

SSAC Draft Minutes – 9 March 2022

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>) (Agenda items 1-3)
Professor Linda Bauld	Chief Social Policy Adviser (<i>ex officio member</i>) (Agenda items 1-3)
Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak	SSAC Member (Agenda items 1, 4-7)
Professor Aziz Sheikh	SSAC Member
Dr Caroline Cantley	SSAC Member
Professor John Underhill	SSAC Member
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Member
Professor Marian Scott	SSAC Member (Agenda items 1-6)
Professor Mark Inall	SSAC Member
Professor Robert Bowman	SSAC member
Professor Wayne Powell	SSAC member
Professor Sir Jim McDonald	Council for Science and Technology (CST) (Agenda item 2)
Professor Deborah Roberts	ClimateXchange (CXC) (Agenda item 3)
Dr Roddy Macdonald	Scottish Government (SG) Deputy Director Higher Education and Science (Agenda item 4)
David Mallon	Head of Climate Change Division, Scottish Government (Agenda items 9-10)
Dr Kate Crowley	Co-Director of the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute (Agenda items 9-10)
Dr Rhona McDonald	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 Minutes of Last meeting

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Professor Bauld to her first SSAC meeting. Apologies were noted from:

Professor Ferrier
Professor Williams
Dr Mark Bustard, IBIoC (regular attendee)

1.2 The previous minutes were agreed and will be published on the SSAC website.

1.3 Most previous actions were completed with a few ongoing around Climate Change Adaptation, which would be covered at Item 9. The SSAC were invited to respond to the SG Consultation – Resource Spending Review (RSR) Framework by SG Domestic Climate Change Division.

Action 24/1 – Chair agreed to prepare response to SG RSR Framework Consultation and circulate to SSAC for comment by 27 March.

2. Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Prime Minister’s Council for Science and Technology (CST)

2.1 Sir Jim provided an overview of his work with the CST. He reflected on some of the big issues around Net Zero and innovation eco systems and pointed to the strong connectivity between CST and the UK Government (UKG). He advised that while UKG is not bound by what CST says, it is able to influence government, and highlighted an example of a letter on systems based approach to Net Zero. Sir Jim stated that connectivity, influence and feedback were the key message. He talked of the national academies represented on CST and their importance and recommended tighter connectivity between SSAC and national academies.

2.2 Sir Jim discussed Scotland’s Industry Leadership Groups (ILGs) and felt now would be a good time for SSAC to engage with them as an opportunity to connect science advice around innovation and net zero. He felt some of these groups would benefit from being well connected with SSAC.

2.3 The chair thanked Sir Jim for his time, excellent presentation and follow up discussion and welcomed his offer to engage further.

Action 24/2 – Chair to follow up with Professor Sir Jim McDonald on his offer to facilitate Royal Academy of Engineering speaker at future SSAC meeting.

Action 24/3 – SSAC Secretariat to ensure the upcoming SSAC recruitment campaign reflects the need for industry candidates.

3. Professor Deborah Roberts, Director, ClimateXChange (CXC)

3.1 Professor Roberts shared a presentation of the work of the CXC providing an overview of the models used to see how their work developed over time. CXC have around 40-45 projects per year which are managed by their secretariat. They work with relevant Scottish Government Directorates to co-design projects around net zero ambitions for Scotland.

3.2 The Chair thanked Professor Roberts for the useful presentation and SSAC members posed some questions around how CXC work was commissioned and what quality assurance checks were undertaken for pieces of work.

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

4.1 Roddy Macdonald provided an overview of the current work within the directorate. He advised that work was ongoing on the Spending Review which is expected to be published in May 2022.

4.2 SG and academic institutions were involved with work regarding international students and academics affected by the current situation in Ukraine.

4.3 The Innovation Strategy was expected to be published in the summer and the UKG's recent announcement of Innovation Accelerators for Glasgow was welcomed.

4.4 SSAC members asked about the Research Excellence Framework (REF) cycle coming to an end and whether there will be a convening exercise about implications for Scotland thinking strategically about how Scotland moves forward.

Action 24/4 - Dr Roddy Macdonald to check the position regarding REF and feed back in due course.

