

Minutes of SSAC Meeting, 12 December 2023

13.30-17.00

Edinburgh Climate Change Institute,  
High School Yards, Edinburgh EH1 1LZ

**Attendees:**

| <b>Name</b>                  | <b>Position</b>   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Professor Julian Jones       | SSAC Chair  |
| Professor Julie Fitzpatrick  | Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland ( <i>ex-officio member</i> )  |
| Professor Mat Williams       | Chief Scientific Adviser - Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture ( <i>ex-officio member</i> )                                |
| Professor Linda Bauld        | Chief Social Policy Adviser ( <i>ex-officio member</i> )  |
| Professor Bruce Whitelaw     | SSAC Member   |
| Professor Lisa Boden         | SSAC Member   |
| Professor Louise Horsfall    | SSAC Member (online attendance)   |
| Professor Martyn Pickersgill | SSAC Member   |
| Professor Melanie Simms      | SSAC Member   |
| Professor Murray Roberts     | SSAC Member   |
| Professor Nick Owens         | SSAC Member   |
| Dr Catherine Elliott         | SSAC Member   |
| Dr Graham Kerr               | SSAC Member   |
| Dr Kate Donovan              | SSAC Member   |
| Dr Mariana Garcia Criado     | SSAC Associate  |
| Professor Tahseen Jafry      | SSAC Co-opted Member  |
| Dermot Rhatigan              | Deputy Director, Industrial Transformation and Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser (Scottish Government – SG)                    |
| Suresh Kumar                 | Deputy Director, Industrial Transformation and Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser (SG) – (Agenda Items 2-5 – online attendance) |
| Dr Rhona McDonald            | Strategic Lead, Science and Research, (SG)  |
| Claire Dougan                | SG Seconded from UKRI (Agenda Item 5)   |
| David Mallon                 | Head of Policy and Implementation Unit, Climate Change Division, Scottish Government (SG) - (Agenda Item 7 - virtual)               |
| Joanne Ward                  | Head of Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG)   |
| Christine Lawson             | SSAC Secretariat, Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG)   |
| Caroline Murray              | SSAC Secretariat, Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG)   |

## 1. Welcome and actions from last meeting.

### Apologies:

Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak  
Dr Connor Blair

1.1 The Chair provided a brief outline of his views for the way ahead for SSAC in his role as new SSAC Chair and welcomed the support of the members in taking forward future projects.

1.2 The Chair welcomed Dr Kate Donovan to her first SSAC meeting as a new member.

1.3 The minutes of the last meeting were previously agreed and published online, and all actions are completed or in train:

**Action 28/5** – Prof Bruce Whitelaw to arrange meeting with associate members and other SSAC volunteers to take forward discussions on SSAC social media. Outstanding and to be taken forward and completed by March 2024 meeting.

**Action 30/1** - Entrepreneurial campuses and existing post doctorate entrepreneurial support – a brief update was provided at the meeting. The Deputy Director for Entrepreneurship will be invited to the next SSAC meeting for a further update.

**Action 30/4** – SSAC to respond to Climate Change Plan Consultation expected to be published in early 2024.

## 2. Ex-officio updates

### 2.1 Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland – Professor Fitzpatrick:

- Professor Fitzpatrick outlined elements of her current work, including efforts to raise the profile of science in SG and provide a clearer route for engagement on science between SG and its stakeholders.
- The CSA also highlighted the recent publication of the UK Government(UKG)'s [Science and Technology Framework](#)UKG [Science and Technology Framework](#), and the importance of links between her office, the rest of SG and UKG.

### 2.2 Chief Scientific Adviser - Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture – Professor Williams

- Professor Williams outlined work in his area, including planned legislation, ongoing activity of the First Minister's Environmental Council (FMEC), and recruitment for a CSA Marine (who would be an ex-officio member of the SSAC once appointed).

### **2.3 Chief Social Policy Adviser – Professor Bauld**

- Professor Bauld outlined her current work on poverty, fairer Scotland, and inclusive growth, mentioning the new devolved social security benefits packages which differ from UK government and her work connected to the cost of living.

