

Minutes of SSAC Meeting, 10 June 2025
13.00-16.30
Online MS Teams

Attendees:

Name	Position
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Chair
Professor Julie Fitzpatrick	Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Linda Bauld	Chief Social Policy Adviser (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Deborah Williamson	SSAC Member
Dr Evgenia Yakushina	SSAC Member
Professor Gareth Harrison	SSAC Member
Professor Graham Kerr	SSAC Member
Professor Ifor Samuel	SSAC Member
Professor Louise Horsfall	SSAC Member
Professor Martyn Pickersgill	SSAC Member
Professor Melanie Simms	SSAC Member
Professor Nick Owens	SSAC Member
Professor Qammer Abbasi	SSAC Member
Professor Russell Morris	SSAC Member
Professor Simon Dobson	SSAC Member
Dr Kate Donovan	SSAC Member
Dr Alexander Browne	SSAC Associate
Dr Connor Blair	SSAC Associate
Dr Kirsten Jenkins	SSAC Associate
Helen Cross	Director, Research and Innovation, Scottish Funding Council - observer
Fiona Bunn	University of Edinburgh, SSAC Engineering Biology Working Group member - observer
Grace Barrett	University of Glasgow, SSAC Critical Technologies Working Group member - observer
Dr Linda Galloway	Deputy CSA Scotland, and Strategic Lead for Science and Research, Scottish Government (SG)
Joanne Ward	Head of Science Advice and Engagement Team (SG)
Sam Cox	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

- The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and advised that Helen Cross, Director, Research and Innovation, Scottish Funding Council (SFC) was attending as an observer and would provide an update later in the agenda. He advised that Fiona Bunn, SSAC Engineering Biology working group (WG) member, and Grace Barrett, SSAC Critical Technologies WG member were also attending as observers.
- Summary of actions had been circulated and actions completed with exception of mis- and dis-information session still to be arranged pending response from UK Science Media Centre, London.

- Apologies noted from:

Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak	Chief Scientist (Health) (<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 Julie Jacko	SSAC Member
Professor Murray Roberts	SSAC Member

2. Ex-officio Hot Topic Discussion

2.1 Chief Social Policy Adviser (CSPA) – Professor Linda Bauld

- Highlighted the upcoming ScotSCIENCE Strategic Board meeting which would focus on strategic science-related issues.
- The population health framework, which was co-authored with COSLA and the directors of public health, is to be published on 17 June. It has two initial priorities, the first is a shift to a systems focus on prevention and the second one is healthy weight.
- Focus on impact assessments and statutory duties regarding policy development, with science and evidence having a role to play here.
- Ongoing work included the refreshed review of SG's Ukraine resettlement programme; Scotland's commitment to the care community work and involvement in tracking the progress of achieving the Programme for Government (PfG) commitments.
- Noted interest in seeing what the implications for Scotland are of the upcoming UK Spending Review.
- The mis- and dis-information strategy will be published in the coming weeks.

Action 37/1 – CSPA to check with Cancer Research-UK on the healthy weight/obesity network about how this work is going and to see who is involved to determine how much Scottish participation there is.

Action 37/2 – CSPA and Helen Cross, SFC to discuss impact assessments.

2.2 Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland – Professor Julie Fitzpatrick

- Newly-formed ScotSCIENCE Strategic Board providing a high-level forum for engagement between the CSAs and senior leaders in SG, about science-related issues.
- Taking forward work on ARIs to try to get engagement at the highest level.
- Continuing work on pandemic preparedness and response.
- A question was raised around critical national infrastructure and CSA advised that she has been on the UKRI roadmap infrastructure steering group which oversees the refresh of the roadmap and emphasised the importance of having speakers who will embrace and highlight the Four Nations approach.
- Noted lack of clarity with science and technology spend and the need to keep representing place based issues. Helen Cross said SFC are going to do some work around this and would be happy to share it.

