

Minutes of SSAC Meeting, 3 December 2024
13.00-16.30
Virtual MS Teams Meeting

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 Mathew Williams	CSA (Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture) (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Mark Inall	Chief Scientific Adviser (Marine) (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Graham Kerr	SSAC Member
Dr Kate Donovan	SSAC Member
Professor Lisa Boden	SSAC Member
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 Connor Blair	SSAC Associate
Dr Mariana Garcia-Criado	SSAC Associate (Agenda Item 1)
David Mallon	Head of Policy and Implementation Unit, Climate Change Division, SG (Agenda Item 4)
Stephen O'Neill	Deputy Director Entrepreneurship, (SG) (Agenda Item 6)
Dr Linda Galloway	Strategic Lead for Science and Research (SG)
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.

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

- Dr Mariana Garcia-Criado's associate membership ended on 30 November 2024 and will not be renewed as she has secured a research fellowship with Marie Curie 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. Members also expressed their thanks and well wishes to Mariana.

- The minutes of the last meeting were agreed, published online, and were circulated with meeting papers.
- Actions from the previous meeting were completed with the exception of the SSAC response to the Scottish Affairs Committee (SAC) letter which will be addressed in due course. The Chair outlined some of the reasons for the delay and his recent conversations with Scottish Funding Council colleagues on this subject.
- The Chair announced that this would be the CSA's last SSAC meeting as she would be stepping down early in the New Year. He thanked Professor Fitzpatrick for all her work in helping bring science into the heart of policy making, including through her work on ScotSCIENCE and Science Bites sessions within Scottish Government. *[Post Meeting Note: subsequent to this meeting the CSA Scotland has changed her working arrangements with SG, continuing until her successor is appointed but on the basis of one day per week, rather than three.]*

2. Ex-officio Hot Topic Discussion

2.1 Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland – Professor Julie Fitzpatrick

- Professor Fitzpatrick thanked all for their well wishes and said that she had enjoyed her time with SSAC and that the Council was a valuable asset for SG policy makers and scientists.
- She thanked all members for their work on the Council and the various projects which have been very helpful for all across the SG. She also thanked *ex-officio* members for their input in helping to create a more joined-up way of working. She noted her thanks to the secretariat and wider team for their support and the work of the current Chair, Professor Julian Jones and previous Chair, Professor Maggie Gill, for their efforts.
- Professor Fitzpatrick said it had been a privilege to carry out her role and reflected on some of the highlights during her term including being involved in SAGE throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to see science in action, and the creation of ScotSCIENCE, linking science across government. She advised that there is set to be a high-level Forum to link the CSAs and DGs going forward.
- Professor Fitzpatrick provided a brief update of her work since the last meeting, touching on UK Government missions, R&D spend, and DSIT's responsibility for UKRI ARIA funds.

2.2 Chief Social Policy Adviser– Professor Linda Bauld

- Professor Bauld provided a brief update of her work, including the standing committee on the COVID-19 pandemic, equality data improvement framework and work on PROMISE care system following the Independent Care Review. She advised that the updated National Performance Framework is expected in the new year.

2.3 CSA (ENRA) – Professor Mat Williams

- Professor Williams outlined some of his work including the natural resource research portfolio on agriculture and strategic research on land management and agriculture space. He stated the Science Advisory Board were supportive of the science impact and how it can be maximised to empower the impact agenda. Regular meetings with Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) continued.
- He advised that FMEC (First Minister Environmental Council) has been running for three years and is to continue. He advised that the [Natural Capital Market Framework - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/natural-capital-market-framework/pages/1-to-4.aspx) had been published recently and behaviour change planning work continues.
- He noted that his role had been extended until 2026. He has attended other panels including the Biodiversity Advisory Group and mentioned that much work was underway in the biodiversity space but that this was not the time for SSAC to be specifically involved.
- Professor Owens agreed about the volume of work in the biodiversity area – it is currently more in the terrestrial area than marine and whilst there is no need for SSAC involvement at this point, he wanted to ensure that an appropriate amount of attention is paid to marine biodiversity.

2.4 **CS (Health) – Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak**

- Professor Dame Dominiczak advised that there was a new Scottish cross-sector Networking Hub in partnership with the Academy of Medical Sciences, with an event scheduled for January 2025. She stated that ‘four nations’ activity was increasing with a commercial clinical trial in the UK with Scotland well represented and good collaboration across the nations.
- She noted the PfG commitment on health and economy and that collaborative working was needed to deliver the aim. She suggested there was a need for young entrepreneurs from various areas to help with bringing innovation to the health service.

2.5 **Chief Scientific Adviser (Marine) – Professor Mark Inall**

- Professor Inall reflected on his first six months in post and thanked CSA and CSA (ENRA) for their support during this time. He advised that he had positive engagement with UKG and that DEFRA were interested in working together on devolved authority issues around the marine environment. He said that there was lots of interest and engagement on seabed mapping.
- The blue economy vision in SG policy overlapped a lot with environment and marine and he mentioned there would be a RSE event in Glasgow in Summer 2025.
- He reiterated that collaborative working was important in the marine space. He thanked SSAC members Professors Owens and Murray for their advice/input on the wind farm independent review that he had been working on.
- The Chair added his thanks to the SSAC members for their input on this and advised he would be interested to hear the outcome of the review in due course.

3. **Future Projects**

- **Construction** – The Chair advised that there was no further update from Built Environment-Smarter Transformation (BE-ST) colleagues on a draft scoping outline for a potential project to help the construction sector with the transition to Net Zero.
- **Energy Demand Aggregation** – Dr Donovan stated that this project does not overlap well with SSAC members’ research areas but colleagues at ClimateXchange (CXC) may be able to pursue this. It is hoped that discussions on this between SSAC/CXC/SG policy colleagues will lead to a virtual roundtable in early Spring 2025 with a view to identifying any significant project from those discussions that SSAC could lead on in the future.
- David Mallon agreed it would be good partnership working with CXC and SSAC. CSA (Marine) asked to be included in future working group.