### **3. Members' updates**

3.1 Dr Donovan noted a potential overlap with behavioural science and the opportunities with DG Net Zero climate change plan.

3.2 Professor Horsfall noted that the UK [Biomass Strategy 2023](#) sets out how the use of biomass will help meet net zero but relies on 'sustainable' biomass.

**Action 31/2 – Professor Williams to consider whether SSAC could be involved in a project around sustainable feedstocks and feedback to the Council.**

### **4. SG Divisional Update**

4.1 Mr Rhatigan confirmed that he will move on to a new role in Strategic and Commercial Assets division. Suresh Kumar has taken up post as Deputy Director for Industrial Transformation and the Office of the CSA. There will be a short handover period and it was suggested that Mr Kumar be invited to any sessions / meetings the group felt would be useful.

4.2 Mr Rhatigan advised the following:

- upcoming Scottish budget announcement is due on 19 December
- On the 4 December 2023 the [UK and EU signed a new agreement](#) which finalised the UK's association to Horizon Europe and Copernicus.
- the UK government response to the Nurse review was published in November
- the DSIT recent announcements are available online. [Department for Science, Innovation and Technology - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

4.3 He also advised that the Heat and Buildings consultation was recently opened and SSAC input would be welcome to consider the implications for current work programmes. The [consultation](#) closes on 8 March 2024.

**Action 31/3 – SSAC to respond to Heat and Buildings consultation by 8 March 2024.**

4.4 The Chair thanked Mr Rhatigan for his update and introduced Suresh Kumar (virtually). They gave a brief introduction outlining their background and previous experience, noting that involvement with the SSAC is welcome. The Chair advised that it would be helpful for SSAC to consider opportunities and challenges ahead and hold individual conversations if that would be helpful.

4.5 The Chair stated that skills had been highlighted in past SSAC reports and suggested this is an area that could be discussed with Mr Kumar and the SG Deputy Director for Skills. This is an area of concern for research, teaching, and businesses

alike, with larger organisations attracting key skilled staff away from SMEs (small and medium size enterprises). Mr Kumar also suggested learning from other countries regarding skills retention and the Chair advised that Mr Kumar's international experience would be valued.

## **5. SG Secondee – Dr Claire Dougan presentation on Areas of Research Interest (ARIs)**

5.1 The Chair welcomed Dr Dougan to the meeting to present on her secondment project to develop an ARI document for SG.

5.2 Discussion followed, which included a recognition that more strategic forecasting would help ensure that there were clear links between research and policy development.

5.3 The Chair thanked Ms Dougan for her presentation noting it would be useful to recognise which research gaps would be of interest to Scotland and where there are overlaps with wider UK needs.

## **6. Future Projects Updates**

### **6.1 Science-Policy Interface**

- The Chair updated the council on the recent SSAC engagement with the SG Analytical Leadership Group and a meeting with Colin Birchenall, Chief Technology Officer, Digital Office for Scottish Local Government who had suggested that including his office at the planning stage of future projects would be helpful, He had agreed to advise of other work for the SSAC's awareness.
- Dr Donovan suggested engaging local government networks and would provide connections. She agreed to join the Science / Policy Interface working group.
- Professor Jafry stated there is Just Transition and adaptation work going forward with huge areas of interest globally and suggested overlap with Mr Birchenall's area. She also pointed out from the UK Biomass report that domestic waste responsibility lies with local authorities.

### **6.2 AI/Emerging Technologies**

- There was discussion on AI, the Engineering Biology strategy and interest in these areas across SG. Professor Fitzpatrick agreed that repetition of what other groups engage in would not be useful. She noted an interest in gene editing and biological areas and will advise SSAC further, as appropriate It was suggested that the five technical areas listed in the [UKG Science and Technology Framework](#) would be useful to add to this SSAC work programme.

