

SSAC Draft Minutes – 15 September 2022

**Virtual Meeting by Zoom
Hosted by Professor Maggie Gill, Chair SSAC**

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>) (Agenda Item 6 onwards)
Professor Bob Ferrier	SSAC Member (Agenda Item 4 onwards)
Dr Caroline Cantley	SSAC Member
Professor John Underhill	SSAC Member
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Member
Professor Marian Scott	SSAC Member (Agenda Item 10)
Dr Kate Donovan	SSAC co-opted Member
Dr Marie McPhillips	Research Collaboration Lead, SFC (Agenda Item 7)
Professor Sarah Skerratt	Chief Executive Designate, RSE (Agenda Item 7)
Dr Mark Bustard	Chief Executive, IBioIC (Agenda Items 6-10)
David Mallon	Head of Climate Change Division, Scottish Government (Agenda Items 9 and 10)
Dr Roddy Macdonald	Scottish Government (SG) Deputy Director Higher Education and Science (Agenda Item 4)
Dr Rhona McDonald	SG Higher Education & Science (Agenda Item 7)
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)
Samantha Cox	Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG) – observer

1. Welcome

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting by formally paying respects to Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

1.2 The Chair stated that today's meeting would be the last official SSAC meeting for Professor Sir Aziz Sheikh and Professor Bob Ferrier whose terms end on 30 November 2022. She thanked both for their efforts during their tenure and wished them well for the future. It was hoped that they could join the SSAC dinner in December.

1.3 The Chair congratulated Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak on her new role as Chief Scientist Health in Scottish Government and welcomed her to the SSAC in her ex-officio capacity.

1.4 The Chair welcomed Dr Kate Donovan to her first SSAC meeting and introduced Samantha Cox who would be observing the meeting as newly recruited into the Science Advice and Engagement team to provide support to the work of the Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland.

1.5 Apologies were recorded from:

Professor Sir Aziz Sheikh
Professor Wayne Powell
Professor Linda Bauld
Professor Mark Inall
Professor Robert Bowman

2. Minutes and Actions from last meeting

2.1 The minutes were agreed and will be published on SSAC website. Actions from the June meeting were completed.

2.2 Previous outstanding actions around agenda topics for future SSAC meetings will be completed for December meeting.

3. SSAC Recruitment

3.1 The Chair advised that the SSAC Recruitment campaign was advertised online from 22 August. Closing date for applications is 30 September – a few applications had been received so far. She encouraged members to continue to share the advertisement with their networks.

4. Update from Dr Roddy Macdonald, Deputy Director Higher Education and Science, Scottish Government

4.1 Dr Macdonald reflected on what he described as a momentous time in history with the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Ministerial engagements will continue after the national mourning period.

4.2 The SG's Programme for Government was published on 6 September with a focus on "cost of living" commitments and environment and climate change issues.

4.3 Dr Macdonald thanked the SSAC for their input to the Innovation Strategy consultation and advised that work continues on that. Much work in his directorate was focussed on the recent Tickell, Grant and Nurse reviews and discussions around Horizon Europe.

4.4 Dr Macdonald would welcome suggestions from SSAC members on research/science initiatives/areas of interest that would be suitable for ministerial visits in the coming months.

Action 26/1 – SSAC to put forward suggestions for ministerial visits to research/ science establishments.

4.5 In response to CS(Health) on the differences in health funding in Scotland identified in the British Heart Foundation (BHF) review, Dr Roddy Macdonald agreed to look into that and discuss with the CS(Health) team.

Action 26/2 – Dr Roddy Macdonald to engage with CS(Health) team on funding issues in respect of the BHF review.

5. Update from Professor Julie Fitzpatrick, Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland

5.1 The CSA provided an update on activity badged under the ScotSCIENCE umbrella, including the first 'Science Bites' lunchtime seminar for SG staff about policy-relevant science and research topics.

5.2 The CSA provided an update on various meetings including the Scottish Aquaculture Council headed by Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, Mairi Gougeon. She also reflected on her recent visits to Dundee (Science Centre and University's Drug Discovery Centre) and Aberdeen (Marine Scotland labs and Net Zero Technology Centre).

5.3 There was discussion around research funding issues, and the Chair advised that it would be helpful to raise these issues during the Panel discussion at Agenda Item 7 and to follow up at the December meeting and feedback to SG.

6. Member Updates

6.1 Professor John Underhill provided a brief overview of Offshore Wind issues and some of the complexities in this area. He felt there was a need for science and technology to feed into this to help decision-making around Energy Transition.

7. Panel Discussion on Science/Policy Interface

7.1 The Chair welcomed and thanked the guest speakers for joining the meeting. The Chair outlined the background for this discussion and stressed she was keen to stimulate discussion on where the SSAC can add value in this space.

7.2 Professor Sarah Skerratt provided an overview on how RSE operates and highlighted outcomes, approach, values and impartiality as being key to the RSE in operating in a crowded space. She also highlighted that they operate a peer review policy control through their Fellowship, which has members from a range of multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral areas. Their work is impartial and evidence-led and from multiple sources, and they choose partnerships with care to enhance approaches, values and outcomes.

