



**The James Hutton Institute**  
**BOARD MEETING**  
Craigiebuckler Room, Aberdeen  
**23 November 2016, 09:00h**

**MINUTES**

**Chair:** Ray Perman (RP)

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

**Apologies:** Deb Roberts (DR)

**Attendees:** Colin Campbell (CC)  
Beth Corcoran (BeC)  
Alasdair Cox (AC)  
Bob Ferrier (BF)  
Fraser Black (FB)  
Lesley Torrance (LT)  
Anne Pack (AP) [Minutes]

**Closed Session**

**1 Apologies**

Deb Roberts.

**2 Register of Interests**

The following new declarations were made:

James Curran:

- EC Expert Advisor on H2020 for SMEs.
- Board member, Green Purposes Co.

Joan Macnaughton:

- Chair, The Climate Group
- Member, Strategic Advisory Board, Engie, UK
- Associate Editor, Renewable Energy Focus

**3 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2016.**

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

**4 Matters arising**

**Actions one, two and three** are complete.

**Action four:** *A Hutton Foundation Plan to be provided to the Board.*  
This is not required until January 2017.

**Action five:** *CC to arrange for the Public Affairs Coordinator to discuss with DK and JM the steps that need to be taken in relation to the Higher Education Bill. Discussed on the agenda.*

RP acknowledged the volume of work done by DK and JM. JM suggested this be made top priority as there is only a three week window to bring it together.

Meantime meetings are being arranged for 8 December and 20 December with appropriate members of the House of Lords. It is not known who will chair the Lords Committee that will consider the Bill nor is the timetable known at present. Apart from preparing the case three or four people with the relevant knowledge of research institutes need to be identified to represent the Institute.

**Action:** *CC to identify advisors to represent the Institute in relation to the Higher Education Bill.*

## 5 Health and Safety

The report was received for information. JC will join regular Health & Safety inspections in January and spend some time meeting with the Hutton Sustainability Co-ordinator who has written the Institute's Public Bodies Climate Change Duties report which contains details of our carbon footprint.

**Action:** *CC to send a copy of the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties report to JC.*

It was reported that the audit undertaken by the Internal Auditors was exemplary with no recommendations. This is a great tribute to the H&S team.

## 6 Strategy Planning and Budget

### 6.1 Review of external environment and overall strategic direction

CC provided two papers and gave a presentation as a basis for discussion. It is recognised that the external environment is highly dynamic; Brexit is a big consideration for the Institute and other similar organisations; and that the Institute must reposition itself to be prepared for the future. The Board's appetite for risk needs to be established.

The Board had a lengthy discussion. It was suggested that it is fundamental to the cost control programme that effort is prioritised into three strategic areas:

- James Hutton Ltd commercial growth
- Tay Cities Deal – IBH and APGC
- T&Cs/pensions

Though the Board was mindful of potential overload for the Executive the Executive confirmed that it had recently reprioritised major tasks, and parked others meantime to make room for this work.

Comments made as part of the discussion included that the Institute needed to have a stronger commercial focus, improved structures for commercial management, and a clearer orientation to the market. Possible approaches considered included more focus on potentially successful areas, with a reduced capital requirement and cost base, and a renewed emphasis

on innovation.

CC reminded the board about new initiatives around innovation (the IBH) and new structures e.g. programme management office and thanked the Board for the useful input during discussion. He confirmed that staff are increasingly being informed about the importance of cost recovery and generally understand the need to change to new T&Cs. He added that it is also important to think long term. Projects such as the Foundation, which is currently not a key priority, is about the Institute's long term vision and is increasingly seen as important to staff.

The Board approved the paper.

### **6.2 H1 financial review and full year re-forecast**

BeC provided a verbal update. The revised forecast for the half year shows a larger deficit than the original forecast.

The forecast was profiled using 2015/16 actuals in order to focus on key areas. The focus is currently on commercial activity and income generation. Cost savings are always being sought. Procurement has resulted in some cost savings.

### **6.3 Internationalisation**

A paper outlining the Institute's International Strategy was provided for information. The development of the Strategy considered the UK government's desire to align a larger proportion of research investment towards global challenges. It also takes into account the uncertainty and risk around EU funding. The Institute aims to open up new customer bases in countries it already collaborates with in an attempt to become less reliant on SG funding.

The Board commended BF on a good document. Members would have liked an analysis of collaborators and competitors included, as well as a discussion over what lack of EU funding meant.

It was suggested that close monitoring of EU in light of Brexit would be prudent as this is a big risk area, and relevant points need to be registered with appropriate decision makers. Meantime EU funding will be pursued for as long as possible.

### **6.4 Terms & Conditions update**

Twenty information sessions between management and staff have taken place over T&Cs. The biggest issue for staff is pensions. A meeting has been arranged with the union on 24 November to begin negotiations. There is much work to be done to implement the new Terms and Conditions by 1 April 2017 which leaves little room for delays. The Executive are aware of this and are keeping things on track through weekly meetings.

### **6.5 International Barley Hub update**

The project has been invited to the second stage with Tay Cities Deal. Work has begun on preparing the Business Plan.

The Board reaffirmed its commitment to IBH.

## **7 Regular reports**

### **7.1 CEO Report and Q2 Operational Plan review**

The report and Plan were received for information.

## **7.2 P6 Management Accounts**

P6 Management accounts were provided for information.

Of note in the forecast, this time last year costs were rising and income did not match it. In order to bring it back to break-even tight control was imposed on purchasing.

This year similar interventions will be put in place. The T&Cs project is a high priority and one which will deliver savings, if not in this financial year, in the next.

The Board extended its gratitude to BeC for delaying her leaving date to provide a hand-over to the incoming Finance Director.

## **8 Minutes of sub-committee meetings since last Board meeting**

### **8.1 ACS**

The draft minutes of the ACS meeting held on 20 September were received for information.

BC provided a verbal update of the meeting held on 22 November. The meeting learned about the composition and focus of the Science Strategy Group, which will co-ordinate the process of science group reviews which will begin early 2018. ACS also discussed the BioSS Corporate Plan.

### **8.2 Audit & Finance**

Nothing to report since the last Board meeting.

### **8.3 Nominations & Remuneration**

JM provided a verbal update on Board recruitment. Fifteen people were interviewed. Some considered it important that the incoming chair of James Hutton Ltd should have commercial experience given the financial position of the Institute. Three candidates were identified as possible appointees for this position.

JM, on behalf of N&R, recommended four candidates for the main Board. The N&R committee will continue to proceed in relation to the position of Chair of James Hutton Institute and James Hutton Ltd.

Members were requested to reach out to their contacts and suggest names of potential members,

**Action:** Members to reach out to their contacts and suggest names of potential members;

## **Other Reports**

### **9.1 Media Digest**

This report was received for information.

## **AOB**

It was agreed that the Board should discuss the BioSS Corporate Plan to offer comment regarding the vision, strategic direction and business plan.

**Action:** AP to circulate the BioSS Corporate Plan that went to ACS.

## **Closing remarks**

RP noted this was GT's last Board meeting. He thanked him for his support to the Board, his guidance and mentoring and for his chairmanship of N&R.

**Dates of meetings in 2017:**

January 25<sup>th</sup> Edinburgh

March 29<sup>th</sup> Dundee

May 31<sup>st</sup> Aberdeen

July 26<sup>th</sup> Dundee

September 27<sup>th</sup> Aberdeen

November 29<sup>th</sup> Dundee