



Scottish Consortium
for Rural Research

MINUTE OF THE 139TH MEETING OF THE SCRR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 22 MAY 2019, AT JAMES HUTTON INSTITUTE, CRAIGIEBUCKLER, ABERDEEN, AB15 8QH

Present:

Prof Steve Yearley (Chair)
Prof Sarah Skerratt (Scientific Director)
Prof Willie Donachie (Secretary/Treasurer)
Prof Karen Halliday (UoE)
Prof David Hopkins (SRUC)
Mr Ed Mackey (SNH)
Prof David Miller (JHI)
Prof Martin Price (UHI)
Prof Geoff Simm (UoE)

Apologies:

Dr Nick Fraser (NMS)
Prof Pete Hollingsworth (RBGE)
Prof Lee Innes (MRI)
Dr Kathy Velandar (Edinburgh Napier University)
Prof Des Thompson (SNH)

1. **Welcome & Apologies:** Professor Steve Yearley welcomed those present especially Mr Ed Mackey who attended in the place of Des Thompson, SNH and Prof Geoff Simm who will be over the office of Executive Committee Chair at the next meeting. The Chair noted thanks to the James Hutton Institute for hosting the meeting.
2. **Minutes and matters arising from 137th Executive meeting:** The minutes were accepted with no matters arising.
3. **Update, Members, Centres of Excellence and Networks**
 - 3.1. **Scientific Director's report: (SS)**
 - Meetings with SCRR members continue. Stirling and Moredun were reported on previously and Forest Research arranged for 30th May. There is a plan to have a video conference with UHI contacts and site visits to JHI and SNH. WD to arrange these.
 - 3.2. **SNH: (EM):** There were 8 topics to report on.
 - i. Inter Governmental Conference on Biodiversity in Edinburgh 2020. SNH and Scottish Government are organising this.
 - ii. SAGES Conference: 27-28th November 2019, Edinburgh. Focus is on challenges for a Blue/Green Economy
 - iii. Blue Carbon Conference, RSE, Edinburgh 28th June 2019. 2019 is the Year of Carbon.

- iv. Climate and Nature Emergency. Responding to climate predictions
- v. Paper published on SNH strategic relevance needs. This is a consultation paper and may be of relevance to SCRR.
- vi. Biodiversity Leadership Programme which chimes with the Peter Wilson Lecture 2019. This pulls together a number of important issues including the post Brexit situation.
- vii. SBIF Review published and article included in Summer issue of the SCRR Newsletter

3.3. University of Edinburgh, Global Academy for Agriculture and Food Security. (GS). BSc programme is now 1 year old for. Offering 3 degree courses; Crop and Soil, Animal Science and Global Agriculture. The second programme is Agricultural economics.

Other Programmes for 2019-20

There is also a growing corps of staff including new PhD students whose research areas include AMR, Agricultural ecosystems in directions/trade offs, nitrogen and sustainable intensification in the global south.

Academy hosting a “One Health” conference in 2020.

3.4. University of Edinburgh: College of Science and Engineering (KH)

Major activity is focussing on outreach in China, Gujarat, Chile. China initiative is most advanced. The scope of scientific research is vast within the College and specific areas will be highlighted in future Executive meetings.

A New Chancellors Fellow working on Agriculture Research

3.5. University of Edinburgh: College Arts Humanities and Social Sciences (SY)

Relevant areas include science policy studies. One area of interest is Rural Social Science and a new post has been appointed in Regulation and Innovation in Agriculture.

3.6. SEFARI (DM)

- Charles Bestwick has been appointed as Director of SEFARI for next 2 years.
- SEFARI will be hosting meeting at the RHS in June.
- Natural Capital Forum in London will be attended by SEFARI
- SEFARI/Gateway Website will be up and running in July
- SEFARI institutes are now required to have a repository for research outputs for open access routes

The JHI working

- With Scottish Government on water conservation in India and Malawi
- Tay Cities Deal will help to fund the Vertical Funding and the Barley Hub
- New Programme discussion have been delayed
- Consultations agreed include Environmental Governance, Good Food Nation, climate adaptation plan. Also UK Governments international Collaborations Framework.
- Royal Society of Arts collaboration on Food Quality.

