

Minutes of SSAC Meeting, 19 September 2023

Dynamic Earth, Holyrood Rd, Edinburgh, Midlothian, EH8 8AS

Attendees:

| Name | Position |
|------------------------------|---|
| Professor Maggie Gill | SSAC Chair |
| Professor Linda Bauld | Chief Social Policy Adviser (<i>ex-officio member</i>) - (<i>Item 6 via online</i>) |
| Professor Louise Horsfall | SSAC Member |
| Professor Julian Jones | SSAC Member |
| Dr Graham Kerr | SSAC Member |
| Professor Nick Owens | SSAC Member |
| Professor Martyn Pickersgill | SSAC Member |
| Professor Murray Roberts | SSAC Member |
| Professor Melanie Simms | SSAC Member |
| Dr Connor Blair | SSAC Associate |
| Dr Mariana Garcia Criado | SSAC Associate |
| Professor Tahseen Jafry | SSAC Co-opt Member |
| Dermot Rhatigan | Deputy Director, Industrial Transformation and Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser (SG) (Items 2-4) |
| Dr Cornilius Chikwama | Audit Director, Audit Scotland (Item 4) |
| David Mallon | Head of Policy and Implementation Unit, Climate Change Division, Scottish Government (SG) - (Agenda Item 6) |
| Dr Hermione Cockburn | Science Director, Dynamic Earth (Item 9) |
| Sam Cox | Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG) |
| Caroline Murray | SSAC Secretariat, Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG) |

1. Welcome and actions from last meeting

Apologies:

- Professor Julie Fitzpatrick
- Professor Mat Williams
- Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak
- Professor Bruce Whitelaw
- Professor Lisa Boden
- Dr Catherine Elliott
- Professor Marian Scott
- Professor Robert Bowman
- Jo Ward

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies. She welcomed Professor Jafry to her first SSAC meeting.

1.2. The Chair advised that this would be the last official SSAC meeting for her, Professors Marian Scott and Robert Bowman whose terms end on 30 November.

1.3 The Chair expressed her deep appreciation and thanks for the sterling service provided by Professor Scott during her term on the council, with her contributing to almost all of the project working groups and several roundtables. Alongside her leadership on the SSAC response to the SG Digital Strategy Consultation and the latest Food Systems project which is near publication stage.

1.4 The Chair also expressed her thanks to Professor Bowman for his leadership of the SSAC sustainable chemicals report, the SG Innovation Strategy Consultation and as chair of a breakout out discussion in the ECR roundtable.

1.5 The Chair advised that a new Chair for the SSAC had been appointed and will be announced officially soon. She also announced that the terms of appointment for two Associate members, Drs Criado and Blair had been extended by another 12 months with the unanimous support of the Council.

1.6 The Chair noted the previous minutes had been approved and published online.

1.7 Actions were noted as completed except for the following:

28/1 – Science/Policy interface working group – this was delayed due to the draft report stage of both SSAC current projects on Food and Adaptation and would be discussed later in the meeting at Item 5. The Chair advised that progress had been made with the SG Analytical Leadership Group and it is hoped to have a meeting with them soon.

28/3 – The FM Letter – the Chair noted that after much discussion it was agreed to close this item but instead she will issue a personal reflection of her views at the end of her SSAC term.

28/5 - The social media action – the Chair advised that this action would continue and will involve one of our Early Career Researchers who had attended a previous roundtable and had won awards as a social media influencer.

29/3 – The Climate Change Co-ordination paper will be issued once relevant findings from Food and Adaptation reports are included.

2. Introduction to Dermot Rhatigan, Deputy Director, Industrial Transformation and Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser (IT&OCSA), Directorate for Economic Development

2.1 The Chair welcomed Mr Rhatigan to the meeting to speak on the recent Programme for Government.

2.2 Mr Rhatigan provided a summary of the PfG from a DG Economy focus outlining the 3 main missions on equality, opportunity and community. Among other areas, he briefly touched on the commitment to renewable energy projects, the target for onshore wind farms and a focus on entrepreneurship and advised that work was underway around entrepreneurial campuses directly linked to universities.

