

SSAC Minutes – 8 December 2021

Zoom Meeting – 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 David Crossman	Chief Scientist (Health) (<i>ex officio member</i>)
Professor Andrew Millar	Chief Scientific Adviser Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (ENRA) (<i>ex officio member</i>)
Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak	SSAC Member
Professor Bob Ferrier	SSAC Member
Dr Caroline Cantley	SSAC Member
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Member
Professor Marian Scott	SSAC Member
Professor Mark Inall	SSAC Member
Professor John Underhill	SSAC Member
Professor Wayne Powell	SSAC member
Professor Robert Bowman	SSAC member
Dr Roddy McDonald	Scottish Government (SG) Deputy Director Higher Education and Science (Agenda Item 4)
Simon Gill	Head of Whole System and Technical Policy, SG Directorate for Energy and Climate Change (Agenda Item 7)
Orion Meyer	SG, Directorate for Energy and Climate Change (Agenda Item 7)
Professor Sir Ian Boyd	Chair, First Minister's Environmental Council (Agenda Item 8)
David Mallon	Head of Climate Change Division, Scottish Government (Agenda Item 9)
Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser	Chief Executive UKRI (Agenda Item 10)
Professor Mathew Williams	Taking up CSA ENRA post in Jan 2022 (Observer)
Mark Bustard	CEO IBioIC (Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre) (Observer)
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 Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Prof Mathew Williams and Mark Bustard. Apologies were noted from:

Professor Aziz Sheikh
Professor Linda Bauld

1.2 The Chair noted that it was the CSAENRA's last SSAC meeting and gave thanks for all his work on the Council.

2. Minutes and Actions of last meeting

2.1 There were some minor comments made on the previous minutes which were accepted. The minutes will be amended and published on the SSAC website.

2.2 Most previous actions were completed with a few ongoing which will be followed up by the next Quarterly SSAC meeting.

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

3.1 The CSA provided an overview of her recent activity, including Covid response, contact with the UK CSA Network and plans to increase the visibility of science and innovation within the Scottish Government.

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

4.1 Roddy Macdonald outlined some of the current work ongoing in the Directorate, including discussions with colleagues in UKRI and the UK Government on initiatives linked to Higher Education Research policy. He noted the publication of the Scottish Funding Council's Review and the SG's response to that, and that the Scottish Budget would be formally agreed in the New Year.

Action 23.1 – SSAC Secretariat to issue link to the SFC review to SSAC members.

4.2 There was general discussion around the importance of Horizon Europe, science visibility within Government and the UK Government's 'levelling up' agenda. In terms of science visibility, members agreed that social science should be included here. The Chair advised it would be useful to have a diagram showing how all the organisations with an interest in science within and at arm's length to SG link together, eg Marine Scotland, SEFARI institutes, CAMERAS and others.

Action 23.2 – SSAC Secretariat to produce an organogram to link the various organisations, with input from science and policy colleagues in the rural/environment area.

5. Member Updates

5.1 The Chair congratulated Professor John Underhill on his new appointment as Director, Interdisciplinary Centre for Energy Transition at the University of Aberdeen, which he will begin on 1 March 2022.

5.2 Council members briefly highlighted some work they were aware of around the Innovation Strategy, Centres of Expertise (including on Climate Change and Water), the SFC study/consultation on changes to the Research Excellence Grant and the SFC review regarding the research pool network.

6. Update on Current Projects

6.1 The Chair outlined that going forward Commissioning Notes will be referred to as Scoping Documents and once agreed and signed off by the full SSAC will become Scoping Agreements.

6.2 **Quantum Technology** – Professor Julian Jones outlined the latest position with the project advising that a roundtable is expected in mid-January 2022 with a broad group of stakeholders identified. He asked SSAC members to advise if there were any contacts they were aware of who should be included. Following the roundtable event a draft report will be circulated to the wider SSAC for comment before the final version is completed by end of March 2022.

6.3 **Covid-19 Legacy** – Dame Anna Dominiczak outlined the latest position with the project advising that they too would be holding a roundtable event in mid-January and had broadly followed the example of the QT roundtable with breakout groups identified and welcomed suggestions from SSAC members for additional relevant stakeholders.

Action 23.3 – Bob Ferrier to provide Centre of Expertise contacts to be included in the Covid-19 legacy roundtable.

6.4 There was some discussion around independence of the project work and any potential overlap with the work of the SG's new Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness. Further discussions to be held offline to discuss the scoping document in more detail.

6.5. **Food Security** – Professor Marian Scott advised that there had been an introductory meeting with SG policy officials around the potential for a food and nutrition project. A scoping document around food security is to be drafted and will be circulated to wider SSAC for comment. Professor Wayne Powell volunteered assistance with this project.

Action 23.4 – Marian Scott to create Food Security Scoping Document and circulate for SSAC comment

6.6 Climate Change Adaptation/Mitigation – The Chair advised that this would be discussed in more detail at Agenda Item 9.

6.7 Update on Past Reports – The Chair advised that an update had been circulated with the meeting papers and encouraged members to read these reports.

