



Scottish Consortium  
for Rural Research

## MINUTE OF THE 58<sup>H</sup> MAIN BOARD MEETING (ANNUAL BOARD MEETING) OF THE SCRR HELD ON 13TH NOVEMBER 2019, AT UHI, AN LÒCHRAN, 10 INVERNESS CAMPUS, INVERNESS, IV2 5NA

### Present:

Prof Sarah Skerratt, Chair (SRUC)  
Prof Willie Donachie (Secretary and Treasurer))  
Prof Mark Brewer (BioSS)  
Prof Nick Fraser(NMS)  
Melanie Smith (UHI)

Dr Annis Richardson (UoE)  
Celia Delguin (UHI)  
Ejaz Hussain (UoE)

### Apologies:

Prof Jonathan Seckl (UoE)  
Prof David Argyle (RDSVS, UoE)  
Prof Colin Campbell (James Hutton Institute)  
Prof David Gray (UoE)  
Prof Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)  
Prof Julie Fitzpatrick (MRI)  
Prof David Hopkins (SRUC)  
Prof Geoff Smith

Prof Lee Innes (Moredun )  
Prof Martin Price (UHI)  
Prof Eleanor Riley (Roslin)  
Dr Chris Quine (FR)  
Prof Des Thomson (SNH)  
Prof Gerry Saddler (SASA)  
Prof Wayne Powell (SRUC)  
Prof David Miller (JHI)  
Prof Karen Halliday

1. **Welcome:** The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.
2. **Minutes of the 57<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Main Board:** These were accepted as a true record of the meeting.
3. **Matters arising:** The matters arising from the 57<sup>th</sup> Meeting were noted as action points in the minutes.
4. **Scientific Director's Report (SS)** See Appendix 1
5. **SCRR membership (SS):** see Scientific Director's Report, Appendix 1
6. **Minutes of Executive Committee meeting ()**  
The minutes of the Executive Committee meetings Nos Nos 136, 137, 138, 139, 140 were made available for the meeting.

**7. Membership of the SCRR Executive:**

The membership has changed over the year with the retiral of Professor Steve Yearley from his position as Chair. Professor Geoff Simm was appointed as the new Chair. Re-election of Executive Committee members: Sarah Skerratt and Willie Donachie agreed to serve another term until November 2020. Prof Jonathan Seckl also agreed to serve for another term from June 2020. Dr Kathy Velandar was elected to serve until 2022.

**8. Finances & Secretary's report**

- **Finances 2018-2019:** Copies of the Audited Accounts for the 2018-19 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:** Due to the pressure on time this item was passed over.

**10. AOB:** None

**11. Date of next Board meeting:** A date in November 2020 will be sought.



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## SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT NOVEMBER 2019

1. **Thanks for 2018/19:** I was deeply honoured to succeed Prof Stuart Monro as SCRR Scientific Director in November 2018. I have learned so much from Stuart's inspiring leadership, have been strongly supported and guided by Willie Donachie as I have been "learning the ropes", and have really enjoyed working with the Executive team in our regular meetings. I have also been delighted to learn about SCRR members' world-leading science at our Members' locations across Scotland, and have been delighted at the kind hospitality we have received at delicious Directors' lunches! Sincere thanks to all for making my first year in post so rewarding and enjoyable, and I very much look forward to serving, and working with, the Chair, Board, Executive and Members in the 2019/2020 year ahead.
2. **Joint Scotia/SCRR "post-Brexit" Debate at the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), February 2019:**
  - a. The two presenters were David Barnes, National Adviser on Agricultural Policy, Scottish Government and Steven Thomson, Senior Agricultural Economist, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). There was a very wide-ranging discussion, including around "food security and food sovereignty". Conclusion is that much uncertainty remained.
3. **Peter Wilson Lecture, May 2019:**
  - a. Francesca Osowska OBE, Chief Executive of Scottish Natural Heritage set out some challenges and opportunities on how nature must be at the heart of decision-making in Scotland. An invited panel responded to the lecture: *Louise Macdonald OBE, Chief Executive, Young Scot; Professor Colin Campbell FRSE, Chief Executive, James Hutton Institute; Mike Robinson HFRCS, Chief Executive, Royal Scottish Geographical Society; Martin Valenti, Strategic Director, Scottish Land Commission.* This was followed by a plenary discussion on issues raised and potential solutions. *The Vote of Thanks was given by Prof Sarah Skerratt as SCRR Scientific Director.*
4. **Interviews with SCRR Members – thematic analysis of interviews to date:**

### **SCRR Member organisations that we have spoken with (to 13.11.19):**

- University of Stirling (Natural Sciences; Biological and Environmental Sciences; Aquaculture);
- Moredun Research Institute;
- Forest Research;
- University of Highlands and Islands (including: SAMS [Oban]; Inverness College; Perth College; West Highland College; Institute for Northern Studies [Orkney]; Archaeology Institute [Orkney]; Environmental Research Institute [North Highland College, Thurso]).

