



Scottish Consortium
for Rural Research

MINUTE OF THE 129TH MEETING OF THE SCRR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 13TH FEBRUARY 2017. NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND CHAMBERS STREET, EDINBURGH, EH1 1JF

Present:

Prof Steve Yearley (Chair)
Prof Stuart K Monro (Scientific Director)
Prof Willie Donachie (Secretary/Treasurer)
Prof Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)
Dr Nick Fraser (NMS)
Prof Martin Price (Centre for Mountain Studies, (UHI)
Dr Kevin O'Donnell (SASA)
Dr Sonja Rueckart (Edinburgh Napier University, for Dr Kathy Velandar)
Prof Alistair Stott (SRUC)

Apologies:

Ruth Wolstenholme (Sniffer)
Prof Lee Innes (MRI)
Prof David Miller (JHI)
Dr Kathy Velandar (Edinburgh Napier University)

1. **Welcome & Apologies:** SY welcomed those present.
2. **Minutes and matters arising from 128th Executive meeting:**
Agreed with minor changes.
3. **Centres of Excellence and Networks: update on all networks**
 - 3.1. **CAMERAS:** (KOD) Rural Affairs Food and Environment (RAFE) Board has brought focus to activities. The CAMERAS Operations Group (COG) are undertaking a range of activities such as the Mapping Exercise which is now nearing completion. It promises to be a useful source of information on the resources within the member organisations.
 - 3.2. **SASA:** (KOD) The Murray Estates Planning Proposal is a concern for SASA. It has been called in by the Scottish Government for decision. March is the proposed date. Biosecurity is a major issue for SASA. The posts of the Head of SASA and Chief Plant Health Officer for Scotland have been merged and the post has been advertised. Deadline is March 2017
 - 3.3. **Edinburgh Napier University:** (SR) The Biological Sciences Programme has now been credited by the Royal Society of Biology. The new facility for Marine Sciences has been officially opened at St Abbs Head. This is operated through a tripartite agreement between ENU, Heriot Watt University and the St Abbs Marine Station who are all members of the Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland (MASTS). It is open for collaboration. SKM indicated that

he has brought this facility to the attention of scientists at St Andrews. A new timber research group has been established at the University. A large grant (£700K+) has recently been awarded for research into polycystic ovaries using sheep models.

- 3.4. Knowledge Centre for Exchange and Impact (KCEI):** May be changing its name soon to Science Knowledge Scotland. Graham Cook has been appointed Director. Early projects include one funding a think tank looking at conserving diversity in crops and farm animals. There is also a contribution to the Climate Change plan consultation where Graham Cook is collating information from the MRPs.
It was agreed that SKM should invite him along to a Directors' Lunch to talk about the new Centre and its future work.
- 3.5. NMS:(NF)** The UK Consortium for Natural Science Collections initiative on a unified database for all natural science collections appears to have stalled. This would be a very valuable resource for UK science. AS informed the Committee about an Agri-Metrics project which SRUC is involved in. This is collating disparate data sets which are not currently being put together using new technologies. There could be useful links to be made with the Consortium for Natural Science Collections.
- 3.6. RBGE; (PH)** There will be a meeting in Edinburgh University in June 2017 of the International Society of Wildlife Forensics. The RBGE have been awarded two new grants; i) a new grant from Synthesis, an EU funded project for natural History Collections, to hold a conference on using next generation sequencing technologies to liberate sequence data from preserved collections. This could align with the proposed SCRR meeting on collections ii) A Leverhulme grant to work with the Sanger centre on sequencing DNA from individual pollen grains including fossil specimens.
- 3.7. SRUC:** Two upcoming conferences are being hosted by SRUC; i) International Farm Management Conference, 4-7 July; ii) European precision Agriculture, 16-19 July. Both are in Edinburgh. Links with The Global Academy for Agriculture in Edinburgh are being pursued strongly with a new BSc in Agriculture an objective. SRUC aim to make most of their distinctive business structure and develop the Public/Private factors inherent in the structure, with strong links both to industry and academia. Internationalisation through working with organisations such as Difd will also be important for future development.
- 3.8. Social Sciences (SY)** The new Global Academy has raised opportunities for the School as there is innovation potential for social policy here. As a result of discussions with Geoff Simm there are now options for innovation policy as part of the degree and the School has been persuaded to put funding in for appointments in the Social Science area within the Academy. The Centre for African Studies is also interested in getting involved.
Following the Board Meeting at Napier SY had discussions with Dr Madhu Satsangi, the Stirling representative and there is a proposal for a meeting at Stirling in the future. There was a meeting 4 years ago on Social Sciences and Stirling are interested in hosting one now.
- 3.9. SSAC (SKM)** The last entry was in January 2016 which is worrying given the communication aspirations of the Committee. SKM is minded to write to the SSAC Chair about this lack of communication. The Committee agreed

