



Scottish Consortium
for Rural Research

MINUTE OF THE 128TH MEETING OF THE SCRR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 8TH SEPTEMBER 2016 AT THE OLD SURGEONS HALL, THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, EH1 1LZ

Present:

Prof Steve Yearley (Chair)
Prof Stuart K Monro (Scientific Director)
Prof Willie Donachie (Secretary/Treasurer)
Prof Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)
Ruth Wolstenholme (Sniffer)
Dr Nick Fraser (NMS)
Prof Wayne Powell (SRUC) joined at 10.22h
Prof Martin Price (Centre for Mountain Studies, (UHI) Joined at 10.15h

Apologies:

Prof Geoff Simm (SRUC)
Prof Lee Innes (MRI)
Prof David Miller (JHI)
Dr Kevin O'Donnell (SASA)
Dr Kathy Velandar (Edinburgh Napier University)

1. **Welcome & Apologies:** SY welcomed those present.
2. **Minutes and matters arising from 127th Executive meeting:**
Agreed
3. **Centres of Excellence and Networks: update on all networks**
 - 3.1. **CAMERAS:** The following report was submitted by Kevin O' Donnell. The CAMERAS re-boot continues apace. Effort has been concentrated on formalising the relationship with the Scottish Government's RAFF Delivery Board. The RAFF Board was set up as a result of a recommendation from the Pack 'Red Tape' Report (<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00480885.pdf>). The idea is that CAMERAS would act as a source of science advice for the RAFF Board. As part of this a project to map national capabilities is being constructed. Also work on redefining the CAMERAS Board working relationship - core principles, goals etc.
 - 3.2. **MRI:** (WD) A new Director has been appointed to the new CKEI Centre but the name is embargoed until week beginning 12 September. Princess Anne will be visiting MRI in November.
 - 3.3. **NMS:** ((NF) A new network has) been formed, SPIRO. This comprises Scottish Earth Science researchers and includes Pete Davidson (NMS) and Charles Cockell (Ed U). This is Scottish wide and a meeting at NMS will be held in February 2017. NS described a project where surveys in regard to livestock rearing and the environmental impact on other species such as dung flies. Where there may be differences through geography and farming practise. That may have an impact on the biology of the flies.

- 3.4. RBGE; (PH)** The creation of new centre of expertise in Plant Health is currently being discussed. It involves a number of SCRR members such as RBGE, JHI, SRUC, BioSS, SASA, FR and the University of Stirling. This has a potential budget of around £750K per year and the work must integrate with the Scottish Government's Research Programme 2016-21. The main activities are Risk, solutions with a KTE wrapper around it. are to The JHI and SRUC will have co-Directorship. Although competitive it is likely only one bid will be submitted.
- 3.5. Sniffer: (RW)** Currently the organisation is working more on the solutions side rather than research side. One area is concerned with air quality, especially in urban settings and its potential impact on climate change. This involves working with local authorities and councils. On climate change there have been conversations with the public to gauge involvement and understanding and also discussions with public bodies on adaptation issues. The latter can take the form of adaptation learning exchanges. Sniffer are working with the University of Edinburgh on a bid to Horizon 2020 Fund on climate services and how these are used. There will be a European Climate Change Adaptation meeting in Glasgow 2017. RW attended a meeting organized by the Scottish Alliance for Geoscience and Environmental Sciences (SAGES). Martin Innes is the new Director of SAGES. National Centre for Resilience now being set up. The focus here will be responding to short term hazards.
- 3.6. SRUC:** The Chair welcomed Wayne Powell to the Committee meeting. WP became CEO for SRUC on 1 July 2016 and is settling into the post. His early focus is on integrating the various activities of SRUC, research with focus on translation, consultancy, the skills agenda and education. He explained his view on the future direction of SRUC to be a significant player in developing Scotland's rural economy. There is a massive opportunity to address global challenges and SRUC well placed to exploit the opportunities that a synthesis of plant and animal breeding offers. The dispersal of SRUC campuses also is a strength which has been underplayed previously.
- 3.7. Social Sciences (SY)** The new Global Academy for Agriculture and Food Security is now being set up and connections will be developed with Geoff Simm. Dr Ann Bruce is well placed to provide the links. Claire Haggart has been working on rural energy issues. The School of Social Political Science is becoming more interested in energy. A new Chancellor's Fellows has been appointed here to look at social and political components around energy. A new Masters course aligned to this is being worked up. Another scientist, Miguel Sanchez, is looking at the history of genomic sciences. PH commented that the RBGE was considering creating a permanent 'genetics garden'. WP informed the members that a Rockefeller conference on synthetic genome editing with specific focus on the societal issues is being planned. .
- 3.8. SSAC (SKM)** The new Chief Scientist, Sheila Rowan, is now in post. The SSAC is also working well.
- 3.9. UHI (MP)** A report on sustainable deer management is due to publish in December. Land reform reports concerned with ownership and management of land are also imminent. There appears to be a Scottish Government interest how Scotland relates to our northern Europe neighbours and this may be an area for SCRR expansion. Rural Transport Scotland has funded UHI projects concerned with implications of the twinning of the A9 road. Topics include run-off and impact

on communities separated by the road. SKM Informed the meeting about an RSE outreach event in Inverness with UHI.