- A question was raised on whether to ask local authorities about ARIs. CSPA advised that COSLA is aware of ARIs as is Solace (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Managers) as it has been raised at meetings and where the policy areas are directly relevant to local government there will be interaction.

2.3 CSA Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (ENRA)

- A brief written update had been circulated with the meeting papers.
- The Chair noted that relevant to SSAC is the support which has been given to SG on the updating of its climate change plan – particularly in relation to land use and agriculture.
- The Chair considered these were likely to be areas where CSA ENRA would welcome advice from SSAC and asked if a future conversation would be helpful, for example on the challenges of updating the government's climate change plan.

Action 37/3 – Professor Nick Owens and Dr Kate Donovan to be involved in advising CSA ENRA on the updated climate change plan.

2.4 SFC Update – Helen Cross

- Outlined background to SFC's budget distribution in core grants to universities to support their research and innovation activities with some for strategic projects.
- Important to SFC presently is supporting the viability of Scottish university research ensuring that everyone understands the value that Scotland gets from these.
- SFC innovation grants support SG's emphasis on innovation and commercialisation.
- Asked all universities to create a strategy for how they will invest that funding and to tell us about what they think they will get from the outcome. That Strategy to be published soon and will share with SSAC.
- SFC published a tender [View Notice - Public Contracts Scotland](#) which builds on some previous work where SFC are looking at the economic impact of research done in Scotland on a large scale.
- SFC created a series of spotlights to highlight case studies where universities have done work that has had a real impact on the four priority areas for SG as highlighted in PfG. [SFC website](#).
- The Chair thanked Helen for her input and looked forward to continued engagement with the SFC.

3. Scottish Government Update – Dr Linda Galloway

- The PfG was published earlier than normal to allow government the full year to deliver across this before the elections next year. There was no change to the four key priorities but some detail has been adapted and changed for this version.

- SG has a new Permanent Secretary (Perm Sec) in place, Joe Griffin, with previous experience in SG as DG of Strategy and External Affairs and Education and Justice. CSA added that the Perm Sec had been very engaged with science.
- New CSA would likely be in post around August with announcement to come in due course.
- Working with Scottish Enterprise to highlight some of the opportunities with Horizon Europe with an event taking place on 23 June bringing together European representative from the EIT knowledge and innovation communities to raise awareness about innovation opportunities including funding.
[Scotland's Horizon Europe - EIT Information & Networking Event — IBiolC](#)
- Dr Yakushina provided additional advice on direct funding which is allocated to SMEs who would like to participate in Horizon Europe and advised on some of the work her area was doing with some SMEs <https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk/opportunities/horizon-europe-pump-priming-collaboration-opportunities-2025/>
- The Chair raised a few items that were in the PfG, namely the establishment of the SG Technology Council, direct reference to increasing SFC research innovation grants, and a section on sector export plans for technology, life sciences, renewables and hydrogen.

Post Meeting Note: New Ministerial-led Scottish Technology Council announced on 15 June [New Scottish Technology Council - gov.scot](#) with two current SSAC members appointed - Professors Abbasi and Samuel.

- The Chair also noted that the hydrogen commitment was not fully consistent with some of the recommendations in the SSAC hydrogen report of a few years ago and wondered whether we need to address that again given recent developments.
- Reference to heat in buildings in the PfG may suggest an area where advice from SSAC might be helpful.

Action 37/4 – Chair to identify SSAC member to review SSAC hydrogen report in the context of references to hydrogen in the current PfG to consider whether we need to address further.

4. Update on current projects

a) Engineering Biology – Professor Louise Horsfall

- Post roundtable feedback has been completed and over a dozen follow up interviews have been conducted.
- First rough draft of the report has been circulated for discussion within the WG including the three landscape annexes.
- There are eight draft recommendations still to be discussed in depth at the next WG meeting.
- The Chair thanked Professor Horsfall for her feedback and thanked Fiona Bunn for all her contributions to the report.

