

**Minutes of SSAC Meeting**  
**2 December 2025**  
**13.00-16.00**  
**MS Teams**

**Attendees:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Professor Julian Jones	SSAC Chair
Professor Calum Semple	Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) for Scotland ( <i>ex-officio member</i> )
Professor Linda Bauld	Chief Social Policy Adviser ( <i>ex-officio member</i> )
Professor Mark Inall	CSA Marine ( <i>ex-officio member</i> )
Professor Deborah Williamson	SSAC Member
Professor Gareth Harrison	SSAC Member
Professor Graham Kerr	SSAC Member
Professor Ifor Samuel	
Professor Julie Jacko	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
Dr Evgenia Yakushina	SSAC Member
Dr Kate Donovan	SSAC Member
Dr Alexander Browne	SSAC Associate
Dr Kirsten Jenkins	SSAC Associate
David Mallon	Head of Unit, Climate Change Division, Scottish Government (SG) – Items 3b and 4a
David Lott	Scottish Funding Council – observer
Dr Linda Galloway	Deputy CSA Scotland, and Strategic Lead for Science and Research (SG)
Joanne Ward	Head of Office of the CSA (OCSA) (SG)
Caroline Murray	SSAC Secretariat, OCSA (SG)

**1. Welcome and actions from last meeting**

- The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and advised previous actions were complete with the exception of a few longstanding items which are being progressed.
- Apologies were noted from:

Professor Mathew Williams	CSA Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture ( <i>ex-officio member</i> )
Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak	Chief Scientist (Health) ( <i>ex-officio member</i> )
Professor Murray Roberts	SSAC Member
Professor Simon Dobson	SSAC Member

## **2. Ex-officio hot topics discussion**

### **Research Policy Exchange – CSA and Dr Linda Galloway**

- The CSA is keen to improve bilateral knowledge exchange between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and SG.
- Dr Galloway advised that RSE were undertaking a piece of work on research/policy exchange.
- The CSA added that he had a useful meeting on how SG could work with Universities Scotland and RSE, perhaps with some SG colleagues contributing by helping to promote awareness of roles for future scientists in SG.

### **Life Sciences Strategy**

- The Chair suggested that SSAC members look at the SG Life Sciences Strategy, which has a number of overlaps with current SSAC projects. There was a long list of actions including the launch of AI Scotland and it would be useful to discuss this strategy in more detail at the next meeting.

### **Update – Chief Social Policy Adviser (CSPA) Professor Linda Bauld**

- CSPA outlined some of her key work recently and advised of the Wellcome grant awarded to three Scottish universities to support the development and testing of a new model which enhances positive research cultures.
- She shared a link for information on the interesting work of [The contemporary relevance of the social sciences – Academy of Social Sciences](#)
- CSPA involved in the new National Scottish Pandemic Sciences Partnership work and advised that a new Chief Nursing Officer had been recently appointed by SG (Professor Aisha Holoway).
- CSPA continues to be involved with preventative spend related to public health spend and shared a useful link <https://carnegieuk.org/publication/budgeting-for-wellbeing-international-approaches/>
- Professor Williamson expressed a keen interest in the social prescribing work and CSPA agreed to provide contact details.

### **National Scottish Pandemic Sciences Partnership – Professor Deborah Williamson**

- Professor Williamson advised that this was a tripartite venture funded by SG and hosted by Public Health Scotland (PHS) and academia in response to the Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness' recommendations that came out in 2024 and from SSAC's Covid report in 2022 to essentially establish a Scottish partnership initiative around pandemic-related research.
- She advised that Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak had been involved to make sure partnership recommendations are anchored in research and would encourage CSPA and CSA to be involved.
- The CSA agreed the focus on research response is key, along with how data is used across SG.

- Professor Williamson advised that disaster reduction was not part of the conversation they had so far but agreed that this should be considered and will discuss with Dr Donovan further around disaster reduction and health.
- The Chair stated this was an important topic for a future meeting and would be guided by Professor Williamson and CSPA to identify work for SSAC.
- The Chair welcomed David Lott, Scottish Funding Council (SFC) attending as an observer in lieu of Dr Cat Ball. He advised of a value of research event David is working on around health and social care later in 2026 which will be included as an agenda item for discussion at the next SSAC meeting.

#### **Update – Chief Scientific Adviser (Marine) Professor Mark Inall**

- CSA(Marine) is using the development of an ARI (Areas of Research Interest) document for Marine as the impetus to form an Office of CSA(Marine) to help focus discussion around the science/policy interface in the marine space.
- CSA(Marine) suggested it would be good to invite new SG DG Net Zero Professor Andy Kerr to a future SSAC meeting.
- The Chair agreed to invite new DG Net Zero to an in person meeting and would discuss this with CSA(Marine) and Dr Linda Galloway.
- CSA(Marine) noted recent engagement with UKRI had highlighted UKRI's shift to an emphasis on research linked to government policies. David Lott added that Professor Sir Ian Chapman is the new Chief Executive recently appointed to UKRI and provided link to recent speech setting out [UKRI's new strategic direction for growth](#). He advised that the UKRI strategy will be delivered in Spring 2026 and it will be important for UKRI to engage around the UK including Scotland.

