



**The James Hutton Institute
BOARD MEETING**

Calton Room, Apex Waterloo Hotel, Edinburgh
20 January 2016, 09:00h

Chair: Ray Perman (RP)

Board members: Brian Clark (BC)
James Curran (JC)
Ian Gambles (ICG)
Stephen Hall (SH)
Deborah Keith (DK)
Joan Macnaughton (JM)
Laura Meagher (LM)
Allan Stevenson (AS)
George Thorley GT)
Alan Werritty (AW)

Apologies: Marian Scott (MS)

Attendees: Colin Campbell (CC)
Beth Corcoran (BeC)
Bob Ferrier (BF)

Secretariat: Anne Pack (AP)

Closed Session

RP updated the board on progress in the recruitment of the new CEO. A strong shortlist had been drawn up and final interviews will be held in February.

Opening remarks

RP referred to a letter recently received from Linda Pooley of Scottish Government asking the board to sign up to the First Minister's the Partnership for Change campaign to ask boards to make a commitment to working towards gender balance. The board agreed to support the campaign.

- RP to write to Linda Pooley confirming the Institute's commitment to working towards gender balance on the Board by 2020.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Marian Scott.

2 Register of Interests

No additional disclosures were made.

3 Minutes of the AGM and meeting held on 18 November 2015.

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4 Matters arising

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GT to bring forward a recommendation on a headhunting organisation for new Board members following the appointment of the Institute's new CEO. | GT | GT will make a recommendation to the March Board, <i>via</i> the N&R committee. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CC to bring a proposal on CEO and Directors' salaries to N&R committee. | GT | CC has forwarded this to the N&R committee for discussion at its next meeting. GT will come back to the Board with an update. AS asked that FB's salary is included in the discussion. |

Previous matters arising

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Request a meeting with Bridget Campbell to discuss revised Corporate Plan | RP / AP | It was agreed to wait until after the Corporate Plan has been finalised.
Action ongoing. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• AP to arrange an Away Day to set the strategic agenda | AP | RP recommended September 2016. Action ongoing. |

5 Health and Safety

JC gave a verbal report on his meeting with Glyn Beech, Interim Health and Safety Officer, saying he was comforted and reassured by the health and safety culture at the Institute; including the work on ISO accreditation, the relationship with the unions and the audit programme. There are a number of things JC would like to discuss with Frances Rowe, who has recently returned from maternity leave and he hopes to meet with her soon. Items for discussion will include the various policies which have been approved, and which JC would like to see expanded. JC would like to see more reporting on health and safety to the Board such as additional basic statistics on a wider scope to capture reporting on breaches of procedure, the number of audits, and training.

The increased number of incidents included in the report provided is due to awareness-raising of the importance of near-miss reporting.

AS queried the reporting of hazards in the category injuries and incidents and suggested the hazard is part of pre-emptive management and should not be included in those totals. JC will look at that and report back to the Board.

- **JC to look at the reporting of hazards within the statistics table.**

6 Strategy Planning and Budget

6.1 Spending review and future landscape

The Executive were advised at a bilateral with RESAS on 18 January, that the Institute's funding cut for the coming year will be 2.8%. No further capital funding will be provided by RESAS and some other programmes have been folded into the overall programme, so effectively the total cut could be as much as Further clarification on the detail has still to be provided. The cut to the Institute translates to £0.5m – £0.75m and in order to meet this savings are being sought on recruitment, travel, and other areas. There are plans to increase funding from our estate.

It was suggested that the Institute presents a positive business-like front in response to RESAS's offer, and state what it can deliver based on the funding offered, whilst outlining how tough it will be to do so-

It was suggested that a one-page briefing be provided to Board members on the Institute, and one on the IBH to help Board members to promote the Institute where appropriate.

- **BF to provide the Board with one page leaflets on the Institute, and the IBH.**

Future landscape

There is a need for the Institute to identify greater collaborative opportunities with the other MRPs and other similar organisations. A discussion took place amongst the Board on what areas should be explored.

6.2 Corporate Plan

The 2nd draft of the Corporate Plan is almost complete and will be provided to the Board mid-late February. It still requires the James Hutton Ltd Business Plan, and the outcome of the spending review.

6.3 James Hutton Ltd Business Plan

The Board asked that thanks be sent to Fraser Black (FB) for the presentation (delivered by Jonathan Snape because of FB's illness) on the James Hutton Ltd Business Plan, at dinner the previous evening. It was agreed to invite FB to the next Board to provide an update.

- **Invite Fraser Black to the March Board to provide an update on the James Hutton Ltd Business Plan.**

6.4 Public affairs strategy

A high-level Public Affairs Strategy was provided by BF for discussion and comment. BF introduced the paper saying engaging with key influencers is especially important at this time of funding pressures in order to mitigate the risks.

The strategy includes a list of goals which the Board felt were good, especially the one on increasing visibility of the Institute at a UK level, and to understand mechanisms for raising its profile with the EC and international governments.