5. Updates from Members

5.1 Professor Scott's draft scoping document for the SSAC Food project had been circulated with the meeting papers for comment. She explained that the focus was still to be sharpened due to the number of cross cutting areas involved.

Action 24/5 - Secretariat to convene Food subgroup meeting with SG officials and include Professors Powell, Ferrier, Scott, CSA and SSAC Chair.

5.2 SSAC members mentioned areas of work they were aware of, and involved in, covering: the Just Transition Strategic Taskforce, Research Pool Directors to discuss Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) and the REF cycle coming to an end.

6. Update from Professor Julie Fitzpatrick, Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland (CSA)

6.1 The CSA highlighted progress in developing a 'ScotSCIENCE' initiative to strengthen support for science in SG.

6.2 The CSA highlighted discussions around the UKRI strategy and the review process that was underway. She also advised that meetings on Sir Paul Nurse's Science Landscape Review and the SG's STEM Education and Training Strategy were ongoing.

6.3 The CSA advised that the Ukraine issues were raised within the UK CSA network.

6.4 There was a brief discussion about the possibility of recruiting early career researchers as associate members of the SSAC

Action 24/6 – Chair to update the Associate Membership paper taking into account SSAC discussion.

7. Roundtable Reflections and Lessons Learned

7.1 Dame Anna shared her views on the Covid-19 roundtable (held via Zoom) and praised the work of the breakout chairs and scribes who had produced meaningful reports for the project. She thanked the SSAC Chair for her work on drafting the main report, and also colleagues who provided the analysis from the questionnaires which fed into the roundtable.

7.2 Professor Sheikh agreed and noted that the technical side of the event was well managed. He discussed some of the benefits of holding this type of event virtually, being able to convene relevant people at fairly short notice who were keen to engage on the subject, but he wondered whether a hybrid event would work as successfully.

7.3 Professor Jones shared his views on the Quantum Roundtable (held via MS Teams), thanking all involved for their support. The event was hosted by the SG policy team who commissioned the project. He agreed with Professor Sheikh about the convening power for an online event and thought we may not get that scale and breadth of attendance if it were in person.

7.4 Professor Jones stated the plenary session worked well and resulted in a good set of notes for the main report.

7.5 Dr Cantley suggested it may have been helpful to have a second Quantum roundtable given the people who use Quantum may not be specialists but would have valuable input to make to the discussion. She thanked Dr Najwa Sidqi for the Innovate UK KTN report which would be included as an Annex in the main Quantum report.

Action 24/7 – Chair to circulate a Roundtable Lessons Learned paper to advise SSAC project leads for their upcoming events.

8. Update on current/future projects (SSAC Note 22/3)

8.1 Climate Change Mitigation/Circular Economy – Professor Inall advised that recruitment was ongoing for the project intern. A meeting has been arranged with Zero Waste Scotland for later in March to discuss the project in more detail around the Material Flow Accounts. A roundtable will be required to discuss the draft report and recommendations in the later phase of the project.

8.2 Energy (SSAC Note 22/4) – Professor Underhill advised that SG policy colleagues had refined and agreed the scoping document as per Note 22/4. The project has quite a tight timeline with a set of key questions to be prepared and followed up by two roundtable events. The help of an intern would be required and support from the small SSAC subgroup which includes Professor Webb, previous co-opted SSAC member. The SSAC approved the Scoping Agreement.

8.3 Feedback on Past Reports – outlined in Note 22/5.

8.4 Associate membership (SSAC Note 22/6) – This was discussed in Item 6 above (paragraph 6.4).

8.5 Professor Jones provided a brief update on the Quantum project and advised that he hoped to share a first draft in a few weeks for SSAC comment which could be followed up by email or arrange a SSAC sign off meeting if required.

9. Adaptation

9.1 The Chair welcomed Dr Kate Crowley to the meeting, who provided a brief introduction about her current and previous work which would be helpful for the SSAC Adaptation project. The Chair suggested it would be useful for Dr Crowley to be involved in the Adaptation subgroup going forward. SSAC members agreed and no objections were raised.

9.2 David Mallon outlined the timeline for refreshing the Climate Change Plan (CCP) and the Climate Change Adaptation Programme (SCCAP). An update of the 5 year plan is about to start to develop the next programme and present to Parliament in 2024. He stated that there was a need to refresh and update the Adaptation Programme taking account of Mitigation and Just Transition priorities.

