

SCOTTISH CONSORTIUM FOR RURAL RESEARCH

The 121st meeting of the SCRR Executive Committee was held at
RSPB Scotland Headquarters, 2 Lochside View, Edinburgh EH12 9DH
on Monday 27th October 2014

Present:

Steve Yearley	(Chair)
Stuart Monro	(Scientific Director)
Ian Bainbridge	
Nick Fraser	
John Oldham	
Martin Price	
Ruth Wolstenholme	
Alastair A Macdonald	(Secretary/Treasurer)

1 Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were received from Colin Campbell, Willie Donachie and Kathy Velander

2 Minutes of 120th executive meeting

Accepted as accurate.

3 Matters arising from 52nd Board meeting

Points are dealt with elsewhere on the agenda

4 Centres of Excellence and Networks: update on all networks

Sniffer

Ruth indicated that a current aspect of Sniffer's work is on partnership working including health and wellbeing and climate resilience, and working with an existing partnership to include adaptation is the

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere.

<http://www.gallowayandsouthernayrshirebiosphere.org.uk> **Through the Adaptation Scotland programme** they are running an adaptation learning exchange and working with community facing organisations, to increase rural and urban adaptation in the programmes and activities of these organisations. One aim of the activities, particularly through the partnership approach, is to identify knowledge gaps and research needs.

SRUC

John reported that positive discussions with the University of Edinburgh were progressing slowly. Governance and due diligence issues continued to be the focus of attention although requests were being made for more attention to be paid to academic matters. Some form of association is

hoped for by summer 2015. All MRPs have been through their mid-term reviews.

Ian commented that whereas the Centres of Expertise had been well received, the strategic partnerships appear to have performed less well; perhaps these will disappear from 2016. Perhaps there will be one or two more Centres of Expertise. John indicated that work had commenced preparing for the next five year plan (2016-). John drew attention to the evolution of Horizon 2020

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/home.html> and commented that he hoped as many people as possible were feeding information in as part of European networks to inform thinking in Brussels.

In answer to the question of whether there would be any change in the structure of SRUC as it maps onto the structure of the University of Edinburgh, e.g. with respect to the strong Social Policy and Social Sciences group, Steve commented that there was nobody doing the kind of work in Social Sciences at Edinburgh University of the type that was being done in SRUC. John replied that there might be very little change and that SRUC could possibly remain an entity, rather like the Roslin Institute. It would probably become part of the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. How to accommodate the further education element of SRUC's remit is an aspect unusual to the University, as is the management of a large consulting wing (ca. £20+million per year). There is nothing to prevent collaborative discussion between different research interests of the parties at the moment.

Stuart drew attention to the intention of SCRR to host an array of research posters to help inform the discussions to be held at the meeting on the 29th October in the MacDonald Hotel arising out of SRUC's Rural Policy Centre's 3rd report, *Rural Scotland in Focus 2014* (http://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120428/rural_scotland_in_focus). Due to a series of time and other circumstances this had regrettably not been possible. [Preliminary report of the meeting at: http://www.sruc.ac.uk/news/article/1042/successful_rural_scotland_refocused_event].

Stuart went on to comment that Susan Davies, Head of RESAS, had asked him to chair the mid-term review of the RBGE.

CAMERAS

Ian indicated that the next CAMERAS Board meeting was on the on 6th November. The CAMERAS Rural Affairs and the Environment Research Strategy 2016-2021 has been completed (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/05/6251/downloads>) [Ian please check that this is the correct URL]. Nine Evidence Plans are going to be developed over the next 12 months. The Monitoring Strategy is continuing to develop its monitoring action plans. It was asked if CAMERAS would be more involved with MRPs. The MRPs would be

required to consult with CAMERAS. Linda Pooley will be taking over as Deputy Director of RESAS.

There was a brief discussion of the post-referendum political climate and its possible impact on rural research and its funding in Scotland.

Social Sciences

Steve briefly reviewed the history of his involvement with the SCRR as a member of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Edinburgh. He is now housed in Science, Technology and Innovation Studies, which is interested in Science Policy, Innovation Studies and Science in Society issues. He would like to develop the theme of the SCRR 'Ruralities' conference further. He also commented on the organisation and plans of SKAPE (Science, Knowledge and Policy). Co-directed by Steve and Christina Boswell, it is interested in critical reflection on the way that scientific evidence is used in policy-making processes and the image of policy-making that scientists and the scientific community often has.

