**154th meeting of the SCRR Executive Committee, 14 September 2023, RBGE**

[**scrr**](http://www.scrr.ac.uk/)

[Scottish Consortium  
for Rural Research](http://www.scrr.ac.uk/)

**Minutes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In attendance:** |  |
| Geoff Simm (GS) Chair | Nick Fraser (NF) |
| Lyndsey Hayes (LH) Minutes | Lee Innes (LI) |
| Alex Davey (AD) | Katie Dubarry (KD) |
| Karen Halliday (KH) |  |

1. **Welcome & Apologies**

GS opened the meeting and noted apologies from Willie Donachie, Des Thompson

Tracy Shimmield, David Miller and Sarah Skerratt.

GS thanked KD for joining today, noting the wish to reinvigorate SCRR from all its members and strengthen the ERC voice in what we do for future.

1. **Minutes / matters arising**

Minutes of the 153rd Executive meeting held on 15th June 2023 were accepted with no changes.

Matters arising not covered further on in agenda:

* ACTION: LI will pass brief for photos onto Davy to see if any students interested.
* Rama Dieng workshop not going ahead at moment but will be kept in mind for future.

1. **Update on Board Chair role / nominations process for new Executive Committee Chair**

GS was approached by the University of Edinburgh’s Vice Principal Research, Professor Christina Boswell, to take on the role of Chair of the SCRR Board. Court approved this at its June meeting, with effect from 16 October 2023. GS will assume this new role in time for the Nov SCRR AGM, so will demit as Chair of the Executive Committee following this meeting.

Constitutional requirements to seek a replacement chair of the SCRR Executive Committee state that they should be *‘…elected by and from the Board’.* A call has gone out for email nominations to be sent to [lyndsey.hayes@ed.ac.uk](mailto:lyndsey.hayes@ed.ac.uk) by the deadline of **23 September**. GS encouraged active members of this committee to consider applying. Co-chairs and shorter terms were discussed and it was agreed this could be considered.

LH stated the constitution requires 10 members to be quorate at Executive Committee meetings, so we could also do with considering a few more members to join this committee.

1. **Scotia Representative**

Overlap noted between Scotia and SCRR. LI volunteered to act as rep between the two.

1. **Membership**

* LH announced that we again have a contact at Heriot Wat University in Teresa Fernandes, with thanks to Tracy Shimmield for putting us in touch.
* Glasgow and St Andrews Universities have named contacts for SCRR membership (Dan Haydon for Glasgow / Ian Matthews and Althea Davis for St Andrews) however neither institution engages with SCRR activities and LH struggling to collecting fee payment.

ACTION: Committee members to approach contacts above if known to them (or other relevant people in these institutions) to help try to promote engagement with SCRR.

* David Field of the RZSS has decided not to renew membership this year, due to lack of engagement. GS/NF offered to help with approaching RZSS to discuss.

ACTION: LH to respond to RZSS and make offer of a discussion/visit with GS/NF.

Other institutions considered for membership:

* The National Trust for Scotland. Suggested by NF, as although not strictly research based, their rural landscape side could make then an appropriate body.
* RHASS (Alan Laidlaw). ACTION: GS will write to Alan Laidlaw.
* Soil Association. ACTION: GS will connect PhD Student, Aoife Behan, ex Soil Association with KD and the ECR group.

KH flagged the balance of expertise on plant/animal.

1. **Events**

LH sought feedback on format of meetings and member lunches and suggestions for 2024. Continuing with mix of online/IRL format agreed and attempting to hold a lunch or two out of the central belt. Possibility to tie in visits with Scotia. ACTION: LI will ask A. Stott about combining SCRR lunches/Scotia visits.

Agreed broad ‘Food Security’ theme for Peter Wilson Lecture 2024 and speaker suggestions:

* KH
* Ottoline Leyser – CEO of UKRI
* Conservationist contact who does work in Africa
* GS
* Lindiwe Sibanda, Director of African Universities Alliance Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Food Systems, Pretoria Uni
* Jan Low, International Potato Centres (World Food Prize laureate for work on bioforticaion of orange flesh sweet potato)
* Jess Fanzo, Johns Hopkins Uni (food systems dashboard etc)
* Mario Herrero, Cornell Uni (food systems modelling inc. livestock role, Eat Lancet etc.)
* Peter Alexander, GAAFS UoE (foods systems / land use)
* Cynthia Rosenzweig, NASA Goddard Institute (World Food Prize laureate for work on climate change and crop production)
* AD
* RBGE brilliant researcher and possible future research leader

NF urged all to choose speakers that will appeal to younger people too. ACTION: KD to take back to ECR group to ask for speaker ideas that would appeal to them.

1. **Feedback from ECR Group**

KD excited to be part of forming ECR group at this stage. They met initially at RSE in May, where there was unanimous agreement, particularly after covid, for these types of networks and communities for ECRS. Held scoping / brainstorming session earlier this week to discuss plans for year. Enthusiasm to get things going and exciting prospect for cross disciplinary work. Early days but organising first in-person meet up soon to look at how to expand out to rest of Scotland and ECR member groups in other institutions. GS offered ways this committee can help by providing some resource and getting ECR input into SCRR planning and events. It was agreed to send ECR representatives to attend SCRR Executive committee meetings in future. KH noted RSE offer as place to meet, made previously by Sarah Skerratt. GS reiterated to KD that SS and KH are the nominated ECR contacts within SCRR for KD or others in the group to link in with.

1. **Discussion on written member** [**updates**](https://uoe-my.sharepoint.com/personal/lhayes2_ed_ac_uk/Documents/SCRR/SCRR%20Member%20Updates.docx?web=1)

NF – Recommended Rising Tide exhibit in update.

AD – Highlighted Nature restoration fund grant in update. Invited all to [Knowledge Exchange Event](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/leading-ideas-hub-2-knowledge-exchange-in-practice-tickets-707739547037?aff=oddtdtcreator) on 3rd Oct.

TS – Update and Dynamic Earth event noted by GS.

LI – Julie Fitzpatrick is retiring from Moredun, though still retaining role as Chief Scientific Advisor for Scotland. New Director is Tom McNeilly. LI has been out with mobile lab, Patron, Princess Anne, visiting in Oct.

GS – Vet school celebrating bicentenary this year. Lisa Boden new Head of School. GAAFS latest newsletter just published.

KH – Department of plant sciences gained gates funding and UKRI funding. Advertising new round of CF to bring in ECRS. Have revamped how recruit to encourage Diversity, which has led to increase in quality of applications received. Collaboration with Intelligent Growth Systems, vertical farming company, to develop computer vision tech to capture plant growth, with a view to figure out when plants start to self-shade re. risk area for crops. Refreshing previous collaboration with colleague in IITA in Zambia, linked with crop development and speed breeding. Change in Head of Institute – Katherine Kidner has now taken over.

1. **Accounts and current financial position**

LH will produce full Annual Accounts for Nov AGM and approach WD to ask if willing to audit these again. Bank balance noted as very healthy, so paying speaker travel from further afar for 2024 PWL could be considered. Members/ECR group also encouraged to bid with any other ideas.

1. **Publicity & communications**

LH working on winter edition of Newsletter and will use member updates to seek stories.

ACTION: All to send any articles that would make a good story for the newsletter to LH by end Sept.

LH asked for particular theme requests, or anyone interested in writing the editorial. ECR focus was put forward as possible theme, with either KD or SS to be approached to write the editorial.

1. **Any other business**

No other business was raised.

**Date of next meeting:** AGM, Thursday 23 November, 10.30-12.00, Online via Zoom.