- SSAC members raised a few questions on the recommendations and that there were some similarities with the Critical Technologies work.
- It is hoped that following feedback/edits on the rough draft, a final version would be circulated in advance of the next SSAC meeting for comment.

b) Critical Technologies – Professor Melanie Simms

- All information from the questionnaires, roundtable and follow up interviews have been collated.
- The initial draft of the report has been divided into key sections and allocated to WG members to draft each section by end of June which will start to shape the recommendations.
- The project lead will identify any gaps or overlaps between the sections to finalise the draft by end of July and share with the WG for further feedback.
- The final draft will then be shared mid-August with the wider Council for comments/input.
- Professor Simms raised that she also wished to share a draft with SG and SE colleagues and may need to factor in response time from that process.
- The Chair thanked Professor Simms for the update and Grace Barrett for her contributions to the project.
- The Chair advised all to read both draft reports very carefully and take the opportunity to comment on both.

Action 37/5 – Professors Horsfall and Simms to liaise on the recommendations from both their SSAC reports, in case of overlap or connection.

c) Flexible Energy Demand Management – Dr Kate Donovan

- Dr Donovan thanked Professor Harrison for standing in at short notice to chair the roundtable and for the SSAC volunteers – Professors Dobson and Abbasi and Drs Browne and Yakushina who chaired or noted discussions from the breakout groups.
- Dr Donovan produced a top line summary from the roundtable notes and will include some final edits before sharing them with SSAC after this meeting.
- While the roundtable participants highlighted the increasing urgency for flexible demand management, they also discussed some challenges which vary from high costs of implementation to technical and regulatory issues.
- What was particularly useful was the discussions around the co-benefits opportunities going forwards and the need for pilots or case studies to demonstrate application of flexible demand management. The lack of these kind of case studies is something that could be addressed.
- Professor Harrison added that utilities companies, particularly Scottish Power and possibly SSE, would also have an interest here too.
- Dr Yakushina noted that CENSIS recently shared a report on energy demand and expectations. The UK Steel Council has also issued a report on energy. The Critical Minerals Association is also a source of information about their interest in the manufacturing sector.

- The Chair added his thanks to Dr Nicola Dunn (CXC) for all she has contributed to the project.

Action 37/6 – SSAC WG members to review the energy demand summary document and determine if they would be interested in having a discussion on suitable scope for a future project.

Action 37/7 – Dr Yakushina to share CENSIS and UK Steel Council reports with Dr Donovan and provide an update after meeting with Critical Minerals Association.

Action 37/8 – Dr Donovan and Professor Harrison to consider which SG colleagues who have been involved so far should be included in a future energy demand management meeting.

Action 37/9 – WG meeting to be arranged to determine scope of energy demand management project.

5. Science Bites – Sam Cox

- Sam outlined the background to the Science Bites sessions which are held approximately monthly as part of CSA's goal of raising awareness of science research and its relevance to policymaking. The sessions are aimed at non-scientists in government, with speakers are welcome to cover any science topic of their choosing that has some Scottish Government policy relevance.
- Sam thanked those who provided some suggestions in MS teams chat and will follow up on those.
- Sam also advised that she co-ordinates a teach-in session following publication of SSAC reports for the project leads to share their findings with SG officials and help publicise the report and work of the SSAC to wider SG policy areas.

Action 37/10 – All SSAC to advise Sam Cox if interested in presenting a future Science Bites session.

6. Future Projects Discussion

a) Near-term Skills

- The Chair advised that the head of the SG Climate Change Unit had previously raised the question of whether we should do a project on near-term skills issues in the context of Scotland's climate change related ambitions.
- Feedback from wider SG colleagues highlighted that there were numerous CXC projects conducted <https://www.climateexchange.org.uk/research> which addressed the question of climate related skills generally.
- Previous SSAC reports had raised skills as a recommendation and there was a need to identify if there was a gap where SSAC could add value.

Action 37/11 - Dr Donovan to speak with colleague about the CXC reports and feedback any more insights on skills gaps.