**Action 39/1 – Chair, CSA(Marine) and Dr Linda Galloway to discuss invitation for new DG Net Zero to attend future SSAC in person meeting (17 March or 8 Sep).**

#### **Update – Chief Scientific Adviser Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (ENRA) – Professor Mathew Williams**

- Written update provided in advance of meeting:
- The ENRA strategy public consultation has concluded and the final strategy, including relevant areas of research interest, will be published in January.
- Scotland's national LIDAR survey has begun – 10% has been completed so far, to be released in January 2026, with biannual updates and completion by late summer 2027.

### **3. SG Consultations**

#### **a) [Circular Economy Strategy Consultation](#)**

- The Chair thanked Professors Horsfall, Dobson and Harrison for expressing an interest in responding to this consultation on behalf of SSAC.

**Action 39/2 – Professors Horsfall, Dobson and Harrison to identify which questions from the Circular Economy consultation are relevant for SSAC to respond to.**

b) [Climate Change Plan Consultation](#)

- The Chair thanked Professors Harrison and Dobson for their interest in this consultation.
- David Mallon advised that the CCP consultation started in November and is a substantial event in climate change terms for SG because it covers 15 years up to 2040, applies to many sectors of the economy and seeks to reduce any negative impacts society wide. He would be keen to have SSAC views on the draft.
- Professor Harrison suggested there was scope for SSAC to do something on energy aspects. Dr Jenkins and Professor Morris also keen to support the SSAC response to this very substantial, high level document.
- Dr Donovan advised of a recent workshop session on Scotland Beyond Net Zero (SBNZ) and would be happy to feed into the discussion from that.

**Action 39/3 - Secretariat to arrange subgroup meeting with David Mallon to discuss SSAC response to Climate Change Plan Consultation, perhaps through a short advice paper.**

#### **4. SSAC Future Projects Progression**

a) **Near-term skills – Professor Melanie Simms**

- Professor Simms discussed the draft scope circulated with the papers. The intention was to bring together a range of recommendations made in past SSAC reports and contextualise them around current environment and existing initiatives.
- She suggested a small group discussion with key stakeholders to sound out the synthesis of past skills recommendations would be helpful, with the project framed around economic growth.
- There was some discussion over whether the project should look at STEM skills only, or wider skills issues, and whether to include secondary school education in STEM (noting the likely demographic shifts over the next 5-20 years that will see fewer young people in Scotland), energy transition skills, renewables, innovation and research. However, there was also a shared concern about stretching the project brief too wide, given resources available and the 6-month timeline.
- Professor Simms had agreed that the previous intern on the Critical Technologies project would be available to assist; secretariat to confirm whether there is support available for this.

**Action 39/4 – Professor Simms to share current Skills project scoping document with David Lott for feedback.**

**Action 39/5 – Secretariat to arrange working group meeting with David Mallon to agree next steps for updating the Skills scope.**

#### **b) Artificial Intelligence – Professor Ifor Samuel**

- Professor Samuel provided a brief update of the recent meeting between SSAC and SG colleagues. It had been agreed that SSAC would develop questions to put to a roundtable of key stakeholders early in the new year to scope out a potential AI project that could help inform SG's strategy regarding AI, alongside input from the Scottish Technology Council (STC).
- Professors Samuel and Dobson have prepared a short paper on the questions for the roundtable.

**Action 39/6 – Secretariat to share AI roundtable questions with SSAC and SG colleagues who attended the initial discussion for feedback.**

#### **c) Hydrogen**

- The Chair advised that the Council would revisit this potential project in 2026 after considering work in this space by ClimateXChange.

**Action 39/7 – Secretariat to include hydrogen on 17 March 2026 agenda**

#### **d) Innovation**

- The Chair advised that SG policy colleagues had proposed an innovation related project as per the scoping draft attached with meeting papers. The Chair asked Dr Yakushina to provide some feedback on the initial draft.
- Dr Yakushina said it was a good summary and its main focus was on the qualitative evidence gap in terms of the barriers that prevent businesses from innovating, the enablers and motivations that drive innovation, and the systemic factors that enable or constrain innovation activity (for example management behaviour, risk appetite and perceptions of innovation).
- There was discussion around the focus of the SSAC project based on the draft paper and Professors Owens, Samuel and Kerr volunteered to be involved in the working group with Dr Yakushina and Professor Jacko to help take this project forward.

