

**Minutes of SSAC Meeting, 6 June 2024
09.30-13.30
Edinburgh Climate Change Institute, Ground Floor, High School Yards,
Edinburgh EH1 1LZ**

Attendees:

Name	Position
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Chair
Professor Julie Fitzpatrick	Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak	Chief Scientist (Health) (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Linda Bauld	Chief Social Policy Adviser (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Graham Kerr	SSAC Member (online)
Professor Louise Horsfall	SSAC Member
Professor Martyn Pickersgill	SSAC Member
Professor Melanie Simms	SSAC Member
Professor Murray Roberts	SSAC Member
Professor Nick Owens	SSAC Member
Dr Mariana Garcia Criado	SSAC Associate
Dr Suresh Kumar	Deputy Director, Industrial Transformation and Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser, Scottish Government (SG)
David Mallon	Head of Policy and Implementation Unit, Climate Change Division, SG - (Agenda Item 6) – (online)
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 Mat Williams (CSA Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture)
Professor Lisa Boden
Dr Kate Donovan
Dr Connor Blair
Professor Tahseen Jafry

1. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted:

- Dr Catherine Elliott had resigned from the Council.
- Dr Graham Kerr was recently appointed as Professor in Practice, University of Glasgow's James Watt School of Engineering.

- Professor Jafry's co-option term ended on 31 May and an expression of thanks was noted for her contributions to the SSAC Climate Change Adaptation projects.
- The minutes of the last meeting were agreed, published online, and were circulated with meeting papers.
- Actions from the previous meeting were completed or will be updated through the course of the meeting.

2. Ex-officio Hot Topic Discussion

2.1 Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland – Professor Julie Fitzpatrick

- The CSA reflected on the leadership, Cabinet, and portfolio changes in Scottish Government (SG). She emphasised the importance of regular engagement with the DG Economy directors during this period and noted that her recent meeting with the new Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic, Ms Forbes, was productive, with enthusiasm around innovation, research science, and technology.
- The ScotSCIENCE platform to strengthen support for science in SG continues to be promoted and discussed with other CSAs across government.
- The CSA is working with Mr Dey (Minister for Higher and Further Education' and Minister for Veterans) to explore ways to increase the profile and co-ordination of science and connected policies in SG.

2.2 Chief Social Policy Adviser - Professor Linda Bauld

- Professor Bauld discussed the current focus of her work around avian flu and post pandemic recovery. The Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness will be issuing its final report in the next few months.
- There is work ongoing in public service reform that Office of Chief Social Policy Adviser (OCSPA) are assisting with, particularly in relation to single island authorities and evidence relevant to progressing these.

2.3 CS (Health) – Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak

- CS(Health) noted connectivity between discovery research and translation/bio medical research centres in England and advised that it was now ten years since UK(G) created biomedical research facilities with both academic and non-academic scientists
- CS(Health) advised she will call on SSAC when required to look at any potential work in this area in the future.

3. Future Projects Discussion

3.1 Offshore Wind

- Professor Owens delivered a presentation on current offshore wind activity to determine whether an SSAC project had potential. He noted that Scotland was leading the technological expertise for deep water turbines, and significant

work was already underway in this sector in terms of evidence maps and research projects.

- However, he suggested that biodiversity net gain is perhaps the main policy linked issue of interest for SSAC. There may be scope for Scotland to increase its evidence in terms of measuring biodiversity connected to offshore wind projects. Council members agreed that there was potential for SSAC to produce a descriptive paper on issues around biodiversity, reflecting on the biodiversity metrics used by others and highlighting there will be a need for the measurement of biodiversity to be central to the debate about net gain that would be useful for both industry members and government.

Action 33/1 – Meeting to be arranged for the Chair, Professor Owens, and CSA ENRA Professor Williams to discuss biodiversity.

Action 33/2 - Dr Garcia Criado and Professor Roberts to discuss where SSAC can influence in the biodiversity area.

