

Minutes of SSAC Meeting, 10 September 2024
13.00-16.30
Conference Rooms 7 and 8, Ground Floor, SG Victoria Quay,
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

Attendees:

Name	Position
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Chair
Professor Julie Fitzpatrick	Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Mark Inall	Chief Scientific Adviser (Marine) (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Dr Kate Donovan	SSAC Member
Professor Graham Kerr	SSAC Member
Professor Martyn Pickersgill	SSAC Member
Professor Murray Roberts	SSAC Member
Professor Louise Horsfall	SSAC Member (online)
Professor Nick Owens	SSAC Member (online)
Dr Connor Blair	SSAC Associate
David Mallon	Head of Policy and Implementation Unit, Climate Change Division, SG (Agenda Items 3 and 4a)
Joanne Ward	Head of 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 Dame Anna Dominiczak, CS(Health)
 Professor Linda Bauld, Chief Social Policy Adviser
 Professor Lisa Boden
 Professor Melanie Simms
 Dr Mariana Garcia-Criado

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted the following:

- Dr Mariana Garcia-Criado's associate membership ends on 30 November 2024 and will not be renewed as she has secured a Marie Curie research fellowship in Spain to begin in the new year. The Chair recorded thanks for all her work on the SSAC and her recent input on the offshore wind biodiversity paper and wished her well in her future endeavours.
- Dr Connor Blair's associate membership has been extended a further year to 30 November 2025 and the Council congratulated him on his recent acceptance to the Royal Society of Edinburgh's (RSE) Young Academy Scotland.
- Welcome to Professor Mark Inall in his new role as CSA (Marine).

- The minutes of the last meeting were agreed, published online, and were circulated with meeting papers.
- Actions from the previous meeting were completed with a few on-going which will be followed up by next SSAC meeting in December.
- The Chair advised that the Scottish Affairs Committee (SAC) letter circulated with the meeting papers will be discussed later in the meeting and over dinner, to be joined by Dr Bethany Adams, (UKRI secondee to Scottish Funding Council (SFC)) and SG colleagues.

2. Ex-officio Hot Topic Discussion

2.1 Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland – Professor Julie Fitzpatrick

- The CSA highlighted the Scottish Affairs Committee (SAC) letter, sent recently to the then Secretary of State for Scotland, on the dissolution of the UK Parliament (and its Committees) due to the UK General Election being held in July 2024. The letter replaced the usual report, following the SAC's inquiry into 'Science in Scotland'. SSAC members discussed several issues and challenges in connection with the inquiry and letter, including challenges for universities, ways to support stronger linkages between research and innovation, funding for institutions and research.
- There was some interest expressed in having a useful Scottish science research eco-system mapping exercise.
- There was a suggestion for CSAs to interact with their UK counterparts in UK Government (UKG) and UKRI around the Scottish issues raised in the SAC letter.
- Some issues were also raised around devolved legislation and the need for this to be fed back to UKRI.
- Discussion around the 80/20 funding split issue, and that the Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise was considered too infrequent.

Action 34/1 – SSAC to provide a response to the SAC letter on the issues raised.

2.2 Chief Scientific Adviser (Marine) – Professor Mark Inall

- CSA (Marine) advised he had been in the new role since July and was beginning to find his way in this newly created post. Key issues he is dealing with include deep sea, offshore wind, agri-fisheries (latter two are big topics for Marine Directorate in SG, cutting across multi-sectoral policy areas).
- Currently mapping out marine interests and where they fall within devolved/ reserved areas for more collaborative work with UKG.
- Offshore renewables – increasing demand in marine environment and more science advice required at early stage policy development.
- There was discussion on the need to identify issues where SSAC can support CSA Marine work.

2.3 Chief Social Policy Adviser for Scotland – Professor Linda Bauld

- The Chair advised that a written update from Professor Bauld had been circulated with the meeting papers.

