

SSAC Minutes – 3 September 2020

Zoom video conference – hosted by Chair SSAC

Attendees:

Attendee	Position
Professor Maggie Gill	SSAC Chair
Professor Sheila Rowan	Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland (<i>ex officio member</i>)
Professor David Crossman	Chief Scientific Adviser Health (<i>ex officio member</i>)
Professor Andrew Millar	Chief Scientific Adviser ENRA (<i>ex officio member</i>)
Professor Robert Bowman	SSAC Member
Dr Caroline Cantley	SSAC Member
Professor Bob Ferrier	SSAC Member
Professor Mark Inall	SSAC Member
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Member
Professor Marian Scott	SSAC Member
Professor Aziz Sheikh	SSAC Member
Professor John Underhill	SSAC Member
Professor Jan Webb	SSAC Co-opted Member
Stuart McKay	Head of Hydrogen Policy Energy Industries (Agenda Item 8)
David Mallon	Head of Policy & Implementation Unit, Climate Change Division (Agenda Item 9)
Dr Roddy Macdonald	Deputy Director and Head of Higher Education and Science (Scottish Government) (Agenda Item 4)
Joanne Ward	Head of SSAC Secretariat/Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG)
Dr Heather Owen	SSAC Secretariat, SAE Team (SG)
Caroline Murray	SSAC Secretariat, SAE Team (SG)
Kirsty McWhinnie	SSAC Secretariat, SAE Team (SG)

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting noting apologies from:

Professor Anna Dominiczak
 Professor Wayne Powell
 Professor Carol Tannahill, new ex-officio member as SG's Chief Social Policy Adviser

2. Minutes and Actions of last meeting

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were officially agreed. It was decided that future minutes will be agreed post meeting by email to minimise any delay in updating the SSAC website.

Action 18/1 Secretariat to circulate minutes for SSAC clearance by email in order that they can be published more quickly after each meeting.

2.2 All previous actions were completed except that connected to the Sustainable Chemicals Briefing Note; work on this has been placed on hold pending further discussion.

Action 17/7 – Ongoing – Sustainable Chemicals Note to be discussed at SSAC December meeting.

3. Update from Professor Sheila Rowan, Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland

3.1 CSA provided an overview of the work she had been involved in with several weekly meetings connected to COVID-19. She noted that structures continue to evolve to deal with the ongoing science advice needs connected to the pandemic and she was co-chair of the new 'Chief Advisers' group within SG.

3.2 Several SSAC members indicated the groups they had been involved with in support of covid-19 work.

Action 18.2 – In connection with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) infrastructure considerations, Andrew Millar to liaise with Colin Moffat (SG's CSA Marine) about whether there are any discussions in Marine Scotland on replacing research vessels with autonomous solutions.

4. Update from Roddy Macdonald, Deputy Director, Higher Education and Science Division, Scottish Government (SG)

4.1 Roddy Macdonald outlined some of the current priorities within the Higher Education and Science Division which includes work on HE sector restart, student accommodation and additional places. Work connected to Brexit around Erasmus and Horizon programmes also continues. He briefly highlighted some of the key areas from the recently published Programme for Government including Upskilling of people, Youth Guarantee Scheme, Digital learning strategy and Green economy/blue economy/digital economy.

5. Introduction/Update from Professor Jan Webb, Professor of Sociology of Organisations, co-opted member

5.1 Jan Webb thanked the members for agreeing to her co-option to the Council and provided a brief background to her past and ongoing work and her current research focus on climate change issues.

6. Draft RESAS Research Strategy

6.1 Andrew Millar highlighted that the £45M RESAS funding research programme will start a new funding cycle in 2022. It will cover new areas (e.g. circular economy and air quality) which may require new research providers. There will be a formal consultation on the RESAS Research Strategy.

Action 18.3 - Andrew Millar to circulate the draft RESAS research strategy once formally published. SSAC members invited to pick out research themes most relevant to their areas to help identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration.

7. SSAC Remit and Work Programme

7.1 The Chair discussed the questions raised in her paper (SSAC Note 20/12) and sought views from the members on defining the SSAC niche and remit, increasing SSAC visibility and SSAC future work plan including potential input into consultations.

7.2 There was agreement that SSAC may like to respond to relevant SG consultations, and these would be considered on a case by case basis.

7.3 There was some discussion on recent changes to UKRI and how to ensure Scottish focus and input. It was discussed that it would be within SSAC remit to provide advice and input to SG on UKRI issues, rather than directly stating SSAC's views to UKRI.

7.4 There was discussion on SSAC's unique position: advising SG in response to commissions from Ministers or officials or in response to member concerns; able to initiate longer term work, adding value by fore sighting on issues by taking a broader perspective; focus on key opportunities and cross-cutting, strategic advice.

7.6 There was discussion on the need to make more effort to attract or co-opt members from industry, or to take the views of industry through networks and representation on subgroups.

Action 18/4 - Secretariat to produce a draft paper about SSAC's niche and 'unique selling point', and plans to raise awareness of SSAC within SG for discussion with Chair and CSA prior to circulating to SSAC for comment.

Action 18/5 - Secretariat to flag Scottish Government consultations that may be useful for SSAC to contribute to.

Action 18/6 - All SSAC members to provide their perspective to Chair and Secretariat on changing requirements for science skills in response to the climate crisis and post-covid to discuss at next meeting regarding opportunities and challenges and impact of UKRI changes going forward.

