

SSAC Update Report – March to December 2016

The SSAC provides independent advice, through its Chair, to the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) for Scotland, to inform policy development and delivery across all areas of the Scottish Government's work. It typically develops advice on a medium- to long-term basis, advising on developments in science and technology and their implications for policy and identifying potential future opportunities and threats.

The SSAC is chaired by Professor Paul Boyle and currently has nine other members, including ex officio members Professor Sheila Rowan (Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland), Professor Andrew Morris (Chief Scientist, Health), and Professor Louise Heathwaite (Chief Scientific Adviser for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment).

Following a review of the SSAC and the appointment of new members in 2016, the new SSAC held its first meeting on 4 March, and subsequent meetings on 22 May, 13 September and 6 December. Below is a summary of its activities in the period March to December 2016.

SSAC WORKSTREAMS

The SSAC is currently progressing the following pieces of work.

Members are developing a series of briefing notes on areas of science that could present future opportunities and implications for Scotland. The first of these is to be published on space technology in May 2017.

The SSAC is progressing a piece of work to provide a 'Scottish response' to the UK Government Office for Science Foresight Report '*Future of an Ageing Population*', focusing on areas where issues/solutions are distinct from the rest of the UK. To aid its work, the SSAC invited Rebecca Jones, Foresight Team in the UK Government Office for Science, to outline key findings of the Foresight report, and issues of particular relevance to Scotland. Rebecca attended the SSAC's September meeting and highlighted potential issues likely to have an impact in the next 20 years or so. These included:

- Implications for health and social care, including availability of 'free' care through family members and friends
- Rising demand for adaptable kinds of housing, suitable for older people with a variety of support needs, a significant proportion of whom live alone
- Rural areas ageing faster than cities, with related implications for infrastructure and services
- Effect on the economy of the disconnect between the number of job vacancies and the number of young people leaving schools and colleges

- ✚ The SSAC is looking at Cyber Resilience as a piece of work to help inform the SG Cyber Resilience Team's future activity. This was agreed at the December meeting following a presentation from the SG Cyber Resilience Team.

MEETINGS UPDATE

- ✚ Areas of discussion at the four SSAC meetings held from March to December included;
 - Scotland's science landscape and how best to consider the opportunities and threats for the Scottish research base that the Scottish Government may consider.
 - Scotland's current energy mix, the Scottish Government's commitment to reducing carbon dioxide emissions, and potential areas where the SSAC could provide scientific advice.
 - The outcome of the EU referendum and the role the CSA, the SSAC and the wider science sector can play in explaining the benefits of being part of the EU in terms of science funding, mobility of students and staff, and the influence Scotland has.
 - The Scottish Government's priorities for innovation, and the role science and research can play to help grow the economy.

OTHER NEWS

- ✚ All new SSAC Members and the Chair took part in an induction process to introduce them to their role. As part of this, a new pairing scheme, linking Council Members with senior policy officials, was introduced. The pairing scheme is intended as a way of supporting communication and understanding between SSAC members and senior officials in the Scottish Government.
- ✚ Since his appointment, the Chair has met a number of people to explain his priorities for the SSAC and emphasise the importance of building good working relationships with government and the wider sector. These include;
 - Dr Alasdair Allan, then Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages,
 - Permanent Secretary Leslie Evans,
 - Then Director General Enterprise, Environment and Innovation Graeme Dickson,
 - Officials from the Office of the Chief Statistician,
 - Professor Andrea Nolan, Convenor of Universities Scotland,
 - Sir Mark Walport, UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA) and Head of the Government Office for Science.

For further information please contact the SSAC Secretariat.