

## SSAC Minutes – 13 December 2022

The Place Hotel, 34-36 York Place, Edinburgh EH1 3HU

### Attendees:

Name	Position
Professor Maggie Gill	SSAC Chair
Professor Julie Fitzpatrick	Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland ( <i>ex officio member</i> )
Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak	Chief Scientist (Health) ( <i>ex officio member</i> )
Professor Mat Williams	Chief Scientific Adviser - Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture ( <i>ex-officio member</i> )
Professor Linda Bauld	Chief Social Policy Advisor ( <i>ex officio member</i> )
Professor Robert Bowman	SSAC Member (online)
Dr Caroline Cantley	SSAC Member (online)
Professor Louise Horsfall	SSAC Member (online)
Professor Marian Scott	SSAC Member (online)
Professor Lisa Boden	SSAC Member
Dr Kate Donovan	SSAC co-opted Member
Dr Catherine Elliott	SSAC Member
Professor Mark Inall	SSAC Member
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Member
Dr Graham Kerr	SSAC Member
Professor Nick Owens	SSAC Member
Professor Martyn Pickersgill	SSAC Member
Professor Wayne Powell	SSAC Member
Professor Murray Roberts	SSAC Member
Professor Melanie Simms	SSAC Member
Professor John Underhill	SSAC Member
Professor Bruce Whitelaw	SSAC Member
Dr Connor Blair	SSAC Associate
Dr Mariana Garcia Criado	SSAC Associate
Jamie Hepburn MSP	Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training (Agenda Item 2)
Dr Audrey MacDougall	Deputy Director, SG Central Analysis Division and Chief Social Researcher (Agenda Item 6)
David Mallon	Head of Policy and Implementation Unit, Climate Change Division, Scottish Government (SG)(Agenda Item 7)
Dr Rhona McDonald	Strategic Lead, Science, Research, International & EU Exit (SG)
Joanne Ward	Head of SSAC Secretariat/Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG)

Alasdair Maclean	SSAC Secretariat, Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG)
Caroline Murray	SSAC Secretariat, Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG)

## 1. Welcome and actions from last meeting

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting by thanking members for the effort made to attend in person given ongoing travel and weather disruption. She offered a particularly warm welcome to the new members who were attending their first meeting and looked forward to working with each of them going forward.

1.2 The Chair also recorded that this would be the last meeting for Professor Inall, Professor Underhill, Dr Cantley and Professor Powell.

1.3 The minutes were agreed and have been published on the SSAC website. Actions from the September meeting were completed or currently ongoing:

**Action 26/2** – Rhona McDonald confirmed that the SG’s Higher Education Research Team is following this up with the Chief Scientist Office

**Action 26/3** – the Chair confirmed she would be looking for volunteers to work with her, following the presentation later in the meeting from Audrey MacDougall

## 2. Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training

2.1 The Chair introduced the Minister and thanked him for joining the meeting for this agenda item.

2.2 The Chair gave a brief overview of the SSAC and how it works and supports Scottish Government (SG) policymaking.

2.3 The Minister spoke to the group, providing a brief summary of his role and reinforcing his portfolio responsibility for science. He recognised the important work of the SSAC and offered particular thanks to the outgoing members for their commitment over the last four years. He welcomed the new members to the group.

2.4 The Minister reflected that it had been over a year since he last met the council but since then has seen for himself the outstanding research and innovation that takes place in Scotland. He explained that he would be happy to receive suggestions from the SSAC on any future visits to see interesting science in action that may be of interest. The Minister made clear that work continues on how to better utilise science as a resource within the SG and he is keen to work with the scientific community as best he can.

2.5 Professors Dominiczak, Underhill and Jones provided the Minister with brief updates on reports published by the SSAC over the past year – Covid-19 Legacy, Hydrogen and Quantum Technologies respectively. The Minister was interested in how the recommendations have been used since publication and offered to speak to

the SSAC in the future on how these reports can best be disseminated to Ministers and policy areas.

### **3. Update from Dr Rhona McDonald, Strategic Lead Science, Research, International & EU Exit, Scottish Government**

3.1 Ahead of Dr Rhona McDonald's update, the Chair noted the change in structure for the SG Science Advice and Engagement team, which includes the SSAC Secretariat, who will be moving to the Directorate for Economic Development within DG Economy. She also noted that Dr Roddy Macdonald, currently Deputy Director for Higher Education and Science, will be taking up a new post in Transport Scotland. She thanked Roddy for his work with SSAC over a number of years.

3.2 Rhona provided a short update on a number of issues and initiatives ongoing, including the upcoming budget and the SG Innovation Strategy. Due to the timing of the meeting she acknowledged that there was not much she could say on the former but asked that secretariat circulate the link to the announcement round the group. She also updated on recent UK Government announcements on Horizon Europe and the Nurse Review.

