

SSAC Update Report - September 2012

The SSAC is Scotland's highest level science advisory body, providing independent advice and recommendations on science strategy, policy and priorities to the Scottish Government. Professor Muffy Calder, the Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland (CSA) and Dr Chris Masters are co-chairs of the SSAC.

SSAC has decided to issue a short report following each quarterly meeting to provide an update on their latest workstreams and areas of interest. This is the first of these reports.

NEW MEMBERS

The SSAC recently appointed four new members (Professor David Cumming, Mr Stuart Farmer, Professor Jon Oberlander and Professor Jason Reese). Three of the new members attended this, their first, meeting.

Further details of new SSAC members can be found on the SSAC website at: <http://www.scottishscience.org.uk/article/new-members-appointed-science-council>.

CURRENT WORK PROGRAMMES

There are currently two active SSAC work programmes:

- ✚ An SSAC Education sub-group recently completed a piece of work exploring the ways in which links between schools, universities and industry can be enhanced to support science education in Scotland. SSAC published a report of their findings - *Science Education: Enhancing Support for Schools Through Collaboration* - in January 2012 (<http://www.scottishscience.org.uk/node/122>). A key recommendation was the creation of one or more Industry/Academic Schools Liaison Co-ordinator for Sciences posts. SSAC is now working together with key stakeholders, including Education Scotland, to ensure that this recommendation is implemented.
- ✚ A second SSAC sub-group has undertaken a piece of work on innovation and exploring ways in which Scotland could increase the level of economic benefit arising from the nation's investment in the science and engineering research base. The SSAC is planning to publish a report with associated recommendations in this area later in the year.

FUTURE WORKSTREAMS

The SSAC is always looking to develop ideas for future work stream on a broad range of scientific issues and science-related policies.

- ✚ In particular, the SSAC together with the CSA are keen to highlight key science and technology developments which may have a significant future impact for Scotland. The SSAC are supporting the CSA to develop a series of 'Science hot topics' which will consider the recent scientific progress in the area, related issues and possible policy implications. The current 'Science hot topics' list includes topics related to energy, the environment and

infrastructure and data and services. It is intended that this will be an ongoing area of work for SSAC and it will be a helpful tool for engaging with policy-makers.

- ✚ The SSAC is also engaging with the work going forward in relation to the National Data Linkage Centre (NDLC). SSAC submitted a response to the recent Scottish Government consultation on this issue. A copy of the response can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/07/7705/downloads#res397119>. At this meeting, the SSAC heard about the latest developments and timelines for delivery of this project from Gerry Donnelly, the recently appointed NDLC programme manager. SSAC has agreed to provide advice and guidance on the project as it moves forward.
- ✚ The SSAC had a useful discussion on the issue of expanding access to research publications following the publication of the Finch Report in June 2012 (<http://www.researchinfonet.org/publish/finch/>). The UK Government has recently accepted the recommendations of the report but, in discussion, SSAC members felt that there may be some unintended consequences that had not fully been highlighted. It was agreed that the SSAC will develop a short paper outlining some of the issues arising in moving towards more open access.

OTHER NEWS:

- ✚ Following on from the March SSAC meeting, when Ken McDonald, BBC Scotland Science correspondent was the pre-dinner speaker, the SSAC heard from Colin McKerchar, Talent Manager for BBC Scotland Factual Programming about a new science talent recruitment initiative that the BBC were planning to undertake. SSAC provided Colin with useful contacts to help progress the initiative.