



Scottish Consortium
for Rural Research

MINUTE OF THE 141ST MEETING OF THE SCRR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 4 OCTOBER 2019, AT THE ROYAL (DICK) SCHOOL OF VETERINARY STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, EASTER BUSH, ROSLIN, MIDLOTHIAN, EH25 9RG

Present:

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

Apologies:

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

- 1. Welcome & Apologies:** Professor Geoff Simm welcomed those present The Chair noted thanks to RDVS for hosting the meeting.
- 2. Minutes and matters arising from 140th Executive meeting:** The minutes were accepted with no matters arising.
 1. Peter Wilson lecture 2020: Young Scot and the Young Academy of Scotland of the RSE, and Youth Parliament Rural Chapter to be contacted. By WD and SS.
 2. Design Thinking Presentation postponed until K Velandar's return.
- 3. Update, Members, Centres of Excellence and Networks**

3.1 SCRR Scientific Director's Report: Meeting at Perth College of UHI went well with staff members from Orkney, Inverness, Fort William and Thurso calling in on video links. Aim to pull together the outcome of the discussions with members and talk about them at the AGM and then continue after the AGM with more meetings.

3.2 UHI: (MP): "Challenging Upland Futures Forum" 1-2 September 2020. Is a SCRR sponsored event. It is a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Mountain Studies Group in UHI.

Day 1. The event will not just focus on evidence but will have presentations from Jayne Glass on the main issues affecting uplands and Charles Warren on policy matters. International speakers will provide a wider view and context. Different multi-

stakeholders representatives will be asked to provide short talks on their interests. Other partnerships will be chosen to present either in talks or in poster displays. Participation will be by invitation but free places will be made available to Youth organisations. The after dinner speaker will be Xander McDaid who is Convenor of the Cairngorms National Park Consortium.

Day2. This will involve mixed sessions. The aim is to use the sessions to find common ground. Six former or current students from the Price Group will facilitate these sessions. THE RSGS have agreed to publish the proceedings.

The venue will be the Perth Theatre.

3.3 SNH (EM): See Appendix 1 for update.

Professor Simm thanked Ed Mackey for his contributions to the SCRR and wished him a long and happy retirement.

3.4 JHI (DM): i) McCauley Lecture Wednesday 2 October. Given by Peter helm and is now online. There were stands from various groups present representing different sectors related to JHI interests. This is important for future events and sharing costs.

ii) COP 25. McCauley Lecture might link to this event in 2020.

iii) SEFARI: There are Fellowships still available. SEFARI now aims to represent all research under the SG portfolio.

iv) Event to note, Celebration of Adam Watson's work 27th November.

v) Consultation: JHI and MRI are listed in a consultation by SG about setting targets for emissions. This is leading to Net Zero. Should public bodies be set these targets and will there be help to achieve them?

3.5 University of Edinburgh (KH) Biological Studies Estates development- A New Plant Facility including Plant Growth Facility built but tendering underway for additional areas. A new climate facility will be added.

New Academic has been appointed as a Chancellor's fellow -Dr Anis Richardson. She will be researching the molecular genetics of barley.

International developments have seen strong links formed with Gujerat University to jointly develop a large facility there. Chile is another country targeted and the large range of ecosystems should allow a similar range of scientific collaborations to take place.

KH is stepping down as Director of Edinburgh Plant Science and taking up the post of Dean of Systematics Inclusions.

Plant Health Care, an SME based on the campus are interested in expanding R&D in KH laboratory.

The Centenary Meeting of the Plant Genetics Society will be held in Edinburgh University this year.

3.6 Global Academy for Agriculture and Food Security (GS): i) Chancellor's Fellows: Currently there is a new call out for these in Global Challenges.

ii) Conferences in the GA: Vet Public Health, Animal Welfare, Livestock (with Roslin), Food and Farming Futures.

4. Events

4.1 Peter Wilson Lecture 2020: Discussions with RSE and Youth Groups to be arranged.

4.3. Design Thinking: This will be held over until K. Velander is back.

4.4 SCRR AGM 2019: Arrangements for the venue in Inverness have been confirmed, Thanks to UHI for booking the space. The AGM will be followed by Lunch and then the Mini-Conference. At least 14 posters will be on display.

5. Membership

5.1. Membership: No new members

5.2. Executive Committee Membership. A major aim after the AGM is the appointment of an Early Career Researcher.

6. Finances

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

7. Publicity & communications

7.1. **SCRR Website**: Publications up to date.

7.2. **SCRR Newsletter**: The next Newsletter is planned for October/November. Please send articles to WD

8. AOB: None

9. Date and place of next Executive meetings:

a) 13th November 2019: 58th Main Board Meeting and AGM, SRUC, An Lochran Building, Inverness Campus, UHI.

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

Appendix 1

SCRR Executive Committee, 4 October 2019

Update from SNH

1 Events

- [SAGES](#) (Scottish Alliance for Geosciences, Environment & Society) 2019 Conference on 27-28 November in Edinburgh, on 'Global Climate Challenges for a Blue Green Economy: scientific evidence; its relevance; societal solutions'.
- 2019 Biodiversity Science Conference on 18 November at the RBGE (see below)
- CBD CoP in Kunming, China October 2020
- Climate Change CoP 25 Glasgow in December 2020 (30,000 delegates)

2 Biodiversity Science Conference

The Biodiversity Science Conference is held every 12-18 months, with the next Conference taking place on the 18th November 2019 at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh. The one-day conference on 'Scottish Biodiversity Science for Nature: *novelty, ingenuity and solutions*' will address current environmental challenges and discuss innovative methods and technologies that create solutions for biodiversity.