### **Theme 1: Members' beneficial experience of SCRR to date:**

- A powerful, neutral network in tying together members, pulling people together.
- *Access and intelligence:*
  - SCRR brings benefits of meeting others that would not otherwise be possible, particularly from research and other institutes – beyond the “usual suspects”, beyond the central belt.
  - SCRR gives participation in Scottish research community that would not otherwise have, because do not have direct input to research programmes, RESAS.
  - Also intelligence that you gather from the networks, from the brief “round the table” updates, presentations and site visits. “For those not in a club, it’s assumed that you know”.
- *Newsletter:*
  - Excellent, and very visual; well laid out and informative;
  - Hard copy essential;
  - Good coverage from across Scotland to items would not otherwise know about;
  - You don’t know what you don’t know until you see it!
  - We know there is a big distribution list, and being part of the SCRR Newsletter helps us to communicate our value to a wider network.

### **Theme 2: Suggestions and proposals for taking SCRR forward**

#### **1. Being strategic and planning for impact:**

- a. Ask ourselves where we want to be in 5 years’ time, and how would we design SCRR to achieve that impact? What would be our pathways to impact? And how do we set things up in order to be able to have evidence to tell that story in 5 years’ time?

#### **2. Inclusion:**

- a. *Geography:*
  - i. SCRR has the opportunity to be inclusive: “there are an awful lot voices not being heard in rural”; and where we host the meetings will shape who we hear.
  - ii. Assess how “Scottish” SCRR is managing to be.
- b. *Early Career Researchers (ECRs):*
  - i. SCRR could organise the Scottish Crucible for younger scientists;
  - ii. Rebrand the Directors’ Lunch – call it “SCRR Networking Lunch” or “Consortium Lunch”, and deliberately target ECRs (along with others) – they don’t bring the baggage, and that helps collaboration.
  - iii. Universities Scotland has an R&D Training Committee that focuses on all matters to do with PhDs in Scotland; SCRR could make a link with them.
  - iv. Collaborate with RSE’s Young Academy of Scotland.

#### **3. Growing in order to become a collective voice with advocacy role:**

- a. SCRR has the scope to be \*the\* voice for rural science in Scotland – a voice for us collectively, representing a broad network of scientists;

- b. Opportunity to “insert ourselves into political space” more by garnering views of SCRR members on critical issues, e.g. via a survey or phone calls;
- c. Greater policy influence whilst not compromising independence. Link to social policy too; extend reach and significance;
- d. Also an opportunity to “sell” the benefits of science to the public and to policy, through public and policy engagement: “What has science done for us?” SCRR can major on its independence and the broad membership of rural partners

**4. Link with other rural networks:**

- a. Questions about interactions between SCRR and CAMERAS partners, SEFARI, Scottish Rural Network, Heather Trust etc.;
- b. Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has just carried out a review of “research pools”. Could SCRR offer to use a pool-type approach?
- c. Add charities, NGOs, industry

**5. Seminars for virtual and face-to-face connections, and ideas-development:**

- a. Organise a seminar series via VC; link into SNH, UHI etc.; could use Skype for Business; questions via Twitter; can arrange them as webinars, advertise on website, and record the presentation.
- b. Use technology to overcome barriers; use it for seminars AND to join meetings in Edinburgh from remoter rural locations;
- c. Thematic discussions with opportunity for members to propose topics;
- d. Short seminars of people’s own research areas, public and recorded;
- e. Promotion of stronger collaboration, e.g. place-based and/or cross-sectoral research bids;
- f. Link with international examples;
- g. Periodic conferences with workshops to develop shared research proposals, and tasks to develop between conferences;
- h. Quote: “We are in disparate areas, geographically and in terms of subjects (within rural). It is always good to make new connections, and very helpful to understand others’ work. In remoter rural areas, it has to be a self-conscious act of network, otherwise it does not happen. Regular communication is an opportunity for cross-fertilisation and project work”.

**6. Publicity:**

- a. Poster and flyer for members, so that we can advertise SCRR in our workplaces.

**7. Newsletter:**

- a. Try to include more work that is (i) applied, (ii) social science-based, (iii) focused on recreation and wellbeing within rural Scotland; (iv) marine “rural” rather than only land-based “rural”;

**8. Conference “offers” in 2020:**

- a. SAMS 2020 Challenger Conference – could have an SCRR component, e.g. around Marine Coastal Environments. “Festival of the Oceans”;
- b. St Magnus Conference, Shetland 14-16 April 2020 – rural research, plus publication.

**Theme 3: What the members can bring to SCRR (learning, experience, networks)**

1. Experience of delivering cross-institutional and cross-partner transdisciplinary research.
2. Delivering to the “grand challenges” which means interdisciplinary working and “ditching the divisions”.
3. Using digital technology to reach further:
  - a. Outreach via videoconference.
4. Focus on Early Career Researchers, succession:
  - a. Early Career Crucible Workshops.

**5. Preparation for mini-conference in November 2019**

- a. This has been a team effort from Willie Donachie, Martin Price, Catriona Clark (SRUC, based at Inverness venue) and Celia Delugin (one of the ECR presenters). Many thanks to them in supporting this new venture!
- b. There are sixteen ECR poster submissions, with invitations to the lunchtime gathering reaching 40+ stakeholders in Inverness region, across public, private and third sectors.
- c. Prizes will be given for the Best Poster, a Scholar Award, plus a Certificate of Participation for all those who presented their poster.

**6. Preparation for Peter Wilson Lecture 2020:**

- a. The Executive Committee has been very happy to move forward with the idea of supporting young people to host/run the 2020 PWL.
- b. Willie Donachie and Sarah Skerratt will be meeting the CEO of the RSE in mid-December to discuss how to involve the RSE Young Academy of Scotland and other appropriate partners in reshaping the Debate “offering”.