8. Policy Presentation – Stuart McKay, Head of Hydrogen Policy Energy Industries, Onshore and Subsurface System Policy Unit

8.1 Stuart McKay delivered a short presentation on the latest thinking on Hydrogen technology and how it fits into the Energy Strategy. He highlighted the key areas of work including the completion of the Hydrogen Action Plan and Hydrogen Policy Statement by end of 2020 and the Hydrogen Assessment Project due mid-September. This followed discussion with SSAC members about whether there is a role for SSAC to provide advice. There was discussion around SSAC giving advice on opportunities for research and innovation to feed into the Hydrogen Action Plan. It was agreed to set up an SSAC sub group to take these discussions forward with Stuart McKay and his wider policy colleagues.

Action 18/7 - Secretariat to set up SSAC sub-group meeting with Stuart McKay re hydrogen. Sub-group consists of: Jan Webb, Robert Bowman, Caroline Cantley, Bob Ferrier, John Underhill and Maggie Gill.

9. Policy Presentation – David Mallon, Head of Policy & Implementation Unit, Climate Change Division Climate

9.1 David Mallon provided a short presentation on the Climate Change Plan. He advised that current focus is on updating the existing Climate Change Plan from 2018 including the new ambitious targets which is expected to be published by end of 2020. He stated that it would be helpful if SSAC could comment on the key messages including the scale of challenges involved in meeting the set targets. It was agreed to set up an SSAC subgroup to take these discussions forward with David Mallon and his policy colleagues.

Action 18/8 - David Mallon to circulate link to papers on the outcomes of a series of deep dive meetings on cross sector interactions and climate change.

Action 18/9 - Secretariat to set up SSAC sub-group to work with David Mallon to consider an SSAC 'sense check' on the climate change papers provided within the tight

deadlines required. Sub-group consists of: Marian Scott, Jan Webb, Bob Ferrier, Mark Inall and Maggie Gill.

Action 18/10 - Andrew Millar/David Mallon to discuss ideas on climate change engagement to feed into the process of the next update for the climate change action plan in a few years' time.

10. Standing Item – Feedback on SSAC Reports

10.1 Heather Owen referred to the feedback provided in the SSAC Note 20/13 regarding the Environmental Impacts of the Scottish Manufacturing Industry report and the Robotics and Autonomous Systems Note.

11. Update on Current Projects/Reports

11.1 Mark Inall thanked SSAC members for their input and feedback into the Geospatial Knowledge Project which he has incorporated into his update paper. (SSAC Note 20/17).

Action 18/11 - Mark Inall and Shona Nicol (SG) to provide interim geospatial report at next SSAC meeting.

11.2 Talking Heads (joint RSE/SSAC engagement for COP26). Mark Inall referred to his update in SSAC Note 20/14.

Action 18/12 - All SSAC to provide suggestions for title of Talking Heads as well as for speakers for Talking Heads videos by 21 September 2020

12. Member Updates

12.1 Members gave updates and there was some discussion around SFC and UKRI. CSA advised that academia was well connected in Scotland and across UK and internationally. SFC also had good engagement with UKRI and she would feedback if there were opportunities to influence funding in Scotland.

Action 18/13 - Secretariat to invite Energy Strategy policy lead to next meeting.

Action 18/14 – Secretariat/SSAC members to create and update a list of SSAC membership on UKRI committees in the SSAC Connect folder.

12.2 There was a suggestion from Bob Ferrier that all members share good examples of online meetings.

Action 18/15 - All SSAC to give feedback/suggestions to secretariat/Chair on the running of online SSAC meetings.

13. AOB

13.1 Research Innovation Scotland (RIS). Mark Inall referred to the update provided in SSAC Note 20/15 (Mark Inall & Caroline Cantley) and stated that the SFC next phase of funding would be guided by the Heathwaite Independent Review of the Scottish Funding Council's Research Pooling Initiative and Sir Anton Muscatelli's report Driving Innovation in Scotland – A National Mission. The RIS and RIS website have recently been launched as a promotional forum to showcase some specific examples of inter-disciplinary cross-research

pool/cross-innovation centre collaborative work with the wider community, and to continue to grow the network inclusively.

13.2 Photonics in Scotland Report 2020. Caroline Cantley presented the report that had been with SSAC members and outlined that the photonics industry had high potential for growth with 7 in 10 of company members increasing their employee numbers each year but the report also highlighted skills shortage challenges.

14. Meeting ends – date of next meeting 2 December 2020

Summary of Actions

17/7	Andrew Millar to talk to former SSAC member Iain Hunter (who led this project) about SSAC views on the sustainable chemicals note and feedback to SSAC after which the Chair and Robert Bowman will develop a proposal for taking the report forward. Agreed at the September meeting to put this on hold and discuss again at December meeting.	On-going
18/1	Secretariat to circulate minutes for SSAC members to amend and clear by email in order that they can be published earlier.	
18/2	Andrew Millar to liaise with Colin Moffat (CSA - Marine Scotland) about whether there are any discussions in MSS on replacing research vessels with autonomous solutions.	
18/3	Andrew Millar to circulate the draft RESAS research strategy once formally published. SSAC members invited to pick out research themes most relevant to their areas to help identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration.	
18/4	Secretariat to produce a draft paper about SSAC's niche and 'unique selling point', and plans to raise awareness of SSAC within SG for discussion with Chair and CSA prior to circulating to SSAC for comment.	
18/5	Secretariat to flag Scottish Government consultations that may be useful for SSAC to contribute to.	
18/6	All SSAC to provide information to Chair and Secretariat on science skills post-covid to discuss at next meeting regarding opportunities and challenges and impact of UKRI changes going forward.	
18/7	Secretariat to set up SSAC sub-group meeting with Stuart McKay re hydrogen. Sub-group consists of: Jan Webb, Robert Bowman, Caroline Cantley, Bob Ferrier, John Underhill and Maggie Gill.	
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