Action 37/12 – All SSAC to review the eight CXC reports and share feedback on any gaps with Dr Donovan

b) NHS Decarbonisation

- The Chair thanked all who agreed to take part in the initial meeting with SG colleagues on 25 June to identify whether there is scope for a project.

c) Innovation Ecosystems

- The Chair advised that the initial meeting about Innovation Ecosystems indicated interest in taking this forward but there was a need for more discussion to identify scope of project.
- Dr Yakushina would be keen to have more analytical support for the development of analysis of the innovation ecosystem.
- The Chair advised that along with Professor Jacko who had been involved in the initial discussion with CSA, more volunteers would be required to take this project forward. Professors Samuel and Williamson and Dr Blair confirmed they would like to be involved.
- The Chair suggested that another meeting with SG colleagues would be helpful to set out a potential scope outline which could then be circulated to the group to identify what WG members would be involved in - desk based research, a degree of analysis and perhaps with engagement from SSAC members and their own research groups who can contribute to this work.
- The CSA suggested it would be good to have SG colleagues, from innovation and entrepreneurship policy areas, to attend the next discussion on this, noting that there is now a new SG chief entrepreneur ([Helping businesses start, scale and flourish - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/helping-businesses-start-scale-flourish))
- Helen Cross, SFC advised she would be happy to be involved in discussions.

Action 37/13 – Secretariat to arrange follow up meeting to identify scope of Innovation Ecosystems project with relevant SG colleagues [Linda Galloway to suggest names].

d) New members' suggestions

- The Chair advised all members to consider the suggested projects in the context of PfG commitments.

Action 37/14 – Jo Ward to provide feedback from relevant SG colleagues about AI projects and those likely to be of particular interest to Economic Development policy colleagues.

- The Chair suggested it would be useful to have a short meeting with David Mallon and possibly Director of Economic Development about Grangemouth along with Professors Harrison, Morris and Dr Jenkins.

Post meeting note: SG feedback indicates no SSAC input required regarding Grangemouth transition at this time.

- The Chair discussed the recent SG [Offshore wind consultation](#) that had been shared prior to the meeting and requested that any members interested in co-ordinating a response on behalf of SSAC notify secretariat.
- Some members suggested they were considering an institutional response.

Action 37/15 - All to review questions within the SG offshore wind consultation to determine whether there is value in having a co-ordinated response from SSAC.

- Translating university research project seems to overlap with other suggestions on the list of potential projects and could be a topic to be considered in the future.
- The Chair suggested it could be a good one to take forward but that guidance from SG colleagues would be helpful to frame it in a way that is useful to SG.
- CSPA suggested if it is on Knowledge Translation it would be good to include the Deputy Chief Social Researcher who has particular responsibility for this in terms of the academic community.

Action 37/16 – Jo Ward to consider which SG policy areas would be most appropriate to progress discussion on university research translation in advance of the next SSAC meeting.

- Professor Kerr suggested that potentially there is a gap around the pace of technology innovation and the lag time between developing content for curricula that reflects pace of innovation. There is also a dwell time between getting some of the content into university courses.

Action 37/17 – Following short paper from Dr Donovan re CXC skills reports – Professors Kerr and Morris and Chair to draft a short paper on skills (focussing on how to train people up quickly enough given we live in an age where technology changes so quickly) for discussion at next SSAC meeting

- Dr Jenkins stated that the Just Transition data related to qualitative data-led perspective for SG thinking. While there is some work in this area, participation and engagement is required on how they engage with lived experience, how qualitative data sits alongside more quantitative metrics of success, and on the impact of potential energy market reforms on consumer pricing and fuel poverty outcomes in Scotland.

Action 37/18 – The Chair and Dr Jenkins to discuss via email and draft a short paper on Just Transition data ahead of next meeting.