7. Refresh of Energy and Just Transition Strategy

7.1 Simon Gill delivered a presentation on the Energy Strategy Refresh and Just Transition Plan, providing background on the latest position and timescales for delivering key pieces of this work.

7.2 It was agreed that further discussion around this topic would be required to identify what work SSAC could do to help with the challenges in this area.

Action 23.5 – Secretariat to arrange meeting with volunteers from SSAC members (John Underhill, David Crossman, Julie Fitzpatrick, Jan Webb, Mark Inall) and Simon Gill and his team in January 2022 to discuss what work SSAC could do to assist SG policy colleagues going forward.

8. Update on First Minister's Environmental Council (FMEC)

8.1 Sir Ian Boyd, Chair of FMEC, presented FMEC's operation and plans to the SSAC. The FMEC had held their first meeting recently which the CSA attended as an observer. The FMEC is scheduled to meet twice a year and Sir Ian is happy to continue dialogue with SSAC Chair.

Action 23.6 – SSAC Secretariat to engage with FMEC Secretariat and arrange discussions with SSAC Chair/Sir Ian Boyd as required.

9. Standing Agenda Item - Climate Change

9.1 The Chair advised that there was potential for a roundtable in March/April 2022 to gather data on emerging issues, and introduced David Mallon to discuss ideas/suggestions.

9.2 David Mallon outlined the current landscape and how best to focus dialogue on the work around the Strategic Framework annual targets for net zero for 2025.

9.3 It was suggested that SG should identify key strategic or policy questions and see where SSAC can add value and help with a roundtable event to include Early Career Researchers (ECRs). There was some discussion about involving CSAENRA if appropriate during the planning stage.

Action 23.7 – SSAC Chair to follow up discussion with David Mallon around the possibility of convening a roundtable of SSAC members and early career researchers, to focus on the Climate Change Plan Update and areas where expert science advice from the SSAC can add value.

9.4 The scoping document for circular economy will need to be refined and will be addressed post-SSAC meeting with the project leads. Once agreed with SG Circular Economy policy colleagues the scoping agreement will be circulated to the wider SSAC for sign off so work can begin in early New Year.

Action 23.8 – Secretariat to arrange climate change (circular economy) subgroup meeting in January 2022 to include Caroline Cantley, Mark Inall, Marian Scott and Bob Ferrier to progress the project.

9.5 The Chair advised that the Climate Change Adaptation project will change name to Resilience (which should include Transport and Infrastructure). She also noted that she would follow up leads for a social scientist to be involved with this subgroup work.

10. Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser, Chief Executive UKRI

10.1 Dame Ottoline gave an overview of UKRI strategy, and the challenges and opportunities following on from the pandemic and the UK Government's views on an innovation-led economy.

10.2 There was wide ranging discussion and questions on a number of issues including Scotland's place within the UKRI strategy, where SSAC fits in the wider landscape and synergy between SSAC and UKRI, clusters, Scotland's record of collaboration, Research pools, and Innovation Centres in particular.

11. AOB

11.1 Reflections on COP26 in Glasgow – SSAC members provided their views on the COP26 event in Glasgow.

11.2 The Chair thanked Mark Bustard for his attendance at the meeting and asked for his observations on where SSAC can best work with industry. He noted the difference in speed at which the SSAC works in providing high level support to policy development vs the timescale

of industry and suggested the Innovation Centre network as a potential sounding board for the SSAC operating at the research/innovation/industry interface.

12. Meeting ends – date of next meeting - 9 March 2022

Summary of Actions

Action	Item	Update
20/3	Chair and Secretariat to discuss further SSAC's possible input to consultations, noting the importance of early engagement with policy teams, where possible, and the value that SSAC can add to consultations on major, cross-cutting or strategic issues.	
21/3	Discussion on HE research funding issues to be added to the agenda for a future SSAC meeting.	
22/3	Energy Scoping Document to be drafted at a later stage.	
22/5	Bob Ferrier and Marian Scott volunteered to be involved in further discussions with Ruth and Ellie (Sniffer) to identify if there was any work that SSAC could do in Adaptation.	
22/8	Bob and Marian to explore with Ruth the idea of food and land use linking in with the adaptation work stream.	
23/1	SSAC Secretariat to issue link to the SFC review to SSAC members.	
23/2	SSAC Secretariat to produce an organogram to link the various organisations, with input from science and policy colleagues in the rural/environment area.	
23/3	Bob Ferrier to provide Centre of Expertise contacts to be included in the Covid-19 legacy roundtable.	
23/4	Marian Scott to create Food Security Scoping Document and circulate for SSAC comment	
23/5	Secretariat to arrange meeting with volunteers from SSAC members (John Underhill, David Crossman, Julie Fitzpatrick, Jan Webb, Mark Inall) and Simon Gill and his team in January 2022 to discuss what work SSAC could do to assist SG policy colleagues going forward.	
23/6	SSAC Secretariat to engage with FMEC Secretariat and arrange discussions with SSAC Chair/Sir Ian Boyd as required.	
23/7	SSAC Chair to follow up discussion with David Mallon around the possibility of convening a roundtable of SSAC members and early career researchers, to focus on the Climate Change Plan Update and areas where expert science advice from the SSAC can add value.	
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