

## SSAC Minutes – 7 June 2022

Hybrid Meeting – hosted by Professor Maggie Gill, Chair SSAC  
RSE, 22-26 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PQ

### Attendees:

Name	Position
Professor Maggie Gill	SSAC Chair
Professor Julie Fitzpatrick	Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland ( <i>ex officio member</i> )
Professor Linda Bauld	Chief Social Policy Adviser ( <i>ex officio member</i> ) (Agenda items 5 and 6 ) (online)
Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak	SSAC Member
Professor Bob Ferrier	SSAC Member
Dr Caroline Cantley	SSAC Member (online)
Professor John Underhill	SSAC Member (online)
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Member
Professor Mark Inall	SSAC Member
Professor Robert Bowman	SSAC member
Professor Wayne Powell	SSAC member (Agenda Item 10) online
Mr Mike Robinson	(Agenda Item 4)
Dr Nick Starkey	(Agenda Item 10) (online)
David Mallon	Head of Climate Change Division, Scottish Government (Agenda items 5-6) (online)
Dr Roddy Macdonald	Scottish Government (SG) Deputy Director Higher Education and Science (Agenda item 3) (online)
Dr Rhona McDonald	SG Higher Education & Science, Observer (online)
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

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the first hybrid SSAC meeting. The Chair noted that Professor Aziz Sheikh had received a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Members passed on their congratulations. Apologies were noted from:

Professor Sir Aziz Sheikh  
Professor Marian Scott  
Professor Mat Williams  
Dr Mark Bustard, IBioIC (regular attendee)

### 2. Minutes and Actions from Previous Meeting

2.1 There was a slight amendment noted to the previous minutes and the final version was agreed for publication on the SSAC website.

2.2 Professor Bob Ferrier confirmed that he would be happy to help with the Adaptation project until the end of his SSAC term.

**Action 25/1 – Secretariat to close previous Adaptation actions and arrange an Adaptation subgroup meeting with SG policy leads and representatives from Sniffer.**

### **3. Update from Dr Roddy Macdonald, Deputy Director Higher Education and Science, Scottish Government (SG)**

3.1 Dr Roddy Macdonald gave a short update on ongoing priorities including the resource spending review which was published on 31 May. He referenced SFC research funding allocations and REF (Research Excellence Framework) planning and was keen to hear views from SSAC on both. He highlighted ongoing engagement with UK Government (UKG), including on ARIA and Horizon Europe.

**Action 25/2 – Secretariat and Chair to consider research funding and wider research landscape in Scotland as an agenda item for a future SSAC meeting.**

### **4. Mr Mike Robinson, Chief Executive, Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS)**

4.1 Mr Robinson outlined the history and background of RSGS and shared the trailer for the film which was made for COP26 by RSGS and a coalition of organisations interested in campaigning on climate change. He stated that collaboration was a key issue and theme emerging from the film and discussion. As climate change is a huge issue there was a need for organisations to work together as one to get messages across and gather support and awareness.

4.2 He also highlighted the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) on climate solutions that were launched by RSGS in 2020 and are now shared on line worldwide. Discussion followed about the demographics of the sign ups with over 50,000 courses undertaken and RSGS's ambitions for the courses.

4.3 The SSAC roundtable on Energy and Just Transition was discussed in the context of this work. The Chair thanked Mr Robinson for his presentation and it was agreed that Mr Robinson would be invited to the Energy Roundtable in July.

### **5. Standing Agenda Item – Climate Change**

5.1 David Mallon reflected on the Early Career Researcher (ECR) virtual roundtable organised by SSAC on 11 May stating that there was enthusiastic discussion and participation and a range of cross cutting issues were raised.

5.2 Professor Mark Inall, who chaired one of the roundtable breakout groups, highlighted the lack of awareness among some ECRs of the TIMES model which is a key tool to inform the setting of targets in the Climate Change.

5.3 David Mallon stated the next Climate Change Plan was due to be published at the end of 2023. He suggested it would be good if SSAC could reconvene another ECR event on adaptation.

5.4 There was some discussion around skills and whether there was scope for the SSAC to do something in this space. It was agreed that this is a complex landscape requiring further consideration in terms of education, skills development and re-skilling. Members

agreed that a specific focus would be needed before starting work in this area but could be discussed again in future.