2.3 He stated there was also a focus on the green economy and the move toward net zero with a commitment to a green industrial strategy which will link in with the energy strategy and just transition plan.

2.4 The Chair thanked Mr Rhatigan for his input and discussion followed on these areas including questions around how the entrepreneurial campuses would work with 'tech scalars' and about the design of some of the existing support available to 'post-doc' entrepreneurs spinning out businesses from universities.

2.5 Mr Rhatigan advised he would be content to arrange a discussion with relevant SG area on the entrepreneurial issues raised.

Action 30/1 – Secretariat to liaise with SG policy area regarding entrepreneurial campuses and existing 'post doc' entrepreneurial support to arrange discussion with relevant SSAC members.

3. Members' Updates

3.1 The Chair advised that written ex-officio updates were provided with the meeting papers and the Chief Social Policy Advisor was due to join the meeting online to provide an update.

3.2 Members provided brief updates including note of the Arctic Science Week to be held in Edinburgh in March 2024, the end of the recent SEPA consultation on sea lice, recent updates regarding UKRI and ARIA and welcomed the news of the UK rejoining Horizon Europe.

3.3 The Chief Policy Social Advisor outlined her continued work on pandemic preparedness, chairing cross government analytical group on the cost of living and attending regular ScotSCIENCE-Network meetings. She also advised that an independent review of social security in Scotland was underway.

3.4 She stated that the COVID recovery strategy is moving to public service reform and will share the report with SSAC once ready and noted that there was a lot of work across government regarding the Covid Inquiry.

4. Dr Cornilius Chikwama, Audit Director, Audit Scotland – Presentation on Science and Evidence in Policy Making

4.1 The Chair welcomed Dr Chikwama to the meeting who delivered an informative presentation on the functions and policy process cycles of Audit Scotland in looking at the performance side of public bodies including SG and local government.

4.2 SSAC members raised a few queries on where in the process cycle science advice comes in and where consideration of ethics factored in the process which Dr Chikwama addressed.

4.3 There was discussion around challenge led and investigator led research and how these fit into the process and Dr Chikwama outlined the science community available within government and how they link with the wider community.

5. Future Projects Updates

5.1 Science Policy Interface

- The Chair delivered a presentation on the science policy interface work which generated a lot of discussion on how best SSAC could take this forward.
- The Chief Social Policy Advisor mentioned that the Science Advice and Engagement team had a new secondee recently join them on a temporary basis and suggested it would be helpful for her and the SSAC to work together on this.
- There was a suggestion that it would be helpful to focus on local government and the Chief Social Policy Advisor welcomed this approach.
- There was discussion on the extent to which SSAC's work should be proactive versus reactive and the need to express our purpose to service government needs
- The Chair asked if any other members were interested in joining the existing working group to advise the secretariat.

5.2 Space

- Dr Kerr advised that the scoping document had been circulated for SSAC agreement and would now be placed as the final scoping agreement on the SSAC website.
- He advised that he was looking to include three external academics to join the existing working group and confirmed that a former SSAC member, Professor Colin McInnes, had agreed to join.
- The project would include a questionnaire and roundtable and was expected to complete in six months

Action 30/2 – Secretariat to upload Space Scoping Agreement on SSAC website and set up next working group meeting.

5.3 AI/Emerging Technologies

- Secretariat advised that this project was requested by CSA Scotland for SSAC to look at a series of evaluation reports of emerging technologies produced by GO-Science through a 'Scottish' lens. Engagement with GO-Science was ongoing and an update would be provided in due course.

5.4 Offshore Wind

- Professor Roberts advised that since early discussions on the potential scope of this project, SG had put out an invitation to tender on the impact of electromagnetic fields on marine species and suggested that as this space is

beginning to get quite busy, asked whether we should consider a pause on this project or take forward.