7. Members' Updates

- Members outlined some key events and current focus of their areas including: working around pre-scrutiny of the climate change plan; place-based investment and AI in government and education; regional funding of SMEs and education courses on AI and data science for people across all areas.
- The upcoming [Scotland's Health Research and Innovation Conference 2025](#)
- Query raised whether there was merit in SSAC revisiting past reports given the recent publication of a Royal Society (RS) space report. The Chair advised that this had not been done before but considered it would be helpful to keep an eye on this and suggested that Professor Kerr revisit the SSAC space report in light of more recent publications.

Action 37/19 – Professor Kerr to review existing SSAC space report in light of recent RS publications.

8. AOB

- a) **Future meeting schedules/format** - Suggestion to move to two in-person strategic meetings a year with four shorter online meetings for more operational discussions. There was agreement to try this approach.
- b) **September meeting** – It is likely that the new CSA will be in post by then and suggested it would be a good idea to have this meeting in person.

Action 37/20 – 9 September meeting to be held as an in-person event. Venue to be confirmed and dates for future meetings will be offered in due course.

9. Date of Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be on 9 September 2025 13.00-16.30 in person

Summary of Actions

Action	Item	Lead	To be completed by	Update
36/1	Role for SSAC to promote ARIs – add to September agenda for further discussion	Secretariat	9 Sep 2025	On-going
36/2	Secretariat to gauge members' interest in a possible event/meeting session on mis- and dis-information, potentially involving the UK Science Media Centre in London	Secretariat		On-going
37/1	To check with Cancer Research-UK on the healthy weight/obesity network about how this work is going and to see who is involved to determine how much Scottish participation there is.	Chief Social Policy Adviser		
37/2	To discuss impact assessments with Helen Cross, SFC	Chief Social Policy Adviser		
37/3	To be involved in advising CSA ENRA on the updated climate change plan.	Prof Owens and Dr Donovan		
37/4	To identify SSAC member to review SSAC hydrogen report in the context of references to hydrogen in the current PfG to consider whether we need to address further.	SSAC Chair		
37/5	To liaise on the recommendations from Critical Technologies and Engineering Biology reports in case of overlap or connection.	Profs Simms and Horsfall		
37/6	To review the energy demand summary document and determine if interested in having a discussion on suitable scope for a future project.	Energy Demand WG members		
37/7	To share CENSIS and UK Steel Council reports with Dr Donovan and provide an update following meeting with Critical Minerals Association.	Dr Yakushina		
37/8	To consider which SG colleagues who have been involved so far should be included in a future energy demand management meeting.	Dr Donovan and Prof Harrison		
37/9	Working Group meeting to be arranged to determine scope of energy demand management project.	Secretariat		

37/10	To advise Sam Cox if interested in presenting a future Science Bites session.	All SSAC		
37/11	To speak with colleague about the CXC reports and feedback any more insights on skills gaps.	Dr Donovan		
37/12	To review the eight CXC reports and share feedback on any gaps with Dr Donovan	All SSAC		
37/13	To arrange follow up meeting to identify scope of Innovation Ecosystems project with relevant SG colleagues [Linda Galloway to suggest names].	Secretariat		
37/14	To provide feedback from relevant SG colleagues about AI projects and those likely to be of particular interest to Economic Development policy colleagues.	Jo Ward		
37/15	To review questions within the SG offshore wind consultation to determine whether there is value in having a co-ordinated response from SSAC.	All SSAC		
37/16	To consider which SG policy areas would be most appropriate to progress discussion on university research translation in advance of the next SSAC meeting.	Jo Ward		
37/17	Following short paper from Dr Donovan re CXC skills reports (37/11 and 37/12)) – to draft a short paper on skills (focussing on how to train people up quickly enough given we live in an age where technology changes so quickly) for discussion at next SSAC meeting	Profs Kerr and Morris and SSAC Chair		
37/18	To discuss via email and draft a short paper on Just Transition data ahead of next meeting.	SSAC Chair and Dr Jenkins		
37/19	To review existing SSAC space report in light of recent RS publications.	Prof Kerr		
37/20	9 September meeting to be held as an in-person event. Venue to be confirmed and dates for future meetings will be offered in due course.	Secretariat		