7.3 Dr Maria McPhillips talked about a vision for open and collaborative communication between the Alliances for Research Challenges and the SG and felt the SSAC could have a role in signposting to relevant expertise. She highlighted the degree of interaction prior to Covid-19 between Public Health Scotland, SG and researchers had since increased, and welcomed the SSAC Covid report in particular the recommendations around collaboration.

7.4 Dr Rhona McDonald echoed the comments from Professor Skerratt and Dr McPhillips. She advised that many policy makers do not come from a scientific background and having input from learned academics who can translate complex scientific evidence for the lay person is valuable. Early engagement and use of a shared language can help define key issues and understand and identify risks. She highlighted that younger scientists are keen to make connections with government and this is a good opportunity for SSAC and academics to make connections from their wider networks.

7.5 Broad discussion covering a range of topics, followed with a consensus that the next step would be to set up a smaller forum and link with the work of ScotSCIENCE.

Action 26/3 – Secretariat to set up a smaller subgroup to take forward discussions on science/policy interface.

7.6 Dr Caroline Cantley highlighted a previous outstanding action (23/2 – to produce an organogram to show how all the organisations with an interest in science, link together, eg Marine Scotland, SEFARI institutes, CAMERAS and others). She suggested that RSE could be a good source to use to simplify that.

7.7 There was discussion about the benefits – and complexities – of trying to map the diverse organisations in the Scottish science landscape. Secretariat to explore existing material in this space and report to the next meeting as part of outstanding action 23/2 noted above.

8. Update on Circular Economy project – Chair

8.1 The Chair advised that the Circular Economy project lead was unable to attend the meeting and provided an update on his behalf.

8.2 The Circular Economy Roundtable event is set for 20 October, with a questionnaire being sent in advance to relevant stakeholders.

Action 26/4 – Members to suggest further potential invitees for the Circular Economy Roundtable, noting that it would be helpful to include those from a data background.

9. Standing Agenda Item - Climate Change - Chair and David Mallon, Scottish Government Climate Change Division

9.1 The Chair advised that Professor Julian Jones had agreed to lead the overarching Climate Change co-ordination sub-group given the number of complex and contentious areas ahead with current SSAC projects and would look to include him in discussions with David Mallon, SG.

9.2 David Mallon pointed to the Programme for Government's focus on the cost of living crisis. He suggested that much could be delivered in that area that would also benefit climate change commitments.

9.3 There was discussion about longer term resilience in the area of energy, including the contribution of the new Energy Strategy and the Just Transition Plan to encourage the sector to take a whole systems approach.

10. Update on past/current/future projects (SSAC Note 22/14)

10.1 **Adaptation** – Professor Bob Ferrier thanked Dr Donovan for the work she had done on updating the scoping document to reflect the discussions with SG policy leads. It was agreed that the focus of the project would be an audit of place-based evidence.

Action 26/5 – SSAC members to advise secretariat if they wish to join the Adaptation or Climate Change Co-ordination subgroups.

10.2 **Food and Drink** – Professor Marian Scott advised that the current scoping document had taken time to formulate given the complexities and other work on-going in this area and had narrowed the focus on food security down to local food.

Action 26/6 - The Chair, Professor Scott and CSA ENRA to have discussion to ensure no overlap with suggested SSAC food project and other government projects.

10.3 **Energy** – Professor John Underhill planned to have a draft report ready to share with wider SSAC for comment in the next week or so. There had been positive feedback from SG colleagues on the roundtable event held on 5 July.

10.4 **Aquaculture** –The Scoping Agreement will be uploaded on the SSAC website and link issued to SG to be included in the official announcement towards the end of September. Going forward, all SSAC Scoping Agreements will be uploaded onto the SSAC website.

Action 26/7 – Members encouraged to let Secretariat know if they wish to be involved in the Aquaculture working group.

10.5 **Past Reports** – The Chair outlined some of the feedback received on past SSAC reports.

11. Collaborative Research in Scotland

11.1 This item was covered in the panel discussion at Item 7.

12. AOB

12.1 No items were raised.

13. Date of next meeting 13 December 2022

13.1 The Chair thanked all for agreeing to change time of original December meeting from the morning to afternoon. This was to facilitate holding the induction meeting for new members in the morning.

13.2 Current members will be invited to join the new recruits at lunch ahead of the main afternoon meeting. A dinner will then take place in the evening – venue to be determined.

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 Roddy Macdonald	
26/3	Set up a smaller subgroup to take forward discussions on science/policy interface.	Secretariat	
26/4	Suggest further potential invitees for the Circular Economy Roundtable, noting that it would be helpful to include those from a data background.	All SSAC	
26/5	Advise secretariat if they wish to join the Adaptation or Climate Change Co-ordination subgroups.	All SSAC	
26/6	Discussion to ensure no overlap with suggested SSAC food project and other government projects.	Chair, Marian Scott and CSAENRA	
26/7	Advise Secretariat if they wish to be involved in the Aquaculture working group.	All SSAC	