

## SCOTTISH CONSORTIUM FOR RURAL RESEARCH

The 119th meeting of the SCRR Executive Committee was held at  
Moredun, Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Midlothian EH26 0PZ  
on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Present:

Stuart Monro (Chair & Scientific Director)  
Nick Fraser  
Kathy Velandar  
Ruth Wolstenholme  
Willie Donachie  
Alastair A Macdonald (Secretary/Treasurer)

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

Apologies were received from Colin Campbell, Ian Bainbridge and Martin Price.

**2. Minutes of 118th executive meeting**

Accepted as accurate.

**3. Minutes of the 51<sup>st</sup> Board meeting**

Noted for information.

**4. Centres of Excellence and Networks: update on all networks**

**Sniffer**

Ruth reported that Sniffer continues to have a strong focus on climate and adaptation and through the Adaptation Scotland programme will be running training events in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness for the public sector. Sniffer is also looking to further develop its work on flood risk, and the interface between policy makers and practitioners, working with local authorities, SEPA and SNH, drawing on research and good practice. Sniffer plans to explore opportunities for partnership projects in a number of sectors/places including in the food sector, which could explore the resilience of food supply chains nationally and internationally. Willie indicated that a large proportion of the animal protein was being produced in this country, but that perhaps other sectors of UK food supply were not 'home generated' (<http://www.scurr.ac.uk/events.php>). Stuart drew attention to the expansion of Scottish salmon exports, with £50m now to China [According to the NFUS, the value of Scottish food exports is currently £400 million, rising to £2.4 billion if whisky exports are included; the Global Connections Survey (GCS) estimates the total food and drink manufacturing exports from Scotland to be £7.7 billion in 2011, with 55% going abroad]. Sniffer is also making links with the 2020 climate group including their land and forestry sub-group to strengthen adaptation in their agenda; Sniffer is keen to reinforce the link between low carbon and being climate ready - and to promote the importance of

adaptation. Sniffer will be moving to ECCI in High School Yards, Infirmary Street in mid April, and thereby become part of that 'knowledge-brokering hub of innovation'.

### **The James Hutton Institute**

[recent news on the JHI website includes: as part of the Edinburgh Science Festival, at Summerhall arts venue in Edinburgh, a farmers market will be held with a scientific twist, SciMart will bring together food producers, researchers and chefs to reveal the fascinating science behind some of our favourite foodstuffs; crop scientists are looking into how seed potato becomes infected with the pathogen that causes blackleg, one of the most serious worries for potato growers across Europe; JHI is joining forces with the Scottish Association of Young Farmers to find the Best Soil in Show at the Royal Highland Show and raise awareness about the importance of soils; the UK E-CLIC landscape competition is looking for ideas and projects from secondary school pupils, university students and the general public on how to use communications and technology to help protect our landscapes; An FP7 funded project is giving policy makers across Europe a helping hand to identify ways to reach farmers with new information and rethink advisory services.]

### **Moredun**

Willie reported that HRH The Princess Royal had visited Moredun last month (20 February) to attend a special event "Challenges in the prevention and control of livestock disease in a changing climate". The event marked the launch of the International Knowledge Transfer and Exchange (KTE) Hub for Livestock Health and Welfare. This hub aims to develop further Moredun's existing international partnerships and collaborations to engage with others across the world to help combat livestock disease. The new Hub will help to facilitate collaborative research projects, workshops, research placements, staff exchanges and the use of new communication technologies to enable independent knowledge about prevention and control of livestock disease to be made as widely accessible in order to benefit all that may need it. Moredun is also establishing closer links with other universities in Edinburgh. Benchmark Animal Health (BAH), which makes vaccines for cattle, chickens, pigs, sheep and fish to boost animal health and food production have begun to fit out their manufacturing plant on the Biocampus at Easter Bush. BAH are currently collaborating with Moredun Research Institute on research into novel vaccines for infectious fish diseases. There was a brief discussion of further development of the Easter Bush Research Campus.

### **National Museums of Scotland**

Nick reported that he was currently having discussions about the redevelopment of the Playfair Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. It is proposed that the 'Monro Project' will lead to some of the anatomical reference collections of the NMS joining those of the University of Edinburgh's Anatomy and Dick Vet material in the building

adjacent to the Royal College of Surgeons. It is due to be opened in phases from 2015-2017. It is expected to become a large museum in Edinburgh, open to the public and for both undergraduate and postgraduate education. Nick indicated that these biomedical links would feature as an integral and relevant part of the forthcoming developments of the museum. The unification of the comparative anatomy links between all three institutions will close an Edinburgh 'circle' with a 300 year history.

## 5 Events in 2013

Kathy reported on the Nature-based Tourism Seminar held on the 16th December at Dynamic Earth. There had been a wide range of participants from the charity/freelance/nature sector as well as from the business/tourism sector. A list of 27 actions were generated by the meeting, and the results of the first stage of the research output were distributed. It is hoped that a summary of the final strategic document will be available to be put in the next edition of the Newsletter. Willie asked about the likely possible effectiveness of the final report. Kathy indicated that she thought that real interest in the results had been expressed. Ruth asked if the impact of climate change had been discussed, as she was not aware of any other examination of this question. It had not been directly dealt with. This was discussed in relation to recent amounts of snow in the hills and rain in the south and the absence of adequate infrastructure to deal with these. Action KV/AAM

Stuart reported that no additional questions had resulted from the discussion topics brought to the Board Meeting on the 13th January.

