

SSAC Minutes – 9 September 2021

MS Teams – hosted by Chair SSAC

Attendees:

Attendee	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>)
Professor Carol Tannahill	Chief Social Policy Adviser (<i>ex officio member</i>)
Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak	SSAC Member
Professor Bob Ferrier	SSAC Member
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Member
Professor Marian Scott	SSAC Member
Professor John Underhill	SSAC Member
Professor Wayne Powell	SSAC member
Professor Aziz Sheikh	SSAC member
Professor Robert Bowman	SSAC member
Professor Jan Webb	SSAC Co-opted member
Mr Jamie Hepburn	Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training (Agenda Item 7)
Ruth Wolstenholme	Managing Director, Sniffer (Agenda Item 8)
Ellie Murtagh	Climate Adaptation Services Specialist, Sniffer (Agenda Item 8)
Sallie Bailey	Deputy CSA ENRA - Observer
Rhona McDonald	Strategic Lead for Science, Research, International & EU Exit, Higher Education and Science (SG)
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 Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were noted from:

Professor Andrew Millar (Sallie Bailey attending as observer)
 Professor Mark Inall
 Dr Caroline Cantley
 Dr Roddy Macdonald (Rhona McDonald attending in place)

2. Minutes and Actions of last meeting

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting had been formally agreed electronically and published on SSAC website.

2.2 All previous actions were completed or have been included for further discussion on today's agenda – the following are on-going:

21/1 – Distribution List for SSAC Geospatial report has been drafted and will be circulated for comment to use as a basis for future reports.

21/10 – SSAC Members to provide suggestions for other potential guests at future SSAC meetings relevant to the current work programme.

3. Update from Professor Julie Fitzpatrick, Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland

3.1 CSA provided an overview of her recent activity. She is due to meet the Permanent Secretary to discuss science visibility across Scottish Government. She commented that there was extensive scientific resource within Scottish Government but there were opportunities for it to be more joined up, particularly against the backdrop of recent UK Government initiatives, including ARIA. CSA felt that Covid-19 provides an opportunity to increase science visibility due to a rise in public awareness.

3.2 CS Health added that the meeting with the Permanent Secretary would help ascertain if there is an appetite to look at how science advice is provided across the SG and discuss the role of science advisors within SG.

3.3 Aziz Sheikh highlighted GOScience as a model that could be replicated. CS Health agreed, though suggested it may be better to focus on particular elements of it rather than replicate in full. There was discussion around ARIA.

3.4 CSA advised there was ongoing discussion regarding the Science and Innovation day at COP26.

4. Update from Rhona McDonald, Strategic Lead for Science, Research, International HE & EU Exit, Advanced Learning and Science, SG

4.1 Rhona McDonald provided an update of the work carried out within Advanced Learning and Science Directorate. She advised that the Programme for Government had just been published and noted reference to the SSAC. Rhona updated on work going forward including the SG's future response to the SFC review.

4.2 ARIA legislation consent memorandum has been lodged on the Scottish Parliament website.

4.3. The UK Innovation strategy and R&D UK People and Culture strategy were published on 22 July. SG are engaging with BEIS on both strategies as they develop the implementation plans.

4.4 Scottish Government officials are engaging with BEIS as they develop the Terms of Reference for a review being undertaken by Professor Sir Paul Nurse, looking at the landscape of UK research, development and innovation organisations .

Action 22/1 – Secretariat to share ARIA legislative consent memorandum with SSAC.

4.5 Sallie Bailey, Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser for Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, provided a short update on the First Minister's Environmental Council. She advised that the council was a sounding board for policy issues, thought leadership and was accountable to the First Minister. The group is not a science group but made up of a broad range of members who are well placed to tackle all aspects of critical International developments. The council's work was to complement and cross pollinate rather than overlap with other groups.

4.6 There was discussion around overlapping and complementing work and how various groups could work together in practice. Sallie advised that the Council is aware of the SSAC and would be happy for a meeting to be set up between SSAC and Sir Ian Boyd, which the Chair welcomed.

Action 22/2 - A meeting to be arranged between SSAC Chair and Sir Ian Boyd.