**Action 39/8 – Secretariat to arrange meeting with working group to define innovation project scope based on the SG proposal for circulation to SSAC for sign off.**

### **5. SSAC Current Projects**

#### **a) Critical Technologies – Professor Melanie Simms**

- The SSAC Critical Technologies Report was published on 1 December. Professor Simms thanked Grace Dey and the working group members for their work on this project.
- A Teach-In event is planned for January 2026 and a Deep Tech seminar at University of Glasgow.
- Professor Kerr advised that Technology Scotland had just appointed a Programme Manager for the Critical Technologies Supercluster

<https://technologyscotland.scot/technology-scotland-welcomes-elena-kniazeva-as-new-senior-programme...>

**b) Engineering Biology – Professor Louise Horsfall**

- Professor Horsfall thanked SSAC for feedback on the draft report and the updated version had been circulated with the meeting papers for sign off.
- She advised that it fits well following the publication of the SSAC's Critical Technology report and the SG's Life Sciences Strategy.
- She thanked Fiona Bunn for her considerable work on this project as well as the working group members involved.
- The Chair considered SSAC approval for the publication of the report will be deemed agreed if no further comments were received by 5 December.

**c) NHS Decarbonisation – Dr Kirsten Jenkins**

- Dr Jenkins advised that the project scope had been agreed subject to a minor change and she had prepared a workplan and timescale for the project. She asked if members could advise if they were aware of any external professional contacts who would be suitable to join the working group.
- She advised that the literature review was underway and a series of fortnightly working group meetings were set going forward.
- Secretariat to confirm whether a project intern could be supported.

**Action 39/9 - All members to advise if they are aware of anyone within their professional networks who could be invited to be involved in the NHS Decarbonisation working group.**

**d) Energy Demand Management – Professor Gareth Harrison**

- Professor Harrison reported a small revision to the draft scope circulated ahead of the meeting, and thought that an earlier meeting with SG officials had been helpful and confirmed a consensus around the draft scope.
- He has started to compile some relevant literature for the project, and thought that recent media announcements regarding the National Grid call on industry meant there is momentum behind this project.

**Action 39/10 – All members to read the updated Energy Demand Management scope in the next few days to sign off. Nil responses by end of the week will be deemed approval to proceed.**

**Action 39/11 – Secretariat to arrange series of Energy Demand working group meetings.**

**6. Members Updates**

- Professor Horsfall advised that she had been seconded to a Circular Economy Initiative by University of Edinburgh, which she will be leading on as a Circular Economy Champion. The Chair congratulated her on this appointment and asked her to keep SSAC updated on that activity. Dr Donovan suggested it

would be worth highlighting [Sustainable Scotland Network - The Sustainable Scotland Network](#)

- Dr Donovan advised that the Centres of Expertise were under review and were coming to the end of the SRP consulting process. She encouraged SSAC members to engage in that process and advised that tenders for programmes would be coming out in April 2026. She also advised of Climate Change Committee consultation workshops. [Investment for a well-adapted UK - Climate Change Committee](#)

## **7. AOB**

### **a) SSAC Publications**

- The Chair advised that the Engineering Biology report will likely be published in February 2026 given the upcoming holiday period and the various actions required for the publication process.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

- The next meeting will be the online operational meeting on 3 February 2026.

## Summary of Actions

Action	Item	Lead	To be completed by	Update
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	Event date 27 Jan 2026 TBC
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	On-going	Engaging with SG colleagues
37/18	To discuss via email and draft a short paper on Just Transition data ahead of next meeting.	Dr Jenkins	Closed	To follow up post NHS decarbonisation project.
39/1	To discuss invitation for new DG Net Zero to attend future SSAC in person meeting (17 March or 8 Sep).	Chair, CSA(Marine) and Dr Linda Galloway		
39/2	To identify which questions from the Circular Economy consultation are relevant for SSAC to respond to	Professors Horsfall, Dobson and Harrison		
39/3	To arrange subgroup meeting with David Mallon to discuss SSAC response to Climate Change Plan Consultation, perhaps through a short advice paper.	Secretariat		
39/4	To share current Skills project scoping document with David Lott for feedback.	Professor Simms		
39/5	To arrange working group meeting with David Mallon to agree next steps for updating the Skills scope.	Secretariat		
39/6	To share AI roundtable questions with SSAC and SG colleagues who attended the initial discussion for feedback.	Secretariat	Completed	Awaiting feedback



39/7	To include hydrogen on 17 March 2026 agenda	Secretariat		
39/8	To arrange meeting with working group to define innovation project scope based on the SG proposal for circulation to SSAC for sign off.	Secretariat		
39/9	To advise if they are aware of anyone within their professional networks who could be invited to be involved in the NHS Decarbonisation working group.	All SSAC		
39/10	To read the updated Energy Demand Management scope in the next few days to sign off. Nil responses by end of the week will be deemed approval to proceed.	All SSAC	Completed	
39/11	To arrange series of Energy Demand working group meetings.	Secretariat		