



SSAC Update Report - January 2014

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's Chief Scientific Adviser. Professor Muffy Calder, the Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland (CSA) and Dr Chris Masters are co-chairs of the SSAC.

SSAC issues a short report following each quarterly meeting to provide an update on their latest workstreams and areas of interest. This is the sixth of these reports. The SSAC held its last meeting at the National Museum of Scotland on 4 December 2013.

ONGOING WORK STREAMS

Current work includes:

SSAC continues to progress work on **the current scientific evidence around Synthetic Biology** and the impact of novel biology on the Scottish economy. This work aims to consider the key issues surrounding synthetic biology and to highlight the potential economic and environmental benefits for Scotland and potential risks. The SSAC hosted the first of two stakeholder events on 28 November. This workshop was attended by a number of stakeholders from Scottish academia and industry, plus representatives from SE, BBSRC, TSB, and the SynBio Special Interest. The event had an industry theme and was focused on the potential opportunities for the exploitation of synthetic biology in a number of manufacturing sectors. The participants discussed Scottish strengths and weaknesses within this context and potential regulations and risks. The outputs from this event will feed into the final report. The next event on 3 February will be focused on the broader societal issues associated with synthetic biology. In addition to the workshop events the researcher is also gathering further evidence by interviewing key individuals and groups with an interest in Synthetic Biology.

- SSAC completed a piece of work reviewing the **Landscape of Big Data and Data Science in Scotland**. The work was led by SSAC member Professor Jon Oberlander. The resulting report has been presented to the Scottish Government Data Management Board.

OTHER NEWS

- Following the publication of its paper **Science and Engineering in Scotland in the Independence Debate** SSAC members met with Mr Michael Russell, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and Dr Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages to discuss the future of science and engineering in an independent Scotland.