5. Member Updates

5.1 The Chair provided an update on behalf of Mark Inall about five Scottish HEI-led UN BlueZone event applications.

5.2 Wayne Powell and Robert Bowman spoke about the Strength in Places awards and highlighted that collaboration is key in terms of maximising leverage for UKRI.

6. Update on Projects

6.1 Quantum Technologies – Julian Jones advised that work was progressing and a scope agreed by the sub group but needed further discussion with SG policy at a meeting scheduled the following week. There was no need for 1-2-1 interviews with stakeholders as the work would be more desk based research and Caroline Cantley had already carried out some initial research around photonics which overlaps with quantum technology. Julian advised he expected the project to finish on schedule.

6.2 Hydrogen – John Underhill advised that while there had been positive engagement with SG hydrogen policy colleagues, going forward it may be that the SSAC looks at a broader Energy project. The Chair agreed and advised that Jan Webb will continue to assist with this work.

Action 22/3 – Energy Scoping Document to be drafted at a later stage.

6.3 Geospatial Report – Alasdair Maclean advised that the report was in the final stages with the publishers and is expected to be issued within a few weeks at the latest.

6.4 Past Reports – The Chair noted that the Sustainable Chemicals Note had received interest from Helen Pain of RSC and the COP26 Talking Heads videos had been highlighted in the recent RSE magazine.

6.5 COP26 Talking Heads – Caroline Murray advised that the programme was nearing completion with Wayne Powell's video due to be published next and others were ready for release up to November. She advised that Mark Inall had shared COP26 suggestions with CSA for use in discussions with SG and UK(G) officials.

7. Mr Hepburn, Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training - Roundtable discussion and perspectives from members on Scotland's science expertise and capabilities.

7.1 The Minister stated that he had appreciated his recent meeting with Maggie Gill and thanked the group for all the work they had undertaken. He advised that whilst Science was not noted on his ministerial title he was keen to engage with the scientific community.

7.2 Bob Ferrier provided a short presentation on Scotland's four Centres of Expertise, which bring together academics from Universities and researchers from Institutes to provide

evidence with impact. One of the Centres (CREW) has been involved in developing the system of monitoring waste-water for Covid-19.

7.3 Dame Anna Dominiczak provided a brief overview of the work she was involved in during her secondment to DHSC. She highlighted the success of Scotland's Lighthouse Laboratory and reflected on how science and industry had come together in an unprecedented manner during the Covid-19 crisis. She talked about legacy and the need to train people with the skills for the future as this will be a key issue for job creation and economic growth.

7.4 The Minister said he was keen for SSAC to feed into the skills agenda through Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to identify what the SG should be prioritising. He also volunteered to act as a broker to introduce SSAC to fellow Ministers as appropriate.

7.5 There was agreement that Scotland has a strong life sciences industry and Aziz Sheikh advised that it was a good opportunity to develop the skills workforce, particularly in data science areas.

7.6 There was general discussion around research, funding and an issue was raised around anti-science and trust that needed to be addressed.

Action 22/4 - Marian Scott to provide links to published papers from ALLEA (All European Academies) around best practice.

7.7 The Chair thanked the members for their contributions and the Minister for his time in attending the discussion.

8. Presentation on Adaptation Scotland

8.1 The Chair welcomed Ruth Wolstenholme, Managing Director and Ellie Murtagh, Climate Adaptation Services Specialist, from Sniffer, (knowledge brokers for a resilient Scotland) who provided a presentation on Climate Change Adaptation.

8.2 Discussion followed the presentation. It was noted that cross sectoral interaction was needed and it would be useful for the SSAC to link into other policies, including the regional land use strategy. Scientific evidence was required to highlight conflicts and drive change, as there was an economic case to get adaptation further up the agenda. It was suggested that finance could support a climate working group to identify barriers.

Action 22/5 – Bob Ferrier and Marian Scott volunteered to be involved in further discussions with Ruth and Ellie to identify if there was any work that SSAC could do in this area.

8.4 The Chair thanked Ruth and Ellie for their time and an interesting presentation which will be shared with SSAC.

Action 22/6 – Secretariat to share copy of Adaptation presentation.