**Action 27/1 – Secretariat to circulate links to announcements on the Scottish Budget and the SG Innovation Strategy when these become available.**

**Action 27/2 – Secretariat to include Innovation Strategy on agenda for next SSAC meeting.**

### **4. Update from ex-officio members:**

4.1 The **CSA** began by reflecting on some of the discussion during the meeting. On the internal move for the SG Science and Engagement team, she reassured members that this will be a positive step in positioning the team where it can better influence key priority areas such as the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET), the Innovation Strategy, Climate Change and Inequalities – all of which have major roles for science and technology.

4.2 Following up on the discussion on the past reports, she agreed with the points made about a need for SSAC reports to have greater awareness across SG, and the need for SG to recognise the value in SSAC's independence, which can lead to recommendations that do not align exactly with current SG policy. She also added her support to the idea of a Chief Technology Adviser as recommended in the Quantum Technology report.

4.3 More widely, the CSA updated on her liaison with the UK Government on Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) and also spoke of her discussions with UKRI and the role of her Scot SCIENCE initiative in ensuring Scotland is well placed to capitalise on opportunities.

4.4 Introductions and updates were also provided by Professors Dominiczak, Williams and Bauld. These focused on issues and topics such as the 50 year anniversary of the Chief Scientist Office and the challenges faced for health scientists

across Scotland (Professor Dominiczak); the recent meeting of the First Minister's Environmental Council (FMEC), the role of RESAS scientists within the SG (Professor Williams) and the response to the Ukrainian crisis (Professor Bauld).

4.5 General discussion followed about how marine science is represented in the SG's 'chief scientific advisory system', since it is not currently included in the CSA ENRA's role.

## **5. Member Updates and New Member Introductions**

5.1 New members introduced themselves and provided some detail on their background and any activities that might be useful for members to be aware of.

## **6. Dr Audrey MacDougall, Deputy Director, SG Central Analysis Division and Chief Social Researcher – Perspective on Consultations and their place within wider policy landscape (SSAC Note 22/18)**

6.1 Audrey gave an overview of her role and responsibilities within her division, explaining that her team was initially established by SG to help deal with crisis issues, but has proved its worth in non-crisis times too. She provided a breakdown of the SG analysis function and the analytical professions within the SG, as well as background to the current approach on the consultation process, including the Eight Step Approach to Consultation.

6.2 There was discussion around the Participation Framework and where the 'citizen assembly' fits within that. The Chair noted that the SSAC has not always had a systematic approach to roundtable participation so would find it useful to see the Participation Framework. There was general consensus amongst members that the SSAC would benefit from engaging more with SG analysts as part of the project process. Dr MacDougall supportive that the SSAC meets with SG analysts to discuss further.

**Action 27/3 – Secretariat to circulate SG Participation Framework round the SSAC.**

**Action 27/4 – Secretariat to set up meeting between SSAC and relevant SG Analytical colleagues.**

6.3 Discussion amongst members around the use of social media and whether the SSAC should have more of a presence on platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn. Concerns raised about the resources needed for Twitter, given it's more reactive nature but LinkedIn likely to be less resource intensive. Agreement amongst members to discuss this further.

6.4 Following questions from new members, the Chair advised that the SSAC operates under the presumption that it will publish its advice, reports and recommendations unless there is a very clear reason not to. This is one of the elements of the UK Government's Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Councils.

**Action 27/5 - Secretariat to circulate the COPSAC principles to members.**

## 7. Standing Agenda Item - Climate Change

7.1 David Mallon, SG Climate Change Division joined the meeting for this item. He set out the importance of science in numerous climate change related workstreams.

7.2 Professor Inall provided an update on the latest Circular Economy project. Professor Williams is keen for the SSAC report to land well with relevant officials in the SG, making a link to a Circular Economy Working Group he is involved with. Other members of the SSAC also showed an interest in the project so Professor Inall confirmed he would be grateful for any relevant feedback and comments from members.

## 8. Update on past/current/future projects (SSAC Note 22/19)

8.1 Brief updates followed on the Adaptation, Food Security and Aquaculture projects, with meetings ongoing and progress related to recruiting interns to assist with the projects.

## 9. AOB and Date of next meeting

9.1 The next SSAC meeting will be held on 21 March 2023 and will be online.

## Summary of Actions

Action	Item	Lead	Update
26/1	Put forward suggestions for ministerial visits to research/science establishments.	All SSAC	
26/2	Engage with CS(Health) team on funding issues in respect of the BHF review.	Dr Rhona McDonald	
26/3	Set up a smaller subgroup to take forward discussions on science/policy interface.	Secretariat	
27/1	Circulate links to announcements on the Scottish Budget and the SG Innovation Strategy when these become available.	Secretariat	
27/2	Include Innovation Strategy on agenda for next SSAC meeting.	Secretariat	
27/3	Circulate SG Participation Framework round the SSAC.	Secretariat	
27/4	Set up meeting between SSAC and relevant SG Analytical colleagues.	Secretariat	
27/5	Circulate the COPSAC principles to members	Secretariat	