### **6.3 Offshore Wind Technology on the Marine Environment**

- Professor Roberts had progressed a number of discussions with relevant SG policy teams, with the aim of exploring gaps in science evidence that would be helpful for policymaking,

- Dr Donovan noted cross sectoral reports on offshore wind connecting into Just Transition and would be useful to bring these multidisciplinary discussions together.
- Dr Kerr advised of two Catapult reports published on effects on marine life: [Tidal turbine collision sensor development requirements report](#) [Tidal turbine collision sensor development sensors review report](#)
- The Chair agreed to proceed with the offshore wind report, but suggested SG would need broader advice. SSAC should consider whether a single report or a broader brief would be more useful.

**Action 31/4 – Professor Roberts and Dr Donovan to discuss offshore wind / Just Transition reporting.**

**7. Standing Agenda Item - Climate Change - David Mallon, Climate Change Division, Scottish Government**

7.1 Mr Mallon noted the development of the next adaptation plan was on track for consultation at the end of January 2024 and would welcome response from SSAC. The consultation will be open for three months.

7.2 Dr Donovan advised that a workshop was being co-ordinated to bring relevant stakeholders together across various networks and Mr Mallon agreed this was a good approach. For his interests, discussion will take place early 2024 regarding help with workshop planning. Professor Jafry happy to help co-ordinate questions.

**Action 31/5 – Volunteers required to work on SSAC response to the adaptation consultation. Names of those interested to advise secretariat by email.**

7.3 Mr Mallon thanked the SSAC for the work on the place-based adaptation (PBA) report. It had been useful in understanding that PBA is not a one-size fits all approach to increase resilience.

7.4 Mr Mallon thanked the SSAC for the Early Career Researchers (ECR) roundtable on mitigation to support the next Climate Change Action Plan. Mr Mallon will advise of a new publication timeline when known and will provide a summary of the SSAC ECR discussions in due course.

**8. Update on Current Projects**

**8.1 Space**

- Dr Kerr advised that the three research work packages are expected to be completed early in new year.
- The stakeholder invitation will be issued in early new year with the roundtable scheduled for 21 February 2024.

**8.2 Feedback on past reports**

- Feedback on past reports had been circulated with the meeting papers.
- The Chair noted the feedback from SG colleagues on the Food Report, suggesting that future work could include quantitative material.

- It was noted the SSAC project lead sourced data at UK level but not Scotland and SRUC concurred that there was a lack of Scottish specific data available.
- Professor Williams agreed data was a challenging issue for Scotland with gaps and resource limitations.
- Professor Fitzpatrick advised that Strategic Insights Unit had quantitative data on food security from a Scottish perspective.

## **9. AOB**

9.1 Secretariat raised the future sharing of SSAC papers through Objective Connect platform. Members should advise on any problems in accessing documents on this platform.

9.2 The Chair thanked all for their participation. He noted that the council should consider future SSAC priorities for projects and volunteers for any agreed work programme.

**10. Date of next meeting – 7 March 2024, 09.30-13.30 - virtual**

## Summary of Actions

| Action | Item  | Lead  | To be completed by | Update |
|--------|---|---|--------------------|--------|
| 28/5   | To arrange meeting with associate members and other SSAC volunteers to take forward discussions on SSAC social media. Feedback to be given at March 2024 meeting. | Professor Whitelaw  | March 2024 meeting |        |
| 30/4   | SSAC to respond to Climate Change Plan Consultation expected to be published in early 2024.   | Secretariat (provide link once available).                      |                    |        |
| 31/1   | Invite SG, Deputy Director Entrepreneurship to next SSAC meeting for further update on campuses.  | Secretariat   |                    |        |
| 31/2   | To consider whether SSAC could be involved in project around sustainable feedstocks and feedback to the council.  | Professor Williams  | March 2024 meeting |        |
| 31/3   | SSAC to respond to Heat and Buildings consultation by 8 March 2024.   | All / Secretariat to share link to consultation once published. | 8 March 2024       |        |
| 31/4   | Discussion on offshore wind /Just Transition and format of reports  | Professor Roberts/<br>Dr Donovan                                |                    |        |
| 31/5   | Volunteers required to work on SSAC response to the adaptation consultation. Names of those interested to advise secretariat by email.                            | All   | 30 January 2024    |        |