9. Climate Change Mitigation

9.1 The Chair advised that Mark Inall will take the lead on this Climate Change Mitigation sub group and requested volunteers to assist. Marian Scott volunteered to co-lead with Mark and continue engagement with Zero Waste Scotland and Bob Ferrier offered to provide support to the project leads. The Chair advised that Mark thought he would be able to provide an intern to support the work going forward. She asked SSAC members to provide feedback on

the climate change scoping document, which Secretariat had circulated with the meeting papers.

Action 22/7 – SSAC members to provide feedback on the Climate Change Scoping Document

10. Future Projects

10.1 The Chair acknowledged that the council already had a number of projects and subgroup work but addressed some of the suggestions previously made at the last meeting to gauge appetite to take forward.

10.2 The CSA picked out food and land use in relation to net zero, with food inequality becoming very topical. Wayne Powell agreed with CSA and would be happy to be involved although not as leader. Jan Webb asked whether food and land use could be included in the adaptation project. Bob and Marian to explore this with Ruth when they connect.

Action 22/8 - Bob and Marian to explore with Ruth the idea of food and land use linking in with the adaptation work stream.

10.3 Marian Scott suggested that AI and Digital Strategy should be embedded throughout the different work groups. Members agreed with this suggestion.

10.4 Dame Anna Dominiczak was keen to address Covid-19 legacy and felt now was the time to work on this. Dame Anna and Aziz Sheikh happy to co-lead but would want to have help around them.

Action 22/9 - Future work streams and resources to be discussed at wash up meeting between Chair and secretariat.

10.5 The Chair advised that members should remind themselves of the principles underlying SSAC activities which had been agreed at earlier meetings and published on the SSAC website 'About Us' page to identify where SSAC is the best placed to take forward any of these areas.

10.6 Wayne Powell asked for clarification on the research and innovation work (in connection with Net Zero and Just Transition) in the Programme for Government relating to an SSAC commission. Secretariat had had discussions with several policy colleagues in connection with Net Zero and climate change, although a firm commission had not been finalised as yet.

Action 22/10 – Jo Ward to confirm and provide further information for Wayne to feed back to a Universities Scotland meeting next week.

11. Consultation re Code of Practice for Science Advisory Committees and Councils (CoPSAC)

11.1 The Chair requested volunteers to look into responding to the consultation which had a deadline of 8 October 2021. Marian Scott agreed to take this forward and produce a first draft for all SSAC to provide feedback.

Action 22/11 – Marian Scott to prepare first draft response to CoPSAC Consultation and circulate to SSAC for comment.

12. AOB

12.1 Jan Webb advised that this was her last SSAC meeting and that her time here had been useful to understand the broader issues and is now taking up a role as Co-chair of Energy Tech Partnership. She would continue to provide work in the SSAC subgroups on energy and climate change.

12.2 The Chair thanked Jan for all her hard work during her time on the council and wished her well in her new role.

12.3 The Chair also announced that Carol Tannahill will be stepping down and thanked her for all her work on the council. Carol's replacement will be invited to the December SSAC meeting.

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.	
21/6	Chair and Secretariat to discuss further and take forward inviting SG climate change policy officials to another meeting of the Climate Change Sub-Group; members to provide feedback on possible SSAC work around adaptation.	
21/7	All to provide feedback on any projects where there is interest in taking forward.	
21/10	SSAC Members to provide suggestions for other potential guests at future SSAC meetings relevant to the current work programme.	
22/1	Secretariat to share ARIA legislative consent memorandum with SSAC.	
22/2	A meeting to be arranged between SSAC Chair and Sir Ian Boyd.	
22/3	Energy Scoping Document to be drafted at a later stage.	
22/4	Marian Scott to provide links to published papers from an RSE working group around best practice.	
22/5	Bob Ferrier and Marian Scott volunteered to be involved in further discussions with Ruth and Ellie to identify if there was any work that SSAC could do in this area.	
22/6	Secretariat to share copy of Adaptation presentation.	
22/7	SSAC members to provide feedback on the Climate Change Scoping Document	
22/8	Bob and Marian to explore with Ruth the idea of food and land use linking in with the adaptation work stream.	
22/9	Future work streams and resources to be discussed at wash up meeting between Chair and secretariat.	
22/10	Jo Ward to confirm and provide further information for Wayne to feed back to a Universities Scotland meeting next week.	
22/11	Marian Scott to prepare first draft response to CoPSAC Consultation and circulate to SSAC for comment.	