6.5 International Barley Hub

An update paper was provided for information. £60,000 is required to continue the development of the Business Plan, support investigation of funding opportunities and progress initiatives to raise the project's profile. Barley research is a strength of the Institute and work on it is still being funded by SG. The building would provide physical space to conjoin expertise and facilitate specific research. Strong letters of support have been received from several bodies including NFU and SWRI outlining the need for the facility.

In order to ensure the Business Plan is robust the Project Team for IBH has been working with experts. The governance will require careful thought, but until funding is in place the detail cannot be fine tuned.

6.6 Balruddery facility

The Board was asked to note the capital funding case prepared for facilities at Balruddery. It will not be submitted until the Institute's budget is known, and will be brought back to the Board for approval at a timely date.

The Centre for Sustainable Cropping (CSC) at Balruddery Farm is a major field facility which attracts scientific collaboration and visitors from various sectors and stakeholder groups. The Centre is seen as a major research platform. Permanent facilities on site would expand the Centre's usefulness and provide an educational outreach.

It was queried whether any funding sources had been explored that supports education purposes, such as the Lottery Fund, Robertson Trust, and Gannochy Trust. Since the Institute provides several education activities it was suggested these could be bundled together to strengthen such an application.

It was felt the Business Case was not clear enough or sharp enough and that it lacked analysis on numbers of visitors and activities. The Board was asked to provide further comments to CC.

- **Comments on the Balruddery facility Business Case to be sent to CC.**

7 Regular reports

7.1 CEO Report

This was received for information. The Board commended CC on the new format and asked if the information was shared with staff. It was noted that there are plans to share the CEO report with the Senior Management Group (SMG) who will relay the content to staff. CC was asked to email all staff to relay the positive news about

recent successes and funding awards.

- **CC to email all staff to relay positive news about recent successes and funding awards**

It was noted that joint funding has been agreed in principle for the purchase of a Thermal Ionising Mass Spectrometer (TIMS). This will allow Analytical Services to continue to deliver a key service and will give a much needed boost to the department which has had no capital investment in a long time.

There was a query in the Operational Plan, under Organisational Development (OD) and the red boxes in relation to delivery and funding of the OD programme. It was explained that the Institute had to modify its ambitions in this area in light of the impending spending review. This programme is now being co-ordinated by HR.

7.2 Management accounts, forecast and cost control measures

The Period 8 to 30 November 2015 accounts and summary were received for information. At the end of Period 8, because time spent on contracts could not be completely accounted for, the target for external contract income was at risk of drift. There has been a big push on accurate timesheet completion and although timesheets are being completed there remains unallocated staff time in the science staff cost expenditure line.

Attention was drawn to the year-end forecast for 2016. Three scenarios have been presented with confidence in the figures. Recruitment has not been halted, but delayed until 1st April allowing for small savings. There have been cutbacks on some consumable budgets. Accruals have been built in for expected PhD student fees. The main concern is income from James Hutton Ltd is reducing. On the income line, the focus is on 'other' income. BioSS is currently processing the year end invoices which should add an extra income.

The main focus is on keeping scientific consumables and other costs to a minimum. The variance in the forecast is on research contracts, and due to unknown project time allocation. It was stressed that it was important the Institute meets budget this year.

An action point in the minutes of the A&F committee meeting was referred to. It stated that the Hutton Board to take receipt of some of the reporting from the top 100 projects so that they are informed. It was also highlighted that projects underspent should have come to the Board.

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8 Minutes of sub-committee meetings since last Board meeting

8.1 ACS

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 17 November were received for information.

A verbal update was provided for the meeting held on 19 January 2016. The meeting

which allowed adequate time for full discussion thanks to the new timing, considered three main items:

- Science challenges for the new Corporate Plan, and its format to serve different audiences
- Matrix management options, which was an ambitious system in light of two different legacy cultures. A study was undertaken on the benefits and dis-benefits. The view of ACS was to build on the benefits of matrix management system rather than adopt a new system.
- Template for agenda planner. A discussion took place and this has been populated.

8.2 Audit & Finance

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 8 December were received for information. It was a good meeting which took a thorough look at potential corrective actions around the outturns. A lot of work is ongoing to support the Institute's management through the internal audit process. A number of hours were released to support the Executive address the timesheet issue and other areas. One way of dealing with the timesheet problem is to ensure it is part of the QA process. Any non-conformance would be a formal issue subject to disciplinary procedures.

8.3 Nominations & Remuneration

A paper providing an update on recruitment of CEO will be circulated to Board members. GT thanked members for comments on the issue of replacement of Chair of the N&R committee. A report will go to the March Board.

- RP to circulate a paper updating members on the recruitment of the CEO.
- RP to provide a report on replacement chair for N&R, to the March Board.

AOB

Dates of meetings in 2016:

March 23rd Aberdeen

May 18th Dundee

July 20th Aberdeen

September 21st Dundee

November 23rd Aberdeen