3.10.

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4. Events

4.1 Annual Peter Wilson Lecture, Monday 6th February, 2017: Professor William Sutherland will be invited by the RSE to give the Lecture on Evidence Based Conservation. We are continuing this with RSE as partners.

4.2 Workshops:

4.2.1 Biological Collections: Representatives from JHI, RBGE, BGS, NMS met at Moredun on 19 August 2016 and discussed the possible organisation of the workshop. Amongst many points made it was agreed the Atlas of Living Scotland was a central component for inclusion in the workshop as this captured a lot of the material to be discussed. A talk on molecular data was also supported. A talk on the Global Challenges Research Fund was identified as particularly attractive as this would focus on the availability of funds for a large collaborative project at a national scale. One individual scientist identified was Marie Haga, Global Seed Bank, Global Population Trust. A Panel discussion would complete the morning session. In the afternoon short breakout discussion sessions would be held on subjects such as National Archives, the Global challenges, digitisation.

Living Collections are defined for this workshop as being part of research programmes so could include preserved materials. Battleby would be the preferred venue and looking at April 2017 for the date. This would be a subscription meeting.

The discussion within the Executive covered a number of points including

i) SE web is a major source of information already.

ii) Making best use of collections, how to use them. The technology available has improved. Mobilisation of data is increasing significantly. The US government are doing this already. Ian Owens at the National History Museum may be a possible speaker.

iii) This area is an information science issue and development of relevant skills is essential. This could be an enormous opportunity for Scotland.

The discussions will be summarised and circulated to the Executive and the attendees at the August meeting. The aim is to firm up the programme and identify potential speakers.

4.2.2.Land Use Strategy: (SKM) The original idea was to focus on the research aspects of land reform but this has now developed in new ways. The Land Use strategy is now published. The Land Use strategy is associated with this and Roseanna Cunningham's department is responsible.

MP advised that this whole area is undergoing change within the government and it might be better to await developments. Scottish Land and Estates also interested and maybe should be invited along to any discussions SCRR have subsequently about research directions. Andrew Midgely is the contact here. Forestry also a major player here.

A meeting with Sarah Skerit will be arranged.

4.2.3 Extremophiles; No further developments as yet but planned to discuss the holding of a small seminar for interested scientists with Universities of St Andrews and Edinburgh heavily involved.

4.3 Directors' Lunches

- 07 November 2016: AGM and Board Meeting Edinburgh Napier University.
- February 13th 2017: Executive Committee and Directors' Lunch; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
- April 2017: Executive Committee and Directors' Lunch; BGS Heriot Watt Campus, Edinburgh

5. Membership

5.1 Consortium: The University of St Andrews have joined the Consortium and will attend the lunch at MRI in October. The National Trust for Scotland still indicates a strong interest in joining SCRR but have not signed up. SKM and WD will follow up on this. SY asked about Aberdeen involvement. Scottish Land and Estates and Scottish Wildlife Trust may be potential members.

5.2 Executive Committee: Prof Geoff Simm has resigned from the Executive to take up his new position at the Global Academy. Prof Wayne Powell was invited to replace Prof Simm on the Executive Committee.

6. Finances:

WD reported that the Finances remain healthy. A number of member organisations who have still not paid their subscriptions for 2015/16 will be contacted again.

7. Publicity and Communications

7.1 SCRR Website: The website is still being overhauled and reconfigured.

7.2 SCRR Newsletter: The next newsletter will be Autumn 2016 and will be issued at the end of September. A Winter edition is planned with the deadline for submissions on the 12th December 2016. One theme could be "Evidence Based Conservation" to fit in with the 2017 Peter Wilson Lecture.

8. Any other business:

8.1 New Posters need to be made to include new members.

9. Date and place of next Executive meeting

TBA

KEY	Prof Steve Yearley	SY	Prof Pete Hollingsworth	PH
	Prof Stuart K Monro	SKM	Dr Nick Fraser	NF
	Prof Willie Donachie	WD	Prof Wayne Powell	WP
	Prof Martin Price	MP	Ruth Wolstenholme	RW