3.7 SRUC (DH)

Main change is the move to give clearer regional identities to the various parts of SRUC and create an organisation closer to an HEI than currently exists.

Big issues are

- presence at RHS and Gardening Scotland

- Enhancement led Performance Review has been successful
- Global Academy participation is a shared enterprise
- Opening Avian Science Research Centre in Edinburgh Bush Estate
- Veterinary Science has now been relocated to Pentlands Science Park sharing with Moredun
- Agricultural Services for the UK initiative. About a dozen HEIs are active in Agriculture but the area suffers from a low profile. This consortium is an attempt to improve this situation by working together to raise its importance to the UK

3.8 UHI (MP)

- SRUC/UHI initiative on strengthening the Highlands and Islands Blue/Green economy
- Centre for Mountain Studies anniversary event “Challenging Uplands Futures” being planned for 2020. SCRR agreed to support this conference for a sum to be decided by the Executive Committee. Year of Mountainous Regions and Coasts of Scotland 2020 is a good fit for this.

4. Events

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

The format is 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 also be a reception with poster viewing at the RSE until 8.00pm. The event should be well attended.

4.2 Biological Collections Workshop: This has not advanced as hoped and will be postponed until further notice. Bigger International meetings on the same subject have affected planning of this.

4.3 Interdisciplinary Learning: Report still awaited.

4.4 Synthetic Biology: KH talked about some of the work into synthetic biology going on in the College of Science and Engineering at Edinburgh. The presentation covered areas such as disease resistance in crops, ash dieback, forest birds, bees, natural flight of dandelions, timing of flowering, influence of external signalling, Isle of Rum Deer Project ethology. Lots of imaging technology including using face recognition technology on plant ID. Modelling is also a major topic for studies.

Synthetic and Systems Biology: A detailed description of this exciting area was given. Improving efficiency of photosynthesis, using plant photoreceptors as switches (optogenetics), synthetic chromosomes.

A general discussion followed this and the possibility of sponsoring a workshop on this subject will be considered.

5. **SCRR Membership (SS):** Nothing to report
Executive Committee Membership (SS): Nothing to report

6. **Finance:** Apart from some subscriptions being delayed finances are fine.

5. Membership

5.1. Membership:

5.2. Executive Committee Membership. There was discussion on the possible appointment of an early career researcher to the Committee.

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:**

7.2. **SCRR Newsletter:** The summer 2019 issue is due for printing at end of May 2019 in time for the RHS.

8. **AOB:** Professor Yearley was warmly thanked for his chairmanship of the Executive Committee and wished well for his future activities.

9. Date and place of next Executive meetings:

- a) 28th August 2019: 140th Committee Meeting and Directors' Lunch at BGS, Heriot Watt University.
- a) 13th November 2019: 58th Main Board Meeting and AGM, SRUC, An Lochran Building, Inverness Campus, UHI.

KEY	Prof Sarah Skerratt	SS	Mr Ed Macke Prof	EM
	Prof Willie Donachie	WD	David Miller	DM
	Prof Karen Halliday	KH	Prof Martin Price	MP
	Prof David Hopkins	DH	Prof Geoff Simm	GS

**Scottish Consortium for Rural
Research**

Income & Expenditure Account Year to date 20/05/2019

	Actual £	Balance in Bank £
Balance brought forward 31/03/2019	28,571.50	28,571.50
Income		
Subscription	10000	38,571.50
Total Income	10000	
Expenditure		
Salaries & Honoraria	3,663.24	34,908.26
Travel	0	34,908.26
Meetings & Hospitality	223	34,685.30
Office Rent, Rates, Heat & Light	0	34,685.30
Office Expenses & Telephone	0	34,685.30
SCRR Newsletter publication	0.00	34,685.30
Publicity, Posters, Website	0.00	34,685.30
Miscellaneous	0	34,685.30
Total Expenditure	3,886.2	
Balance 20/05/19		£34,685.3