- Professor Owens stated that offshore companies were also being asked to do more regarding environmental impacts.
- Professor Roberts said there was a need to define the scope of the project in the current landscape
- David Mallon suggested it would be useful for SSAC to discuss with SG policy colleagues in Offshore Wind regarding impact assessments.

Action 30/3 – Secretariat to arrange discussions between Professor Roberts and David Mallon on defining the Offshore Wind scoping document with relevant SG colleagues.

6. Standing Agenda Item – Climate Change – Maggie Gill and David Mallon, Climate Change Division, Scottish Government

Adaptation

6.1 David Mallon advised that the Adaptation roundtable was well attended and he had had sight of the draft report that was circulated and had fed back some comments.

6.2 He also advised that he was to finalise detailed notes from the Early Career Researchers roundtable on mitigation organised by SSAC Associate members and Professor Jones.

6.3 Professor Jafry raised the issue of inclusivity in climate justice in Just Transition conversations, particularly on how we deal with the ‘just’ part to support and inform local government going forward on adaptation/mitigation plans about placed based adaptation.

6.4 David Mallon advised that the Climate Change Plan framework needs to fit in with the Just Transition plans and would be more of an opportunity to inform the adaptation programme. A draft version would be issued for consultation in January 2024.

Action 30/4 – SSAC to respond to Climate Change Plan Consultation

6.5 Other suggestions were put forward to include in the SSAC adaptation report regarding how well community efforts in this area were shared at COP26 and would be useful to link to that evidence in the report.

7. Update on past/current/future projects (SSAC Note 23/16)

7.1 The Chair reflected on the key lessons learned on taking forward SSAC projects and the importance of listening to SG policy colleagues, obtaining regular feedback/sense-check and sharing executive summaries to ensure continued alignment with policy needs. This had been highlighted as a lesson learnt during the Food project, with the Food sector being a particularly complex and dynamic area.

7.2 Feedback on past projects/reports was provided in the meeting papers (Note 23/17).

8. AOB

8.1 ARIA – Professor Roberts shared his reflections after attending a recent webinar on the ARIA programme and a brief discussion took place among members on their personal views of this work.

8.2 Honours List Nominations – Secretariat raised on behalf of the CSA Scotland to ask SSAC members to consider offering nominations in the Science, Technology and Research category. Deadline for nominations 20 October 2023.

9. Dr Hermione Cockburn, Director, Dynamic Earth - Overview of Dynamic Earth and Engagement Programme

9.1 Dr Cockburn provided a presentation on the work of Dynamic Earth and provided copies of their 10 year strategy ‘From Beginning to Mend’ which was published in Spring 2023.

10. Next meeting – 12 December 13.00-17.00 – Edinburgh in person

Summary of Actions

| Action | Item | Lead | Update |
|--------|--|--------------------|--------|
| 28/1 | follow up on SSAC Science/Policy Interface WG with volunteers – Professors Boden, Dominiczak, Pickersgill, Roberts and Simms and Drs Blair, Criado, Elliott and Kerr | Chair | |
| 28/5 | arrange meeting with associate members and other SSAC volunteers to take forward discussions on SSAC Social Media. | Professor Whitelaw | |
| 29/3 | circulate Climate Change Co-ordination paper once finalised | Secretariat | |
| 30/1 | liaise with SG policy area regarding entrepreneurial campuses and existing post doc entrepreneurial support to arrange discussion with relevant SSAC members. | Secretariat | |
| 30/2 | upload Space Scoping Agreement on SSAC website and set up next working group meeting. | Secretariat | |
| 30/3 | arrange discussions between Professor Roberts and David Mallon on defining the Offshore Wind scoping document with relevant SG colleagues. | Secretariat | |
| 30/4 | SSAC to respond to Climate Change Plan Consultation | Secretariat | |