9.3 The Chair stated that SSAC intended to work with colleagues from the knowledge broker organisation Sniffer, who had previously presented to SSAC on their work for the Adaptation Scotland Programme. SSAC projects could be around two possible areas of interest – water and energy, possibly also including soils. She asked for SSAC volunteers for the adaptation subgroup to work with David Mallon to identify the scope of what SSAC can do.

9.4 It was important that the climate change adaptation work was not being worked on in isolation, as it needs to cut across other sub groups too. It was agreed that a Co-ordination group be set up to piece together how each of the sub groups is moving forward and to raise key themes/overlaps emerging that may be of interest. It might be that some of the sub groups are also coming across some “unintended consequences” so a co-ordination group would allow leads to be kept informed.

Action 24/8 – Chair to speak to Professor Ferrier to confirm he is able to lead the Adaptation sub group.

Action 24/9 – Secretariat to set up Adaptation Subgroup to include: Dr Kate Crowley; Sniffer colleagues - Ruth Wolstenholme, Managing Director and Ellie Murtagh, Climate Adaptation Services Specialist; David Mallon; and Professors Ferrier and Powell, to develop a scoping document and report back to SSAC.

Action 24/10 – Secretariat to invite all SSAC project leads to the first Co-ordination Group to look at overarching links between the various projects.

10. Standing Agenda Item - Climate Change

10.1 A date had been set to hold the Early Career Researchers (ECR) Workshop on 11 May. The Chair had received some suggestions of ECRs and would be in touch with CXC for further suggestions and assistance with the workshop.

Action 24/11 – Chair to contact CXC regarding ECR Workshop

10.2 There was discussion around the role of the First Minister’s Environmental Council and how this complements SSAC work.

Action 24/12 – Secretariat to arrange further discussion with the Chair and Sir Iain Boyd, FMEC

11. AOB

11.1 It was noted that Dr Cantley was taking early retirement in June but will continue with SSAC until the end of her current term.

12. Date of next meeting 7 June 2022

12.1 There was discussion around the benefits of meeting in person for some SSAC meetings if Covid restrictions allowed. It was agreed that the next meeting would be in person if possible.

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.	
22/5	Professors Ferrier and Scott volunteered to be involved in further discussions with Sniffer colleagues to identify if there was any work that SSAC could do in Adaptation.	
22/8	Professors Ferrier and Scott to explore with Sniffer the idea of food and land use linking in with the adaptation work stream.	
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.	
23/6	SSAC Secretariat to engage with FMEC Secretariat and arrange discussions with SSAC Chair/Sir Ian Boyd as required.	
24/1	Chair agreed to prepare response to SG RSR Framework Consultation and circulate to SSAC for comment by 27 March.	
24/2	Chair to follow up with Professor Sir Jim McDonald on his offer to facilitate Royal Academy of Engineering speaker at future SSAC meeting.	
24/3	SSAC Secretariat to ensure the upcoming SSAC recruitment campaign reflects the need for industry candidates.	
24/4	Dr Roddy Macdonald to check the position regarding REF and feed back in due course.	
24/5	Secretariat to convene Food subgroup meeting with SG officials and include Professors Powell, Ferrier, Scott, CSA and SSAC Chair.	
24/6	Chair to update the Associate Membership paper taking into account SSAC discussion.	
24/7	Chair to circulate a Roundtable Lessons Learned paper to advise SSAC project leads for their upcoming events.	
24/8	Chair to speak to Professor Ferrier to confirm he is able to lead the Adaptation sub group.	
24/9	Secretariat to set up Adaptation Subgroup to include: Dr Kate Crowley; Sniffer colleagues - Ruth Wolstenholme, Managing Director and Ellie Murtagh, Climate Adaptation Services Specialist; David Mallon; and Professors Ferrier and Powell, to develop a scoping document and report back to SSAC.	
24/10	Secretariat to invite all SSAC project leads to the first Co-ordination Group to look at overarching links between the various projects.	
24/11	Chair to contact CXC regarding ECR Workshop	
24/12	Secretariat to arrange further discussion with the Chair and Sir Ian Boyd, FMEC	