There is an international studies programme of visiting fellows who comprise a network called SKAPE NET. It was suggested that there should be a short article for the SCRR Newsletter to briefly introduce SKAPE to members of the SCRR such as JHI and SRUC. Action SY

Ian drew attention to the British Ecological Society and its Policy Network chaired by Rob Brooker of the JHI. They held a daylong forum introducing young scientists to Policy. Also *J. Applied Ecology* 2014, 51, 1153-1158.

Other

Ruth mentioned the potential new Scottish Funding Council financed Centre for Research on Resilience – with an exploratory meeting being held on 29 October.

Martin drew attention to ESCOM and the SCRR offer of support in the holding of a research meeting. Action AAM

5 Events

Annual Lecture 2015

Stuart reported that discussions had taken place with the Society of Biology (SOB) and the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) concerning the shared financial commitment to the 2015 annual Peter Wilson lecture. The topic will be some aspect of 'Food Security'. The Executive committee agreed it was very important to maintain the quality and annual nature of this lecture. Action SKM

Workshops

The Metagenomics II workshop has been scheduled for Spring 2015. Stuart indicated that we are looking for meetings that are being organised by members of the consortium that we can assist and co-badge. The Spring ESCOM meeting being proposed is one such. It had been proposed

to prepare a set of research posters to be shown in advance of the SRUC meeting on Tuesday, but for a variety of reasons that project had not been carried forward. There are several ideas that are being explored.

Action SKM

6 **Membership**

Consortium membership

Stuart reported that he is quite keen to get the University of St Andrews back into the consortium, as well as those of Dundee and Aberdeen. Emails have been received to indicate that Willie Donachie will be retiring soon and that Brian Austin at Stirling University will be retiring in 2015. It is hoped that an SCRR Directors' Research lunch and meeting can be held there in 2015 to bring into the consortium other members of staff of Stirling University. Willie's place on the executive committee will require consideration. John indicated that he had been standing in for Geoff Simm who will now take his place on the Executive Committee. Indeed a number of other members of the executive committee have come to the end of their term and this issue will need to be addressed at the next Board meeting. Comments were made that the gender and ethnic balance of the committee needed to be addressed. Some helpful comments were made at previous Executive and Board meetings in this respect.

Action All

Secretary/Treasurer replacement

It is urgent that a replacement is found for the current Secretary/Treasurer who has had to resign due to major reconstruction work disrupting his living and working environment in Edinburgh. The advice was that all members of SCRR should be requested to help find this person, perhaps someone on early retirement or in part-time employment. The workload has been equivalent to about one day per week. There is a job description that will need revision. An advert can be put into the SCRR Newsletter that is currently being assembled.

Action AAM

An email from the Chairman of the Executive to the Directors seeking suggestion of people to fill this post was agreed.

Action SY

7 **Finances**

The Treasurer reported that approximately £26,000 was in the bank account. This represents about 100% of the annual income, a figure deemed to be an appropriate buffer in order to cope with fluctuation in cash flow, as had occurred last year. The accounts are almost ready to go out for annual inspection. The invoices for membership subscriptions had been sent out together with a request that these be paid before the end of the calendar year 2014.

Action All

8 **Contacts**

The Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC) update was published in October (see appendix 1 and <http://www.scottishscience.org.uk/>). Stuart recommended that members should arrange to be notified of these updates by email. Action All

SSAC are currently looking at 'Scientific Infrastructure and Scotland's needs and requirements for the future' and are requesting feedback. The Chief Scientific Adviser in Scotland, Prof Muffy Calder is moving back into Glasgow University. That post will be advertised in the near future. He also reported that there is a call (on the SSAC website) for nine new members of the SSAC and he encouraged members of the SCRR to consider applying. Action All

9 **Publicity and Communications**

The Secretary reported that he was astonished that there had been a uniquely slow response to his request for material for the Newsletter. The question of the reported scale of hunger among Scottish children (24%) was raised. Enough material was now anticipated to arrive by the new deadline of the end of October. This edition of the Newsletter will be prepared and distributed before the end of November. Action AAM

A draft design for the SCRR banner pop-up had been prepared and would be circulated for comments and suggestions. Action AAM

The website will be updated this week. Action AAM

10 **Residual matters from the minutes of the 119th meeting.**

None

11 **Any other business.**

Stuart is retiring from Dynamic Earth on Friday.

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

Board meeting: - Wednesday 14th January 2015, British Geological Survey, Murchiston House, West Mains Road, Edinburgh, EH9 3LA

Appendix 1: SSAC Update Report - October 2014