

**Minutes of SSAC Operational Meeting,
28 October 2025
10.30-12.30
MS Teams**

Attendees:

Name	Position
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Chair
Professor Calum Semple	Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) for Scotland (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak	Chief Scientist (Health) (<i>ex-officio member</i>) (Items 6-9)
Professor Linda Bauld	Chief Social Policy Adviser (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Mark Inall	CSA Marine (<i>ex-officio member</i>) (Items 6-9)
Professor Evgenia Yakushina	SSAC Member
Professor Gareth Harrison	SSAC Member (Items 1-3)
Professor Graham Kerr	SSAC Member
Professor Ifor Samuel	SSAC Member (items 1-3)
Professor Julie Jacko	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
Professor Russell Morris	SSAC Member
Professor Simon Dobson	SSAC Member
Dr Kate Donovan	SSAC Member
Dr Alexander Browne	SSAC Associate
Dr Kirsten Jenkins	SSAC Associate (Items 1-4)
Dr Linda Galloway	Deputy CSA Scotland, and Strategic Lead for Science and Research, Scottish Government (SG)
Joanne Ward	Head of Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser (OCSA) (SG)
Sam Cox	SSAC Secretariat, OCSA (SG)
Caroline Murray	SSAC Secretariat, OCSA (SG)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed all to the first of the online operational style meetings. Apologies were noted from the following:

Professor Mathew Williams	CSA Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (ENRA) (<i>ex-officio member</i>)
Professor Deborah Williamson	SSAC Member
Professor Lisa Boden	SSAC Member
Professor Qammer Abbasi	SSAC Member
Professor Ifor Samuel	SSAC Member
Dr Connor Blair	SSAC Associate

2. Update on current projects

a) Engineering Biology

- Professor Louise Horsfall thanked the project's working group (WG) for their efforts and feedback.
- The annexes have also been reviewed and the main report was circulated to SSAC for sign off by 7 November.
- The Chair encouraged SSAC members to provide comments and advised that following sign off, the next stage would be to progress to publication and thereafter to discuss with SG colleagues any of the actions that could perhaps benefit from future support from the SSAC.

b) Critical Technologies

- Professor Simms advised that the report is now with secretariat for the publication process and that an online teach-in session for SG officials would be organised in due course.

3. Upcoming Projects

a) NHS Decarbonisation

- Dr Jenkins advised that the project is progressing well. She is looking to finalise the scoping document and co-opt external partners to then get a view on the work plan, and aims to start the work in November/December.
- Dr Jenkins advised that she is looking for external people for the working group, and requested SSAC to provide any further suggestions to her if they were aware of anyone suitable from within their own networks.
- Dr Jenkins advised that the workplan is following the standard approach and usual project period (desk-based research, survey, interviews, roundtable) so would welcome anyone who could contribute to those processes.

b) Energy Demand Management

- Professor Harrison thanked SSAC for feedback on the draft one pager scope provided at the September meeting which been discussed with SG colleagues recently. SG colleagues were broadly supportive of the aims but noted value of having a slightly wider audience in SG to avoid any possible duplication.
- Professor Harrison to work on short working plan and ideas about the WG.
- Professor Morris noted that it was an interesting project of mixing technology with cultural change and asked how we were going to address working around the culture of entrenched practices in manufacturing and where the cultural impact comes from.
- Professor Harrison advised that he had picked up on this aspect but suggests it is for the working group to identify how to address that. Professor Morris would like to get involved with this.
- The Chair advised stressed the importance of confirming WG members and arranging meetings ahead of next SSAC meeting.

Post Meeting Note: SG policy leads have discussed with their Energy Network colleagues and both are in support of this project. Secretariat advised them of their involvement at key stages of the work, i.e. feedback on final scoping document, questionnaire, stakeholder contacts if required and attendance at project roundtable.

4. Future Projects

a) Artificial Intelligence

- Professor Dobson advised that secretariat have arranged a meeting with relevant SG colleagues in November with a view to agreeing a useful narrowing of the scope for the project, potentially around how SME businesses might take advantage of AI opportunities.
- He advised that there is a need to think about how we protect Scottish AI companies and anyone using AI more generally from potential future market crashes.

b) Near-term skills

- The Chair advised that this project had been initially raised to help ensure that Scotland has the skills it needs for energy transition. This is also a subject that ClimateXChange has addressed.
- Previous discussion had included suggesting that it would be useful to consider skills in the context of Grangemouth transition: the skills needed to transform the facility and skills needed by the workforce. There are links here to the further education sector.
- Professor Simms keen to join this WG and suggested an opportunity to consolidate the skills issues raised across many past SSAC reports into a meta-analysis to highlight consistent skills issues which could be related to this industry or something more general.
- Further suggestions by members for possible inclusion in the project included the idea of micro qualifications (how to implement), and graduate apprenticeships (demand for colleges offering these courses in the context of funding challenges).

c) Innovation ecosystem – Dr Evgenia Yakushina

- Discussion focussed on the need to make a decision on whether there is value in pursuing a project in this space, noting that, while innovation is a key area for SG work, there is potential for duplication and crossover, with a complicated intersection between what is happening at both SG and UK Government level in this space.