## **6. Update on Past/Current/Future Projects**

6.1 Updates were provided on progress with current subgroup projects –

- Circular Economy - Intern was now in place and monthly subgroup meetings scheduled to take forward discussions.
- Energy – The questionnaires were being finalised for issue w/c 13 June with a virtual roundtable set for 5 July. Professor Linda Bauld expressed an interest in this area and requested to be copied into roundtable arrangements.
- Quantum – First proof of the report had been provided for comment/amendments and the report was expected to be published end of June/early July. It was noted that there was a close connection to some of the issues raised in the Innovation Strategy consultation emphasising the need for cross referencing of SSAC reports.
- Aquaculture – The Chair advised that the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, Mairi Gougeon MSP, had commissioned the SSAC to undertake a piece of work in the aquaculture space. Discussion is underway with SG policy colleagues to develop an appropriate scoping agreement.
- Associate Membership – The Chair provided an updated note on associate membership criteria for discussion under Recruitment at Item 8. Co-opting Dr Kate Crowley onto the SSAC in the interim to assist with the adaptation subgroup work was agreed by SSAC.
- Innovation Strategy Consultation – The Chair advised that the SSAC should provide positive responses linked to SSAC past reports.

**Action 25/3 – Secretariat to arrange a meeting with Innovation Strategy policy leads to discuss SSAC input to the consultation.**

- Past reports – an update was provided with the meeting papers.

## **7. Update from Professor Julie Fitzpatrick, Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland (CSA)**

7.1 The CSA updated that activities had launched under the ScotSCIENCE umbrella to strengthen science support in SG. This would include promoting the work of the SSAC to Ministers and policy officials across SG. Activities include a series of 'Science Bites' seminars aimed at bringing research topics to life and highlighting their relevance to SG policy. The CSA would welcome any suggestions for suitably engaging speakers from SSAC members.

7.2 The CSA confirmed that she was involved in discussions with colleagues across the UK CSA Network in connection with UK government science and research-related strategies and initiatives to ensure appropriate Scottish representation.

## **8. Member Updates and Recruitment**

8.1 There was discussion around imminent SSAC recruitment which would be advertising for 11 members – including two associate members from early career researchers. Members noted the need to ensure the recruitment process is fair and transparent.

## **9. Update on SSAC Covid-19 Report following Parliamentary Committee on Covid Recovery**

9.1 The Chair noted that she attended the Parliamentary Committee on Covid Recovery which was informal and commented that the members were very engaged in learning what they could do. It had been noted at the event that the Scottish science base feeds in variously to the innovation agenda, although there is a need for better connectedness between Academia/Industry to accelerate exchange of knowledge.

## **10. Dr Nick Starkey, Director of Policy, Royal Academy of Engineers (RAEng)**

10.1 Dr Starkey shared a presentation on the work of the RAEng on systems approaches and which they had developed to help “build capacity, capability and systems to make better use of engineering expertise in policy and move the dial on ‘systems’ approaches to policy”.

10.2 There was some discussion around identifying gaps or the next crisis, and the need for better understanding of policy by scientists. Dr Starkey suggested there was a good relationship with the supply side and goodwill with organisations to work collaboratively with clear ground rules on an opt-in basis on issues relevant to their own organisation.

10.3 It was noted that networks and industry had responded very well in Scotland around Covid, demonstrating efficiency and resilience.

10.4 The Chair thanked Dr Starkey for his presentation and offered an open invite for continuing dialogue.

## **11. AOB**

11.1 It was noted that the 13 December SSAC meeting will be held in Edinburgh in person.

## **12. Date of next SSAC meeting 15 September 2022**

**Action 25/4 – Secretariat to seek views on members’ preference for future meetings, in terms of whether these are held online, in person, or a hybrid format.**

## Summary of Actions –

Action	Item	Lead	Update
25/1	Secretariat to close previous Adaptation actions and arrange an Adaptation subgroup meeting with SG policy leads and representatives from Sniffer.	Secretariat	
25/2	Consider research funding and wider research landscape in Scotland as an agenda item for a future SSAC meeting.	Secretariat	
25/3	Secretariat to arrange a meeting with Innovation Strategy policy leads to discuss SSAC input to the consultation.	Secretariat	
25/4	Secretariat to seek views on members' preference for future meetings, in terms of whether these are held online, in person, or a hybrid format.	Secretariat	