Action 33/3 – Biodiversity to be included for discussion at the next Chair and ex-officios’ catch up.

3.2 Engineering Biology

- Professor Horsfall delivered the results of an engineering biology mapping exercise, outlining the UK’s National Engineering Biology Programme and highlighted the six UK mission hubs.
- Notably, there were currently activities in seven main Scottish universities, with the University of Edinburgh being the largest and having around 50 research groups and 200 researchers in this area.
- The group agreed that this is an area of interest for SSAC, potentially through a piece of work for SG outlining where Scotland has strengths and where future investment may have an impact.

Action 33/4 – Meeting to be arranged for the Chair, CSA, CS(Health) and Professor Horsfall to prepare a draft scoping document for circulation to the group by next SSAC meeting.

3.3 Clinical Trials

- CS(Health) advised that SSAC involvement is not required at this time and that a project in this area would be more appropriate in future years.

4. Scotland’s Technology Super Cluster

4.1 The CSA invited discussion on the DSIT (UK Department of Science, Innovation and Technology) Science and Technology Framework’s “Critical Technologies” and noted that the potential impact on this of any change in UK government. She referenced a supercluster scoping document provided by SG policy colleagues to inform critical technologies and a future project.

4.2 It was considered that for Scotland there were four areas of interest:

- Quantum / telecoms / photonics
- Wireless telecommunications
- AI
- Semi-conductors

4.3 The CSA asked SSAC to prepare a paper, providing examples to demonstrate the importance of the science and technology priorities and strengths for Scotland and the need for and potential impact of a super cluster.

4.4 The Chair noted substantial Innovate UK funding for the super cluster areas but there is a need to help grow companies of scale in these sectors. He also noted a need to identify networks that SSAC can work closely with to deliver independent advice on how to increase the understanding of the potential for the super cluster to influence future projects.

Action 33/5 – Meeting to be arranged for CSA, Chair, Professors Kerr and Simms to discuss the super cluster project and identify relevant SG policy colleagues - all SSAC to consider suitable network contacts to involve in this work.

5. Population Health

5.1 Professor Bauld delivered a presentation on population health highlighting current plans and potential outputs with Scotland's population health framework over the next 10 years, working in partnership with COSLA.

5.2 Progress to date includes public health expert consensus statements on vaping, diet and healthy weight, and early childhood development.

5.3 Members asked whether obesity was an area of focus in the Good Food Bill and about current legislation in place. Professor Bauld advised of the UK(G) Bills around smoking and gambling, and the Scottish Minimum Unit Pricing Bill for alcohol.

5.4 Attention was drawn to a UKRI funded project [Our Future Health](#), launched 2018/19 which was currently recruiting for participants.

5.5 Professor Bauld suggested that there was no project for SSAC to undertake at the moment in this area, but it could be something to revisit at a later date.

6. Scottish Government Updates

6.1 Dr Kumar advised that the new Programme for Government (PfG) will be published in September. He noted the new FM and DFM had made clear their commitment to emphasise the importance of the economy, innovation and investment

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

7.1 It was advised that the Scottish National Adaptation Plan (SNAP) consultation had ended and that timescales for SG reports were being reviewed during the election period.

SNAP feedback

7.2 He noted the SNAP roundtable was supported by Climate Exchange and thanked Dr Donovan and Professor Jafry for their work on this project. The roundtable participants were asked to provide a view of the SNAP consultation document with their feedback to be reflected in the draft plan.

7.3 The roundtable had explored interconnections and the role of the Scottish research community surrounding:

- Nature connects
- Communities
- Public services and infrastructure
- Economy, industry, and business

7.4 The Chair stated that the roundtable participants had the opportunity to comment on the draft paper. He advised SSAC members to read the SSAC note circulated earlier and confirm they are content to sign off.

Action 33/6 – All SSAC to sign off the final SNAP note by 14 June.