Post-Meeting Note: Secretariat met with SG colleagues to discuss a potential innovation project on 3 November. SG to prepare a draft scope ahead of December meeting.

d) Hydrogen

- Professor Morris had reviewed the past SSAC hydrogen report and advised that any new examination of this issue was likely to result in the same

recommendations, due to remaining cost uncertainties. However, that did not mean that hydrogen is not important.

- An important context here is that UK Climate Change Committee recommendations focussed on the use of blue, rather than green, hydrogen, and on industrial decarbonisation where electrification is not easy, rather than transport or local heating aspects of potential hydrogen use.
- New developments in the technology (eg around production of ammonia as a fuel source, and in producing excess wind energy) and new projects in this space by ClimateXChange (CXC) over the next six months may provide useful context in which to consider a revisit of the topic of hydrogen by the SSAC.

5. SSAC Promotion of ARIs – Dr Linda Galloway

- Dr Galloway updated the SSAC on the latest ARI publications on the SG website, promotion activity at events (eg SFC Beyond Net Zero conference), and highlighted that colleagues leading the ARI co-ordination work would ask SSAC for assistance on an ad hoc basis for areas in SG where there is no senior scientist/analyst to oversee ARI development.
- The Chair agreed it would be useful to identify where advice from SSAC could be quite general, or could help to focus ARIs, or could form the basis of a future SSAC project. The Chair requested ex-officio members reflect on this and report back.

6. Ex-officio requests for SSAC input

- The Chair advised that short written updates would be requested from ex-officio members ahead of future operational meetings for any SSAC input.
- Nothing urgent was raised for this meeting but four areas may be brought to the next one – quantifying uncertainty; the Scottish Pandemic Sciences Partnership in Public Health Scotland; CSA ENRA Research Strategy update following the recent consultation; and the SG Life Sciences strategy once published.

7. Members' Updates

Members outlined work, events, developments and publications in various areas including:

- development of strategy for materials innovation and economic growth
- attendance at a recent critical technologies event which focussed on supply chain, scale up and technology maturation and standards, hosted by Scotland's CT Supercluster Chair
- activities on hydrogen and AI
- discussions regarding UKRI local innovation partners fund
- adaptation and mitigation work in climate change
- UK wide consultation by the research councils on how best to scale engineering biology
- work ensuring social and ethical considerations are embedded into science and technology policymaking and implementation
- the impact of the [Post-16 education and skills white paper - GOV.UK](#) which SSAC members were encouraged to read

- international development in marine science policy landscape and the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty of the UN
- the recent formation of the National Research Organisation (NRO) which is a self-organising group made up of UK independent research organisations. SG

Members also raised upcoming events that may be of interest:

- Green skills conference on 19 November in Aberdeen. <https://www.nationalworldevents.com/sgsc-2025/>
- Science and the Parliament event 19 November in Edinburgh [Science and the Parliament 2025](#)
- Glasgow hosting Ocean Sciences meeting in February 2026. [Ocean Sciences Meeting 2026 | Feb 22-27 | Glasgow, Scotland](#)
- CXC conference on 26 February 2026 – looking at multi-level governance for climate.

8. Secretariat Update

a) LinkedIn announcements –SSAC members were invited to join up and provide any news about their work/promotion/conferences etc that secretariat could promote via the SSAC LinkedIn page

b) Critical Technologies Teach In – this online events for SG staff will be scheduled for January – details to follow. Professor Simms will briefly outline the role of SSAC before beginning her presentation to allow more time for Q&A at the end of the session.

c) Mis/Dis- Information Session – An online session is being organised with contributions from the Science Media Centre in London, for SSAC and some SG colleagues with an interest in this area. Likely to be in early new year. Focus of the session will be on a range of topics eg health and climate change and will be science focussed.

9. AOB

No items raised.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be 2 December 2025 online. Thereafter the next online operational meeting will be 3 February 2026.

Project Actions

Engineering Biology – All members to provide feedback on EngBio report by 7 November. Secretariat to arrange meeting between SSAC members and policy officials for post-publication discussion on potential future support.

NHS Decarbonisation – Drs Yakushina/Jenkins to discuss offline re possible post-graduate student for working group. **Working Group members** to complete Doodle Poll for series of fortnightly meetings.

Energy Demand – Professor Harrison to prepare draft scope for SSAC sign off and to identify key working group members and work plan to take forward project.

Artificial Intelligence – Professor Dobson to follow up with **Dr Yakushina** on the two-year programme on AI adoption in manufacturing SMEs.

Near-term Skills – Secretariat to reach out to SG colleagues to progress feedback and/or include other policy colleagues.

Innovation Ecosystem - CSA office to facilitate engagement on this proposed project with relevant SG colleagues.

Hydrogen

Secretariat to request feedback from SG colleagues following August meeting.

Dr Donovan to keep SSAC informed of the CXC hydrogen projects in the new year.

CSA office to advise of any urgent priorities in this area.

Chair and Secretariat to consider bringing the issue back to a future meeting in six months' time

ARIs – All members to email secretariat/Dr Galloway directly about any events that would be useful for publicising ARIs.