The Annual lecture on 10 February 2014 was given by Dr Alan Belward and was felt to be superb. Discussions had taken place with the Institute of Biology and the RSE concerning their shared financial commitment to the lecture, and are on going. The committee discussed various financial options, but felt that it was very important to maintain the quality and annual nature of the lectures. Stuart reported a suggested name for the speaker for next year, and that was approved. Action SKM

### Workshops

Stuart reported that SNH were in the process of arranging a citizen Science workshop in Battleby entitled: *Citizen Science – volunteer engagement in environmental monitoring* on Thursday 8th May (<http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A1236707.pdf>).

Stuart reported that the success of the Metagenomics Forum had attracted interest in having a 'follow-up' meeting. It was agreed that Liz Fletcher (Research Development Manager Centre for Synthetic and Systems Biology School of Biological Sciences, Kings Buildings, University of Edinburgh) should be contacted to follow up her suggestion and offer to assist with the organisation of this. Action WD, CC, SKM, AAM

Stuart indicated that there was something happening with the proposed Clyde Basin catchment. [Diarmid indicated during the Research Lunch that this would be a specialist meeting - see: [http://www.bgs.ac.uk/science/landUseAndDevelopment/urban\\_geoscience/clyde/](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/science/landUseAndDevelopment/urban_geoscience/clyde/)].

Kathy indicated that there was a call out from ScotGov for bids information on the economic impacts of Marine Tourism. The 3rd International Marine Conservation Congress will be held in Glasgow, at the at the Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre from 14-18 August 2014 (<http://imber.info/index.php/Meetings/IMBER-Relevant-Meetings/meetings-2014/August-2014/3rd-International-Marine-Conservation-Congress-14-18-August-2014-Glasgow-Scotland-UK>). Nick drew attention to the EC call for bids on the topic of Ocean Literacy. 'The development of the new maritime economy can have important socioeconomic consequences in coastal areas and in the marine space (synergies and/or conflicts of use between old and new activities). These developments, together with the pressures from human activities and climate change on the marine environment, make it crucial to engage with citizens and stakeholders about seas and ocean challenges.'

## 5 **Membership**

Glasgow University has joined the Consortium, with the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Science and the College of Social Sciences being active participants. The archaeology representation at the Cairngorms meeting suggested that the merged Historic Scotland/Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments might also become part of the SCRR, and this is being actively explored. Stuart suggested that one way that this might be furthered is to have a small meeting to discuss the impact of Archaeology on the Rural Environment and Tourism.  
Action SKM/AAM

## 6 **Finances**

The Treasurer reported that the Consortium is in good financial shape. Costs have been kept in check. The reserve is currently larger than the income for one year. However, he will be chasing up those who have not yet responded to particular invoices sent out in the past. Action AAM

## 7 **Contacts**

Two weeks ago the Scottish Science Advisory Council published its paper on Big Data and Data Science in Scotland. The purpose of this paper was to provide an overview of the Scottish context, activities and initiatives in big data and data science, and to indicate questions and issues for discussion. The paper consists of four sections. First, some context for big data and data science is given, including the relationship between big data, open data and open government. Second, an overview of recent Scottish government policy developments in big data and data science is given. Third there is an overview of the major initiatives and activities in Scotland. These are focussed on four areas: scientific research and

research infrastructure, health and medical research, public sector information, and innovation centres and training. Finally, a number of questions and issues for discussion are raised, for example concerning overlaps and gaps, and relations to UK, EU and international initiatives and activities. Further details of all the activities are given in the Appendices. There is also a *Caveat*: The Scottish landscape is changing rapidly, and so the document outlines only those initiatives that have been announced or approved to date.  
(<http://www.scottishscience.org.uk/article/ssac-paper-big-data-and-data-science-scotland>).

Stuart reported that there is now a closer alignment between Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and the University of Edinburgh and that they have announced that they are exploring a closer degree of collaboration. It is envisaged that SRUC would retain its identity and mission. This would specifically include the complete range of education currently on offer that both SRUC and the University of Edinburgh realise is vital to Scotland's rural economy.

**8 Publicity and Communications**

The Secretary reported that the website had been updated and that updating would continue. The Spring Newsletter had required an extra day to dry and so its delivery to the RSE missed the 10th February deadline. The printers were very apologetic. The International Year of Family Farming will continue to be the underlying theme for this year. The next issue will be distributed at the Highland Show. The distribution list had been expanded to include additional copies for all current and potential future Consortium member organisations as well as all Westminster Scottish MPs and all MSPs. The print run will therefore be increased to 1000 for the Summer edition and raised to 800 for the other two issues. The committee expressed agreement with Stuart that it was glad to have maintained the paper copy as it was found to be available to the general public in many different places

Action AAM

**9 Residual matters from the minutes of the 118<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

None.

**10 Any other business.**

None.

**11 Date and place of next meeting.**

Executive meeting: - 26<sup>th</sup> May 2014, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh EH14 4AS