3.10. UHI (MP) Sadly Ian Bryden died in November 2016 leaving a large gap in leadership at UHI. His post is now being advertised.

3.11. **RSE:** (SKM) The RSE recently met in Inverness and will continue to do so over the next two years. A stakeholder meeting before Christmas and it is obvious there is a lot of activity. SCRR might get involved in some activities as there is a large interest in rural sciences.

4. Events

4.1 Annual Peter Wilson Lecture, Monday 6th February, 2017: Professor William Sutherland delivered his challenging Lecture on Evidence Based Conservation. The subject for next year's lecture will need to be agreed and a speaker identified. A number of possibilities were suggested focussing on Rural Research Post Brexit. Precision Agriculture to address production issues is one such area.

4.2 Workshops:

4.2.1 Biological Collections: It was agreed this is a priority. NF and PH will bring forward a draft programme for the Executive to decide upon.

4.2.2. Land Use Strategy : (SKM) We were advised to pause on this due to the uncertainty around the Government's intentions here. SKM will keep the Committee informed on progress

4.2.3 Extremophiles: The intention is to have a research seminar but there has been no demand for this to happen from relevant research groups.

4.2.4 SCRR STEM Strategy Workshop: This has been arranged for February 24th at Dynamic Earth. SCRR Members will discuss the Government's paper on the Strategy and draw up a response from SCRR.

4.2.5: Coastal Event Workshop: A number of SCRR members have interests in this environment and it may be useful to have an SCRR workshop on this topic. ST Andrews, SAMS, Napier Edinburgh, St Abbs Head will be contacted for their opinion. MASTS may also be a good contact here. This was identified as priority.

4.2.6: Scotia/SCRR Essay Competition and Lecture: This is progressing and the basic details have been agreed but there are some administration areas that need further discussion. It is hoped to launch this in 2017 for award in 2018.

4.3 Directors' Lunches

- Monday 24 April 2017: Executive Committee and Directors' Lunch; BGS Heriot Watt Campus, Edinburgh
- Thursday 1 June 2017: Executive Committee Meeting and Directors' Lunch at Field Studies Council at Station Millport

5. Membership

5.1 Consortium: The National Trust are still not signed up due to reorganisation issues. Suggestions were made to approach the Scottish Wildlife Trust and Scottish Land and Estates. WD to make the approaches.

5.2 Executive Committee: The Executive is fully complemented at present. SY indicated that in this summer he will become the Director of the new Institute for the Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh. It was agreed that he continue as Chair of the Executive Committee.

6. Finances:

WD reported that the Finances remain healthy. The invoices for the 2016-17 financial year were sent out in January

7. Publicity and Communications

7.1 SCRR Website: The website has been updated and new material is now being added..

7.2 SCRR Newsletter: The Winter edition was issued in January in time for the 2017 Peter Wilson Lecture. The next newsletter will be Summer 2017 in time for The Royal Highland Show. The deadline for article submission is

8. Any other business:

No other business

9. Date and place of next Executive meeting

Monday 24 April 2017: Executive Committee and Directors' Lunch; BGS Heriot Watt Campus, Edinburgh

KEY	Prof Steve Yearley	SY	Prof Pete Hollingsworth	PH
	Prof Stuart K Monro	SKM	Dr Nick Fraser	NF
	Prof Willie Donachie	WD	Prof Alistair Stott	AS
	Prof Martin Price	MP	Dr Sonja Rueckart	SR
	Prof Kevin O'Donnell	KOD		

Abbreviations:

CAMERAS – Coordinated Agenda for Marine, Environment and Rural Affairs Scotland