7.5 It was noted that the SNAP report will be used by SG and promoted across policy areas and an initial overall analysis of the report will advise Ministers and other Climate Change networks. It was suggested that the report could also be delivered as a ScotSCIENCE Science Bites or SSAC teach in session for all SG.

Action 33/7 - SSAC Secretariat to engage with David Mallon to discuss possibility of a future SNAP teach in event.

8. Update on Current Projects

8.1 Space

- Professor Kerr advised that the Space report was published on 17 May and expressed his thanks to all involved in the working group, particularly the external working group members and researchers.
- Positive feedback on the report had already been received, including from the UK Space Agency.
- The Scottish Space network have also disseminated the key findings of the report on LinkedIn across several posts.
- SG officials had advised that the SSAC conclusions supported the evidence of the recent Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry into the sector and SG noted that the report has given them a 'north star' to work towards.

- As part of the ScotSCIENCE platform, an SG online teach-in event has been scheduled for 25th June to discuss the Space report and is expected to reach a large number of SG officials.

8.2 Social Media

Professor Simms advised that she had created a LinkedIn business page for SSAC which will be set up as a non-profit organisation category. This is still to be developed and requires volunteers to assist with posting reports and admin rights. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/scottish-science-advisory-council/>

Action 33/8 – Secretariat to have admin rights and all SSAC to follow LinkedIn page.

9. Members' Updates

9.1 Professor Owens will be attending the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee parliamentary inquiry on 19 June to respond to questions on the SSAC aquaculture report.

10. AOB

10.1 Lifelong Learning and Skills Directorate have requested that SSAC support research work to contribute to their skills planning reform work. There was agreement to get involved where appropriate.

Action 33/9 – Secretariat to discuss potential input by SSAC further with Skills policy colleagues and facilitate further discussion.

10.2 The Chair recorded his thanks and appreciation to Professor Tahseen Jafry for her co-opted time on the council and for her valuable input to the adaptation and SNAP projects.

10.3 The Chair advised that the Rt Hon Alister Jack, Secretary of State for Scotland, had written to DSIT in response to the recent Scottish Affairs Committee's inquiry into Scotland's research capability, which SSAC had contributed to. All Scottish recommendations suggested by SSAC had been outlined in the letter.

11. Date of Next Meeting

11.1 The next SSAC meeting will be 10 September in SG, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh followed by annual dinner at the Apex Hotel, Waterloo Place.

Summary of Actions

Action	Item	Lead	To be completed by	Update
32/9	Consult with Stephen O'Neill to consider next steps and provide an update at a future SSAC meeting.	Secretariat	On-going	
33/1	Meeting to be arranged for the Chair, Professor Owens, and CSA ENRA Professor Williams to discuss biodiversity.	Secretariat		Meeting held on 24 June. Follow up meeting to be arranged by next SSAC meeting
33/2	Dr Garcia Criado and Professor Roberts to discuss where SSAC can influence in the biodiversity area.	Secretariat		
33/3	Biodiversity to be included for discussion at the next Chair and ex-officios' catchup.	Secretariat		
33/4	Meeting to be arranged for the Chair, CSA, CS(Health) and Professor Horsfall to prepare a draft scoping document for circulation to the group by next SSAC meeting.	Secretariat		Meeting arranged for 4 July.
33/5	Meeting to be arranged for CSA, Chair, Professors Kerr and Simms to discuss the super cluster project and identify relevant SG policy colleagues - all SSAC to consider suitable network contacts to involve in this work.	Secretariat/All		Meeting arranged for 11 July 15.00-16.00
33/6	All SSAC to sign off the final SNAP note.	All	14 June	completed
33/7	Secretariat to engage with David Mallon to discuss possibility of a future SNAP teach in event.	Secretariat		

33/8	Secretariat to have admin rights and all SSAC to follow LinkedIn page.	All	Next SSAC mtg	
33/9	Secretariat to discuss potential input by SSAC further with Skills policy colleagues and facilitate further discussion.	Secretariat	Next SSAC meeting	