3 IPBES – additional evidence needs

In May 2019 the [IPBES¹ Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystems](#) confirmed seven principal drivers of biodiversity loss – five direct and two indirect – as:

- Changing use of the land and sea, particularly in relation to farming and forestry and associated monocultures, and coastal developments
- Over-exploitation of species
- Climate change
- Pollution
- Invasive non-native species
- + Disconnect with nature
- + Lack of value and importance placed on nature

Climate change is particularly problematic because it intensifies all of the other drivers as well as being a driver in its own right. In view of the Climate Emergency, the updated Climate Change Emission Reductions (Scotland) Bill is expected to

¹ UN Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

receive Royal Assent in autumn 2019 – to be followed by refresh the Climate Change Plan for net zero C economy by 2045.

The indirect drivers, relating to people's attitudes and behaviours towards nature result in the persistence of the other direct drivers of biodiversity loss.

IPBES identified 79 possible actions and pathways to achieve transformational change, of which 13 focus on research priorities.

SNH is working with the Scottish Government to develop cross-department and agency responses to this. The evidence and research aspects of the IPBES report align with our Strategic Evidence Needs document; we will consider further evidence needs through our Climate Change Commitment and Action Plan.

4 Biodiversity Strategy Programme

The link between biodiversity and climate change is irrefutable, both in terms of impact and joint solutions. The Net Zero report and IPBES *Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystems* published in May 2019 identify investment and restoration of nature as a significant contributor to meeting climate change targets, and to healthy and sustainable living.

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) from 2004 was refreshed in 2013 to reflect the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Aichi targets for 2020, creating the *SBS 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity*. From this the *Route Map to 2020* set out collaborative action to help deliver these targets.

Over the next year SNH, along with the SBS working groups, will be assessing how successful Scotland has been in achieving its biodiversity targets. The results from this assessment will in turn influence what will be included in the new Scottish Biodiversity 2030 Challenge, together with the new international targets set at CoP15 in (CBD Conference of Parties # 15) China in October 2020.

5 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy: Update on Aichi targets

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy: [2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity](#) provides the strategic direction, targets and metrics for our biodiversity ambition to 2020. SNH is the lead agency, with Scotland being [first to report](#) on all 20 [Aichi targets](#) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity ([CBD](#)). The latest annual assessment is undergoing assurance through our Scientific Advisory Committee with a view to publication in the autumn.

6 State of Nature report – Scotland and UK

State of Nature reports were published by a RSPB-led partnership of NGOs in 2013 and 2016. Publication of the 2019 report is planned for early October.

7 Developing a Genetics Framework for SNH

As biodiversity loss accelerates and environmental challenges mount there is an increasing need for quantitative evaluation of the status and trends of intraspecific and interspecific genetic diversity of species and communities, in order to inform conservation. Recent advances in DNA sequencing technology have transformed the speed, reliability and affordability of DNA-based assessments of genetic diversity and biomonitoring. The following are relevant:

- UK DNA Working Group, est. 2013
- UK DNA End-User group, est. 2017
- Defra DNA Centre of Excellence, est. 2018
- Establishing a Scottish DNA Hub – including academia and other users of DNA-based data – is underway
- SNH Genetics Framework is in prep

8 SNH PhD Studentships and working with universities

This is the 19th year of the SNH PhD studentship Scheme, having funded / part-funded more than 60 PhD studentships over the years. Additionally, our graduate placement/internship programme enables graduates to join us for up to a year to participate in priority areas of work. We are now considering the future direction of these initiatives.

9 SBIF Update

Investing in citizen science and an improved biological recording infrastructure could be a transformative opportunity for Scotland, delivering cross-sectoral policy & business needs for evidence-based action and advice and supporting our wider ambitions of: connecting people and nature; technological innovation; responding to the climate emergency and wildlife crisis; securing evidence for a nature rich future; and demonstrating global leadership in biodiversity action. As the lead public body, SNH will be catalytic to success.

To that end the review of Scotland's biological recording infrastructure – including citizen science participation, skills, support, facilities, technologies – by Scotland's Biodiversity Information Forum, the [SBIF Review](#), was published in November 2018. As the most comprehensive audit of its kind it won the CIEEM Best Practice Stakeholder Engagement Award 2019 and was shortlisted for the Nature of Scotland Innovation Award. To gain a clearer view of the investment proposal, Scottish Government Biodiversity Team has asked for a business case of delivery options in the light of prevailing circumstances and potential routes to funding. The NBN Trust is now leading development of an Outline Business Case.

ECM & DBAT, 3/10/19

Appendix 2

Scottish Consortium for Rural Research

Income & Expenditure Account Year to date 26/09/2019

	Actual	Balance in
	£	Bank
		£
Balance brought forward 31/03/2019	28,571.50	28,571.50
Income		
Subscription	10000	38,571.50
Total Income	<hr/> 10000	
Expenditure		
Salaries & Honoraria	7,326.48	31245.02
Travel	68.25	31176.77
Meetings & Hospitality	2,335	28841.67
Office Rent, Rates, Heat & Light	0	28841.67
Office Expenses & Telephone	34.99	28806.68
SCRR Newsletter publication	2,135.83	26670.85
Publicity, Posters, Website	0.00	26670.85
Miscellaneous	0	26670.85
Total Expenditure	<hr/> 11900.65	
Balance 26/09/19		<hr/> 26670.85