



Scottish Consortium  
for Rural Research

## MINUTE OF THE 138<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SCRR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 3 APRIL 2019, AT MOREDUN RESEARCH INSTITUTE, PENTLANDS SCIENCE PARK, BUSH LOAN, PENICUIK, EH260PZ

### **Present:**

Prof Sarah Skerratt (Scientific Director and Acting Chair)  
Prof Willie Donachie (Secretary/Treasurer)  
Prof Karen Halliday (UoE)  
Mr Ed Mackey (SNH)  
Dr Kathy Velandar (Edinburgh Napier University)  
Prof Lee Innes (MRI)

### **Apologies:**

Prof Steve Yearley  
Prof Des Thompson (SNH)  
Prof David Miller (JHI)  
Dr Nick Fraser (NMS)  
Prof Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)  
Prof Martin Price (UHI)  
Prof David Hopkins (SRUC)

1. **Welcome & Apologies:** Professor Sarah Skerratt welcomed those present especially Prof Karen Halliday who recently joined the Executive Committee, and Mr Ed Mackey who attended in the place of Des Thompson, SNH. The Chair noted thanks to the Moredun Research Institute for hosting the meeting.
2. **Minutes and matters arising from 137th Executive meeting:** The minutes were accepted and the quality of the minute noted.  
Matters arising: Item 4.3. Remote Sensing for Agricultural and Environmental analysis in Scotland. EM reported that a CropMap meeting to discuss Dynamic Crop Mapping was taking place the following week in St Andrews House Edinburgh. This technology is taking off.
3. **Update, Members, Centres of Excellence and Networks**
  - 3.1. **Scientific Director's report: (SS)** The Director informed the meeting that the initiative to visit SCCR Directors on their home turf (see Briefing Document in previous Minutes) was now underway with visits to Stirling (Prof Maggie Cussack) and Moredun (Prof Julie Fitzpatrick) completed since the last Exec meeting. It was a very positive meeting at Stirling where transdisciplinary research was now to the fore following restructuring within the University. Examples were given where Psychology, Re-habilitation not Re-offend, Green Social Work, Rural Economy and aquaculture environmental science. Could SCRR engage with showcasing this type of research. They asked about the achievements of the SCCR Network and this resulted in the list sent out in the meeting papers. They also challenged SCCR to describe how the desired outcomes could be achieved 5 years down the line.

At MRI the discussions followed similar lines and issues raised were

- the Newsletter as an important communication channel for SCCR
- Could SCRR be a CAMERAS Partner
- Can it act to sell science to the public

A major point arising from both discussions was whether SCRR has a USP. The easy answer is yes we are an independent Scottish consortium/network of organisations engaged in various aspects of Rural Research. However perhaps we need to define Rural Research . an inventory of all aspects covered?

Not Government aligned so free to profess opinions?

Offers a door to rural research riches? What is becoming clear that it is no longer a Directors' lunch club and will have to be more active and dynamic in future.

If rebranding was again necessary it could be called

- Rural Research Scotland
- Rural Science for Scotland.

- 3.2. SNH: (EM)** SNH Business Plan now published for 2019-20. Briefly 4 Themes are addressed : Enjoyment, Resilience of Natural Heritage, Natural Capital and Transforming the way SNH works. (see [SNH Business Plan 2019/20](#)).  
Reviewing evidence needs is an important area. Three areas are being given greater consideration; citizen science, how external consultation can be improved and communications.  
A new document summarising the Scotland's Biodiversity Information Forum's Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland has been released (see [SBIF Review Summary](#)).  
Matthew Bird has been appointed head of the Biodiversity Team in the Scottish Government.
- 3.3. University of Edinburgh: (KH)** The main activities Global Academy and Biosciences have a general focus on the GCRF. The majority of the Conferences coming up are concerned with basic research. An area which might lend itself to a future SCRR Forum is Synthetic Biology especially around plant involvement. This will be discussed at the next Executive meeting.
- 3.4 MRI: (LI)** 1) SRUC Veterinary services have now relocated onto the Moredun Campus at Pentlands Science Park. It is expected this will result in greater linkages in disease surveillance and diagnostic developments.  
2) Moredun has its centenary in 2020. The original ethos of farmers helping themselves is still there. Looking ahead to a series of events to celebrate the Centenary Moredun would be keen to work together with SCRR in organising some events.  
3) SEFARI: Charles Bestwick has taken over as Director. One initiative is the setting up of Fellowships where the appointee will be from one of the member Institutes and placed in a stakeholder environment to improve communications.
- 3.5 University of Edinburgh Napier: (KV)** 1) Scotland's Scenic Routes – This is developing further with an initiative to place more new sculptures by young architects in areas such as Lay-Bys. Based on a Norwegian model. There is a 10 minute presentation that KV will give at the Aberdeen Meeting.

