the scientific community.

4. Scientific Director's Report (SKM) See Appendix 1

5. SCRR membership (SKM): see Scientific Director's Report, Appendix 1

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 retiral of Professor Kevin O'Donnell from the Executive and the appointment of Professor Karen Halliday to the Executive.

The appointment of Professor Sarah Skerratt as Scientific Director was approved unanimously by the Committee.

Re-election of Executive Committee members: Willie Donachie agreed to serve another term. Prof Jonathan Seckl also agreed to serve for another term from June 2019.

Committee Members Professors Lee Innes, Pete Hollingsworth and David Miller all agreed to serve another 3 year term.

Professor Steve Yearly indicated to the Committee his wish to retire from his position as Chair of the Executive Committee in 2019. Professor Geoff Simm was proposed by Professor Monro as a successor and having been approached beforehand, was willing to accept the appointment of Chair when Prof Yearley steps down. This appointment was approved unanimously by the Executive Committee.

The possibility of retaining Professor Yearley on the Executive Committee was discussed and he may return as the representative from the University of Edinburgh.

8. Finances & Secretary's report

- **Finances 2017-2018:** Copies of the Audited Accounts for the 2017-18 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. The view of the Committee was that the website does need updating.
- **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:

- **MRI/SRUC:** Event to launch the arrival of SRUC Veterinary Services at Pentlands Science Park will take place in November. This move will encourage an increased level of collaboration between the organisations.

10. AOB:

Professor Seckl acknowledged that this was Professor Stuart Monro's final meeting in role as Scientific Director and on behalf of the Executive Committee and wider membership of the SCRR he thanked Professor Munro for his contributions and efforts which have enhanced SCRR's reputation and influence over the period of his tenure.

11. Date of next Board meeting: A date in November 2019 will be sought.

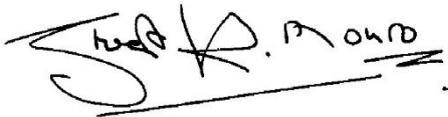
SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT NOVEMBER 2018

1. It is now 10 years since I took over from Dr Chris Browitt as Scientific Director of what was then the Edinburgh Consortium for Rural Research and is now Scotland-wide. In that time many things have changed but also our objectives remain the same; to facilitate collaboration in rural research across the network through a variety of means;
 - a. The regular Director's lunches hosted by member institutions, which help identify key research activities remain as the backbone of SCRR activities.
 - b. The SCRR Newsletter which has been very successful in promoting the research of the membership beyond the Consortium itself has changed its format from that which I inherited but continues to be distributed as a paper copy.
 - c. SCRR workshops and seminars are more difficult to organize than formerly due to the pressures on researchers but collaborative activity with other organisations is becoming more prevalent.
 - d. The annual Peter Wilson Lecture held in collaboration with the Royal Society of Edinburgh is also due for a rethink and to have a greater degree of dialogue within the event.

2. This year three events have been in the planning but only one has been delivered with the other two held over to next year for logistical reasons.
 - a. The Changing Coast: sharing knowledge and practice is a workshop presented as part of the MASTS Annual Science Meeting: "Challenges and innovative solutions for sustainable seas" on the 2nd November 2018.
 - b. As a follow-up from the seminar held last year stimulated by the Scottish Government's Science Strategy which focused on the challenges presented by science education in Scotland and the activities in support of science education delivered by Consortium members, SCRR is engaged with a workshop on "IDL Approaches to Global Challenges – Learning for Sustainability" as part of the RSE conference on Interdisciplinary Learning. This is particularly pertinent to SCRR as rural research is, by definition, interdisciplinary and we wish to encourage awareness about work being undertaken by consortium members which address the Global Challenges.

- c. A Natural History Collections Workshop scheduled originally for October has been delayed till 2018 due to the refurbishment of the lecture theatre at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. The aim of this Workshop is to build a network of collection holders in Scotland taking stock of current activity and set out a road-map for future activity. This workshop will focus on digitisation of collections as being timely and topical. It will provide something of interest to the holders of actively used collections, whilst also providing a forum to bring in additional collection holders, helping to widen the network in Scotland.
3. In collaboration with the Scotia Agricultural Club, SCRR sought to promote interest among young people in the opportunities and challenges associated with the land-based industries. The target audience for an essay competition was secondary school pupils and the competition has been promulgated to schools through Education Scotland, Scottish Association of Geography Teachers and Scottish Schools Education Research Centre. Regrettably the response was nil which has caused a rethink of both the target audience and the nature of the competition. It may be that a future initiative should take place in collaboration with organisations such as the Royal Highland Educational Trust who are seeking to do the same thing and to target primary schools making use of digital techniques and social media.
4. The annual Peter Wilson Lecture was given by Prof Roger Crofts on “Scotland’s land: successes and failures, challenges and solutions”. It attracted a capacity audience and discussion which could have gone on beyond the allocated time. Next year’s Peter Wilson Lecture will be given by Francesca Osowska, the relatively new Chief Executive of SNH. There is a move that I share to move away from a didactic lecture to something that has a greater degree of dialogue. Francesca will be talking around “Environmental Leadership in Scotland”.
5. Membership of the consortium is expanding slowly though there are still significant gaps in the coverage across Scotland, most notably in the Glasgow area. One of the challenges facing the Consortium as we move forward is how to engage more effectively with stakeholders outwith the central belt.
6. After a protracted appointment process, Professor Andrew Millar, Director of Research for Biological Sciences at the University of Edinburgh has been appointed as the Scottish Government's Chief Scientific Adviser for Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. He will provide scientific advice on issues such as the environment, agriculture and the wider rural economy. This appointment is most welcome and will hopefully align scientific evidence with policy in the area of Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

7. **Scientific Director role and challenges for the future:** I am delighted to be able to hand over the role of Scientific Director to Prof Sarah Skerratt following a rigorous appointment process. Her role in SRUC and her connection with rural policy will be a great asset in developing the future role of SCRR. The landscape is becoming more cluttered with network organisations which often overlap in their activities. A challenge for the future will be exploring the distinctiveness of SCRR and defining its place as networks and collaborations become more important.
8. **Thanks:** As I conclude my report I wish to record my thanks to the many members of the consortium with whom I have worked over the last 10 years, the Directors, members of the Executive committee and particularly the three secretary/treasurers, Mike Talbot, Alastair Macdonald and Willie Donachie who have been a joy to work with. Also, to Mary Bownes and Jonathon Seckl as chairs of the Main Board who have always succeeded in being both supportive and challenging. Finally, can I wish my successor every success in the role. Sarah has worked with SCRR in the past so knows it well and will, I'm sure define a new pathway for SCRR.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart K. Monroe', written over a horizontal line.

Prof Stuart K Monroe, Scientific Director