



Scottish Consortium
for Rural Research

MINUTE OF THE 123RD MEETING OF THE SCRR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 4TH MAY 2015 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

Present:

Prof Steve Yearley (Chair, Executive Committee)
Prof Stuart K Monro (Scientific Director)
Prof Willie Donachie (Secretary/Treasurer)
Dr Nick Fraser (NMS)
Prof Nick Sparks (SRUC for Prof Geoff Simm)
Dr Kathy Velander (Edinburgh Napier University)
Ruth Wolstenholme (SNIFFER)

Apologies:

Dr Ian Bainbridge (SNH)
Prof Colin Campbell (James Hutton Institute)
Prof Martin Price (Centre for Mountain Studies, UHI)
Prof Geoff Simm (SRUC)

- 1. Welcome & Apologies:** Prof Yearley welcomed those present and particularly Prof Nick Sparks who was standing in for Prof Simm.
- 2. Minutes and matters arising from 122nd executive meeting:** The minute was approved and all matters arising were covered in other agenda items.
- 3. Centres of Excellence and Networks: update on all networks**
 - 3.1 Moredun:** The bids for the Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS) Scientific programme 2016-2021, which affects other members of SCRR such as SRUC, James Hutton Institute and BioSS, have now been submitted. Flat funding is forecast for this. A major change from previous rounds is the insistence by Government on a single Knowledge Exchange point for the Programme rather than at individual organisation level. This is expected to raise the visibility of the outcomes due to Government funding.
 - 3.2 Sniffer - knowledge brokers for a resilient Scotland:**
 - The European Climate Adaptation Conference will come to the SECC in Glasgow in June 2017. There will be site visits associated with this.
 - Sniffer have been working with the City Council in Glasgow along with other partners such as Borders Regional Council looking at community resilience in the face of climate change. KV highlighted an upcoming initiative between an Estonian group, Napier and Hutton looking at the interaction between tourism and community resilience.
 - Also in Glasgow there is a Social Enterprise initiative looking at a sustainable water campus.
 - Sniffer is working with Transport Scotland, Scottish Government and SEPA on a low emissions strategy. This is not just about environmental monitoring but also health and wellbeing.
 - Sniffer is looking for a new Chair. The advert has been circulated.
 - 3.3 SRUC:** The submission of the new Science programme for the Scottish Government has been the main concern recently. Also the ongoing merger with the University of Edinburgh with August 2016 being the likeliest date for this to complete. A number of new groups, academic and governance, have been set up to facilitate this and are looking at areas of commonality etc.

3.4 CAMERAS: No report on this.

3.5 Social Sciences: SY reported on developments at UoE. Although there is not a strong focus on rural policy there is an interest in agriculture. For instance in relation to climate change there is an active area examining farmer's understanding about the interchange between knowledge and policy. UoE are increasing the teaching areas in relation to food related issues such as food certification, food technology.

3.6 Other:

- Round Table meeting by invitation at the University of Stirling on 30th June on Rural-Urban Interactions. This has been moved from the original date and venue on the 9th June in Perth to enable a more representative group of scientists to attend. This is being organised by SRUC and take up is looking good.
- SSAC – Closing date is now passed for applications for the new Chief Scientific Advisor post. Hopefully a number of good candidates have applied. Following this appointment it is expected that the almost all of the existing Council will be replaced and it would be beneficial for SCRR if the representation of rural environment is increased during this change. This is likely to occur by the autumn
- Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF): NF informed the Committee about a very successful Symposium at Battleby in April involving recorder groups to look at a unified and agreed method of recording and verifying records. Progress is being made here. John Sawyer from the National Biodiversity Network (NBDN) made a presentation on the work of NBDN Gateway. There is a possibility of getting historic records onto the NBDN Gateway.
- Edinburgh Plant Science (EPS) Group: SM attended a meeting of the EPS on the 1st May and SCRR supported the meeting by funding refreshments. Karen Halliday is the contact for EPS. A number of SCRR members are also in this group. One interesting item to come from this is the existence of a number of networks which are interacting with each other. A roadmap of these various networks would be beneficial and SCRR should publicise these for members.
- Ecosystems Science (ESCOM): ECCI on 7th – 8th May 2015. A main speaker will be Rachel Chisolm, project manager for OPERAs, a European project which aims to bridge the gap between Ecosystems science and practice.
- World Natural Capital Forum: Scotland will host this later this November. They are looking for Scottish case study submissions.
- All the above should be listed on the SCRR website.

4. Events

4.1 Annual Lecture 2016: RSE is still considering the proposal for Ann Glover to be the 2016 speaker. The IOB are not going to support the lecture in future but SCRR will go ahead with the RSE on a 50:50 basis. If it does not work out for Prof Glover then a possible alternative is Andrew Pullen (Evidence Based Conservation). He would also be a viable proposition for 2017. This was agreed by the Committee.

4.2 Workshops:

A number of possible future workshops were discussed.

- **Extremophiles** - This could include astrobiology, marine, vulcanology. Fragile environments may also come in here.
- **Land Reform** - Impact on rural industries and communities. Sustainable land use.
- **Systems Biology** – Veterinary and Ecosystems
- **Conflicts in Rural Communities** – There are a range of issues which fall into this category such as wind power siting, quarries, mountain biking, offshore installations.
- **Grid Issues** – Minigrids, Grid infrastructure,
- **Sustainable Development Goals** – A government announcement is imminent so a workshop could be timely.

SM will collate the information and contacts mentioned above to be further discussed at the next meeting

5. Membership

5.1 Consortium: Nothing to report on new members.

5.2 Executive Committee: The membership of the committee needs to be increased by at least two. The current listing will be circulated to the Committee. Consideration will be given to addressing the gender balance within the Committee.

Suggestions for additional members include Plant Science but if any members have suggestions please forward to SM.

6. Finances

- The finances are in good shape and the transfer of banking authority to WD is underway.
- The AGM is now an annual event with the date still to be decided. This will be dependent on the financial information being ready.

7. Publicity and Communications

7.1 SCRR Website: The transfer from Alastair MacDonald is in progress.

7.2 SCRR Newsletter: The summer issue of the Newsletter is planned for distribution at the Royal Highland Show in June. Members will be asked for contributions. SM indicated that members had been asked to forward a list of networks relevant to their organisations in order to draw up a roadmap of interactions for publication on the website and in the Newsletter. SY proposed that a student could be employed to carry out this task and this was agreed by the Committee.

8. Any other business: No other business.

9. Date and place of next Executive meeting

This is still to be arranged for August.