#### 4. Events

**4.1 Peter Wilson Lecture 2019:** (SKM) - Francesca Osowska, CEO Scottish Natural Heritage, will give the lecture on May 30<sup>th</sup> 2019 at 6.00pm at the RSE.

The format will be a shorter lecture followed by discussion with an expert Panel, Professor Colin Campbell (CEO, JHI), Louise MacDonald (CEO, Young Scot), Mike Robinson (CEO, Royal Scottish Geographical Society) and Martin Valenti (Strategic Director, Scottish Land Commission). There will be a reception at the RSE until 8.00pm.

**4.2 Biological Collections Workshop:** An update from PH and NF is below.

a) Plans for a big international conference next year in Edinburgh on natural history collections have developed (led by RBGE and NMS)– which partly have taken up the ‘meeting organising time’, but also runs the risk of some overlap with what we were considering for 2019 via SCRR. <http://www.spnhc-icomnathist2020.com/> Nick and Pete still need to now work out how best to dovetail this with our SCRR plan....to avoid duplication and maximise complementarity.

b) A second factor is that biological collections in Scotland were suggested as a topic for the Scottish Science Advisory Council - during recent discussions with Andrew Millar at RBGE (chief scientific advisor for environment, natural resources and agriculture to Scottish Government). This is a very useful suggestion – and would complement some wider discussions about collections and the ESFRI roadmap (<https://cetaf.org/news/discco-presented-esfri-launch-ceremony-vienna>), and how we engage SG with this wider landscape.

Pete and Nick will talk this through and follow up.

The Committee felt there was still scope for an SCRR sponsored meeting on the original topic, especially with the relevance of databases and collections to the Scottish Government’s Strategic Research programme. The Committee would await developments and hope for a decision at the Aberdeen meeting on the 22 May.

**4.3 Design Thinking:** It is aimed at early career researchers but open to all. It will take place at Moredun on 3<sup>rd</sup> April from 1-5pm. The format is that the attendees are placed in mixed discipline groups and set a problem to solve.

**4.4 Scotia Link:** Nothing further to report.

## 5. Membership

5.1. Membership:

5.2. Executive Committee Membership. There was discussion on the composition of the Committee and the suggestion of having an Early Career Scientist (<25 Y).was made by the Director. The agreed approach would be to advertise the position at the AGM, and this would mean people would come forward for interview, from whom the selection would be made. This individual would be more likely to be enthusiastic.

## 6. Finances

6.1. **Accounts and current financial position:** WD presented the current financial position which was healthy (see Appx 2).

## 7. Publicity & communications

7.1. **SCRR Website:** WD reported that the website still needed work to update it. A number of suggestions were made. The views of the Committee members be sought

on 2 questions; 1) What is the audience, 2) What should the content be . SS and WD will then meet with Damien to discuss feedback and next stage of web design, ideally prior to the next Exec meeting in May.

**7.2. SCRR Newsletter:** The Winter 2018/19 issue was posted out at end of February. The deadline for summer 2019 issue is 26 April 2019.

**8. Any other business:** None

**9. Date and place of next Executive meetings:**

- a) 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019: 139<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting and Directors' Lunch at JHI Aberdeen
- b) 28<sup>th</sup> August 2019: 140<sup>th</sup> Committee Meeting and Directors' Lunch at BGS, Heriot Watt University.
- c) 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019: 58<sup>th</sup> Main Board Meeting and AGM, SRUC, An Lochran Building, Inverness Campus, UHI.

KEY	Prof Sarah Skerratt	SS	Prof Lee Innes	LI
	Prof Willie Donachie	WD	Mr Ed Mackey	EM
	Prof Karen Halliday	KH	Dr Kathy Velander	KV

## Scottish Consortium for Rural Research

### Income & Expenditure Account Year to date 31 March 2019

	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Balance in</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>Bank</b>
		<b>£</b>
Balance brought forward 31/03/2018	40,078.99	40,078.99
<b>Income</b>		
Subscription	16145	56,223.99
Total Income	<hr/> 16145	
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Salaries & Honoraria	14,994.19	41229.8
Travel	19.4	41210.4
Meetings & Hospitality	6,003	35207.38
Office Rent, Rates, Heat & Light	0	35207.38
Office Expenses & Telephone	28.99	35178.39
SCRR Newsletter publication	6,569.89	28608.5
Publicity, Posters, Website	12.00	28596.5
Miscellaneous	25	28571.5
Total Expenditure	<hr/> 27652.49	
<b>Balance 31/03/19</b>		<hr/> <b>28571.5</b>