3. Standing Agenda Item – Climate Change

3.1 David Mallon provided an update on climate change issues advising that the Adaptation Plan was being finalised and is expected to be published later in September 2024. [Climate change: Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029](#)
He thanked SSAC for their contribution to this work.

3.2 Work will now focus on the next climate change plan (CCP) on emission reduction policies covering the period up to 2040 and he advised that a legal framework amendment bill will be issued prior to the next CCP consultation.

3.3 There may be a role for SSAC to provide advice and to convene sectors to develop feedback about mitigation/adaptation actions.

3.4 He stated the next step in the Scottish National Adaptation Plan (SNAP) launch would be the implementation phase to drive forward actions from previous SCCAPs (Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programmes).

4. Future Projects Discussion

4.1 Energy Demand Aggregation – David Mallon advised that he had shared the draft scoping document with SG colleagues and noted support within SG and ClimateXChange (CXC) for this work. Dr Donovan advised that this could be a joint project with CXC/SSAC, however she noted that it was not her area of expertise and there did not appear to be any suitable expertise around the current SSAC membership for this work.

4.2 The Chair suggested a roundtable could be organised to help clarify the scope of the work and Dr Donovan advised that colleagues within CXC could arrange this and she would follow this up. It was agreed to include Dr Graham Kerr and David Mallon when outlining the scope of the roundtable.

Action 34/2 – Dr Donovan to discuss with her CXC colleagues about organising a roundtable to outline the scope of the proposed Energy Demand project.

4.3 Engineering Biology – Professor Horsfall provided a brief update of the project and confirmed there is a PhD student due to be involved in the work. She thanked Professor Pickersgill for volunteering to join the working group. The scoping document was approved by council members and the final scoping agreement will be uploaded onto the SSAC website in due course. Professor Horsfall will reach out to relevant contacts as outlined in the scoping document to co-opt onto the working group.

Action 34/3 – Secretariat to arrange an initial discussion with the engineering biology working group members to include the PhD student.

4.4 Offshore Wind/Biodiversity – Professor Owens advised that the paper circulated for the meeting and the additional paper from Professor Murray/Dr Garcia-Criado outlined the recent discussions and current views. It was agreed that biodiversity enhancement is a complicated concept with issues around how to measure it. SG colleagues had advised that there was some work being done by SRUC and Naturescot to look at biodiversity/metrics.

4.5 Professor Roberts stated that he did not see a clear project at this stage for SSAC and that work seemed well covered in SG in this area. He thanked Dr Garcia-Criado for her work on the additional paper.

4.6 A follow-up meeting with SG policy colleagues was recommended before coming to conclusions on the way forward for a potential SSAC biodiversity project, particularly around definitions of biodiversity, the legislative framework and sustainable aspects.

4.7 CSA (Marine) advised that he would appreciate some urgent advice on a specific piece of work and would discuss with relevant SSAC members (Professors Roberts and Owens) outside of the meeting.

Action 34/4 – Secretariat to arrange follow up meeting with SG colleagues to clarify potential SSAC biodiversity project.

4.8 Critical Technologies/Supercluster – The Chair expressed thanks to Professor Simms for her work on the Critical Technologies scoping document and for agreeing to lead the project. He sought sign off from council members, who agreed the focus of the work but a point was raised on the title and it was agreed that should be amended before final publication. The Chair thanked Dr Blair for volunteering to join the working group along with Dr Graham Kerr.

Action 34/5 – Amend the title of the critical technology project before uploading Scoping Agreement to the SSAC website

4.9 Skills Update – Jo Ward provided an update of her discussions with SG skills policy lead and advised that it would be helpful to introduce him to Professor Simms as a sounding board for current research in the skills area, but did not see a requirement for an SSAC project at this stage.

Action 34/6 – Secretariat to introduce SG skills policy lead to Professor Simms to foster skills related discussions.