Action 35/1 – Include CSA (Marine) in Energy Demand Aggregation working group and seek other SSAC volunteers once established.

4. Standing Agenda Item – Climate Change – David Mallon

- Mr Mallon advised that the new Scottish National Adaptation Plan had been published [Climate change: Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot). SG is now at the implementation phase of the plan within the revised legal framework of the five-year carbon budgets under development. SG expects to have UK Climate Change Committee advice by spring 2025 on what the updated trajectory should be for Scotland by 2045.
- SG will set carbon budgets until 2045 in a statutory instrument to be laid in the summer and will consult on the next draft of the Climate Change Plan once Parliament agrees the carbon budgets.
- The Just Transition plans are being developed on energy, land use, transport, built environment and decarbonisation of heat in buildings and Mr Mallon would be interested in SSAC’s views on the next draft of the Climate Change Plan.
- The Chair mentioned that it is a huge subject and the skills area required to deliver the climate change plan needs to be addressed. Mr Mallon agreed more detailed discussion on skills would be helpful.

Action 35/2 – Small working group to be arranged to discuss a potential project focussed on near-term skills issues in the context of Scotland’s climate change-related ambitions (domestic heating, transport/infrastructure).

5. Update on current projects

- **Critical Technologies** - Professor Simms stated the project was well underway with a small working group attending regular fortnightly meetings. An advert for a student to assist with the project had been progressed and hoped to have someone in place in the new year. A meeting had been arranged with SG colleagues to ensure the focus of the project was on track for what they were expecting.
- Following that discussion, Professor Simms would identify the detail of the work in work packages in January with a view to having a draft report in March based on

input from a virtual roundtable and interviews with key stakeholders. The Chair mentioned that critical technologies and superclusters were mentioned in the PfG summary and thanked Professor Simms for her work on the project along with colleagues Drs Kerr and Blair.

- **Engineering Biology** – Professor Horsfall advised that the working group had met several times on a fortnightly basis. They had a PhD student involved in the project.
- The working group was aiming to write to stakeholders to enable mapping of the Scottish landscape regarding engineering biology. A questionnaire will also be drafted to issue to stakeholders to collate responses for a virtual roundtable (set for 4 March 2025).
- The Chair thanked Professor Horsfall for the update and input from Professor Pickersgill on the project working group along with the work carried out by the PhD student, Fiona Bunn. The CSA agreed that there was great expertise co-opted on to the working group to assist with the project.

6. Update on Innovation Strategy and Entrepreneurial Campuses – Stephen O’Neill

- Mr O’Neill provided an update on entrepreneurial campuses and advised that there was an on-going expansion of the Techscaler initiative to increase the number of Scottish technology-based start-ups.
- A recent report had identified that there were a number of women now starting businesses through Techscaler, but still a gender imbalance in spin outs.
- There had been further investment discussions on how to put funding into place with student-led startups.
- He advised that the Techscaler board has a number of university members and partnerships for informal training programmes for university researchers into start-ups. He would welcome views from the SSAC on how to develop that.
- SG’s Chief Entrepreneur, Mark Logan, recently stood down from his post.
- Currently working with CS (Health) team regarding health-focussed startups.

Action 35/3 – Mr O’Neill to be invited to attend meeting(s) of the working group for the Critical Technologies project.

7. Scottish Government Updates – Dr Linda Galloway

- Dr Galloway introduced her role, which cuts across two DG families – Economy, and Education and Justice, and includes the role of Deputy CSA Scotland.
- Dr Galloway talked about the Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) which the UK Government had published for a number of years and advised that SG have been looking at developing a similar programme of publication and implementation. A ‘taxation’ ARI has already been published as part of a broader strategy in this area.
- A short life working group had been set up to look at research/innovation. This came out of a roundtable involving Mr Dey (Minister for Higher and Further

Education), CSA, Universities Scotland, Scottish Funding Council and sector representatives.

Action 35/4 – The Chair and Dr Galloway to discuss ARI/value of research prior to next SSAC meeting.

8. Members' Updates

- All Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance – UK seat taken by DEFRA CSA Gideon Henderson
- GO-Science's 'year of engineering biology' would be further impetus for the current SSAC project and project lead had already been contacted by them.
- Sniffer were holding a flood resilience conference in January 2025.
- CENSIS/SG interest in reusability of sustainable materials may come onto SSAC radar.

9. AOB

9.1 Recruitment – The Chair advised that there had been a good response to the advert for new SSAC members; interviews to be held in the new year, with new members joining in time to attend the March 2025 meeting.

9.2 Programme for Government (PfG) Summary – The Chair suggested that members take the opportunity to read the PfG summary circulated with the meeting papers as it highlighted key areas that would be helpful for SSAC to consider for future projects.

10. Date of Next Meeting

10.1 The next meeting will be in person on Tuesday 25 March 2025 in Victoria Quay, Edinburgh 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	complete	
35/1	Include CSA (Marine) in Energy Demand Aggregation working group and seek other SSAC volunteers once established.	Secretariat		
35/2	Small working group to be arranged to discuss a potential project focussed on near-term skills issues in the context of Scotland's climate change-related ambitions (domestic heating, transport/infrastructure).	Secretariat		
35/3	Mr O'Neill (Deputy Director, Entrepreneurship, SG) to be invited to attend meeting(s) of the working group for the Critical Technologies project.	Secretariat		
35/4	The Chair and Dr Galloway to discuss ARI/value of research prior to next SSAC meeting.	Secretariat		