4.10 Construction – The Chair advised that he had an interesting discussion with SG construction colleagues and BE-ST (Built Environment-Smarter Transformation – formerly CSIC – Construction Scotland Innovation Centre) to identify if there was potential for an SSAC project to look at climate change related issues within the construction sector regarding net zero commitments and retrofitting. BE-ST colleagues to provide a draft scope outline for consideration.

4.11 Horizon Scanning and ARIs – The CSA advised that ARIs allow departments to identify what is needed in terms of research to help inform policymaking, and may

be helpful within departmental finance discussions. She said that Scotland wanted to adopt this approach and some directorates within SG were doing work this way already however under a different terminology. The CSA and Chief Social Policy Adviser were championing ARIs led by Dr Audrey MacDougall's area (SG Central Analysis Division). Our newly appointed Strategic Lead for Science and Research, Linda Galloway, will play a key role in supporting this work too.

4.12 There was discussion about strategic research funding alignment and some areas not aligned exactly with UKG and a suggestion for Linda Galloway to include an ARI update within her regular SG update at future SSAC meetings, for SSAC awareness.

Action 34/7 – ARI issues to be included within the regular SG update at future SSAC meetings.

5. Update on Current Projects

5.1 Social media/Linkedin – The Chair thanked Professor Simms for her work on the new Linkedin SSAC page and reminded members to accept the invitation to join if not already done so.

6. Scottish Government Updates

6.1 Jo Ward provided a brief update on behalf of Linda Galloway on the latest SG issues.

- The [Programme for Government 2024-25](#) was circulated prior to the meeting and was focussed on tackling the four main priorities for the SG: child poverty, economy, climate emergency and public services. A summary of any science related commitments will be circulated in due course.
- The former UKG CSA, Patrick Vallance had been appointed Minister of State (Minister for Science) by the new UKG.
- Views would be welcome at the dinner on SG funding for research and innovation.

Action 34/8 – Secretariat to produce and circulate a summary of science related PfG commitments.

7. Members' Updates

7.1 Members advised of upcoming events in their respective areas, including Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland symposium in Singapore in October 2024 ([SAVE THE DATE – 2nd 'High Seas' Treaty Symposium, Singapore 17-18 October 2024 - MASTS](#)), CENSIS technical summit on 14 November [CENSIS - Innovation delivery \(censistechsummit.org.uk\)](#) and Dr Donovan will share information about a later event on Scotland beyond Netzero.

8. AOB

8.1 Attendance – the Chair advised that a record of attendance was maintained for the SSAC quarterly meetings and reiterated the need for regular attendance. There was discussion around the ratio of in person/online meetings and agreement that in-person meetings were useful but could be reduced to one per year and spread geographically. There was a suggestion to consider whether offering an all-day event alternative to the afternoon meeting/dinner event may be more suitable.

8.2 Recruitment – The Chair advised that the next SSAC recruitment campaign is underway with a view to new members joining for the March 2025 meeting. Consideration needs to be given to the range of expertise required for potential projects and to reflect this in the recruitment process. The recruitment pack will be shared with SSAC for wider circulation through their respective networks to raise awareness.

9. Date of Next Meeting

9.1 The next SSAC meeting will be online via MS Teams on 3 December 2024 from 13.00-17.00

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	Dec Meeting	
34/1	SSAC to provide a response to the SAC letter on the issues raised.	SSAC Chair		
34/2	Discuss with CXC colleagues about organising a roundtable to outline the scope of the proposed Energy Demand project.	Dr Donovan		
34/3	Arrange an initial discussion with the engineering biology working group members to include the PhD student.	Secretariat		
34/4	Arrange follow up meeting with SG colleagues to clarify potential SSAC biodiversity project.	Secretariat		
34/5	Amend the title of the critical technology project before uploading Scoping Agreement to the SSAC website.	Secretariat		
34/6	Introduce SG skills policy lead to Professor Simms to foster skills related discussions.	Secretariat		
34/7	ARI issues to be included in regular SG update at future SSAC meetings.	Linda Galloway		
34/8	Produce and circulate a summary of science related PfG commitments.	Secretariat		