



The James Hutton Institute

BOARD MEETING

Held at Craigiebuckler
21 July 2011 at 09.00h

Chair: Ray Perman (RP)

Board members: Brian Clark (BC) Sandy Morrison (SM)
Julia Brown (JB) George Thorley GT)
Laura Meagher (LM) George Salmond (GS)
Alan Werritty (AW) Allan Stevenson (AS)

Apologies: Wayne Powell (WP)
David Boxer (DB)

Attendees: Iain Gordon (IG)
Karen Shaw (KS)
Scott Strachan (Item 10.)

Secretariat: Anne Pack (AP)

1	<p>Minutes The minutes were approved, subject to a few minor corrections.</p>
2	<p>Matters arising RP said that the Action Points had either been completed or were covered elsewhere in the minutes. IG reported (Action Point 8) that no international projects where MRPs work together, had been identified.</p>
3	<p>ACS update <i>3.1 Science vision and strategy update</i> IG said that the strategy has to be owned by the people using it. Bob Ferrier, Director of Research Impact, and Colin Campbell, Director of Science Excellence, have taken responsibility for it and are working with the Heads of Science Groups. Suggested changes will be discussed with IG and the resulting refined strategy document will be available for the Away Day in September. It was agreed that Bob and Colin would be invited to attend. Phil Taylor, Head of Communications will also be invited.</p> <p><i>3.2 Review of science update</i> BC said that the meeting on 30th June had been very constructive. A full account of the meeting was reported in the minutes of the meeting (<i>paper</i>)</p>

	<p>10.3). The main item for discussion had been the review of science. Broad agreement was reached on the importance of reviewing the excellence of the science. Bob Ferrier had prepared a discussion document which included a report on the legacy systems. Only external reviewers will be engaged for this process. It should be forward-looking, constructive, and it should identify opportunities. Various levels of circulation of the review reports was discussed, including highlights in the newsletter, a summary paragraph in the public domain, and publication of the full report. It is aimed to complete a review of all groups, at regular intervals, within two and a half years. The order for review was identified, beginning with Ecological Sciences, the group that IG is most familiar with. The science review will review the individual scientists.</p> <p>The 'buddy' system, whereby a member of the science committee familiarised themselves with, and supported, a science group at SCRI had worked well, was of particular interest to ACS. This idea will be considered for The James Hutton Institute science reviews. GS urged caution over involvement with science programmes. Buddies should desist overstepping their director involvement by going into management mode. If managed correctly, the system proved to be beneficial. BC circulated a draft document for members to complete, in order to align expertise with Themes and Groups. IG will discuss this document with Theme and Group Leaders, amend it and return to BC.</p> <p>Action: IG to discuss Advisory Role document with Theme and Group leaders, make amendments, and forward document to BC.</p> <p>The Theme Leaders will be responsible for the RESAS Themes. There will be a mid-term review at the end of 2013. IG has requested that for RESAS the report is kept simple but effective.</p> <p>GS asked if there was to be a replacement for Maggie Gill. IG said given the financial position there might not be a replacement. AS said that historically, SCRI had difficulties with its relationship with SG. IG said that The James Hutton Institute had a good relationship with Valerie Macniven, Director for Rural Payments and Inspection, and Rebekah Widdowfield, Head of Rural & Environment Science and Analytical Services. They visited the Aberdeen site last week, and Valerie will visit the Dundee site on Friday 22nd July. It is planned to build on these relationships.</p>
4	<p>Reports</p> <p><i>4.1 Chief Executive's Report</i></p> <p>IG presented this report, which he explained was in four parts. IG said that The Hutton Gathering on the 8th June had been a successful occasion, where the whole institute met in one place, giving the chance to interact, and the opportunity to ask the Executive Team questions. IG praised Phil Taylor and his team for the excellent job they did in organising the event. BC, who attended, endorsed these sentiments adding that these</p>

were economically, difficult times. IG said that there was the feeling that staff wanted to know more about what was happening. He hoped that with the Theme and Science Group leaders in post, this would give a sense of moving forward. Questions were posed to the panel, many with a common theme:

Redundancies (who, when and how many). IG said that the two organisations have merged to create new opportunities and the chance to grow. An efficiency audit will be undertaken across the two sites to optimise best use of skills.

Co-location (where and when). IG said that it was his intention that staff should feel part of The James Hutton Institute, irrespective of which site they were based at.

Budgets. IG said that we must demonstrate we are capitalising on funding opportunities.

There was general agreement that there was an over-reliance on Scottish Government (SG) funding, and that scientists need to be encouraged to seek alternative sources. AS added that this was partly a change management issue. IG said that there is a dearth of business acumen within the organisation and this needs to be supported and developed, as this is a major issue for us.

GS said that this was, potentially, a liberation for the organisation to move out of its comfort zone.

RP said that the government spending review will take place in September. Any budget cut will be implemented in April and would create an adjustment problem for the institute. AW said that a 10% cut would provide a tough timetable. AS suggested preparing a plan to give a degree of control over possible cuts.

AS felt there was a lack of leadership at the top level of the organisation, with expertise on how to build massive revenues and suggested someone be recruited at the level of the science directors. JB supported this point, adding that more of a focus was required.

In order to demonstrate the institute's external funding activities, IG will prepare a table showing successes, and details of funding applied for.

Action: IG will prepare a table showing successes, and details of funding applied for.

Comment was made on the presentation made the previous evening by Dr David Marshall, on the potato genome sequencing project. David had implied that the institute was hoping to build on the success of this project by looking to replicate the process in other areas.

LM said that the Director of Research Impact and the Theme Leaders need to knit together opportunities.

SM said that clarity was required on what funding the business development teams were seeking.

RP said that there were three revenue streams; science research contracts, commercial subsidiaries, and consultancy.

JB said that it would be helpful to have reports from senior staff ahead of the Away Day in order for the Board to understand the funding processes.

Action: IG to arrange for reports on funding from senior staff to be made available at the Board Away Day.

IG said that he had had discussions on engagement with the policy sector, and how to match expertise with funding, with Valerie Macniven and Rebekah Widdowfield when they visited the Aberdeen site on the 14th of July. Valerie also oversees SASA, which is responsible for aspects of food production in Scotland.

IG said that Valerie was due to visit the Dundee site on the 22nd of July. He would take the opportunity to convey the message that we are aiming to go from fundamental science to commercialisation.

GT suggested building on and exploiting the good relations established with Valerie and Rebekah.

AS said that we must connect to future GDP. It is the key criteria for how we prioritise projects.

IG said that The James Hutton Institute was working with Knowledge Scotland to develop success stories, such as the recent publishing of the potato genome sequencing paper in Nature.

RP reported that Stewart Stevenson, Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, will be visiting Glensaugh on the 31st of August. He will be able to talk on our behalf in cabinet.

4.2 Chief Operating Officer's Report

HR

It is not yet public knowledge, but Carol Smith, Financial Controller on the Aberdeen site has tendered her resignation from The James Hutton Institute, and leaves at the end of August. KS stressed that in light of this news, there is an urgent need for an interim Finance Director to take a lead on the roll out of the E-Bis system and who intimately understands Research Accounting- two areas of significant skill shortage. The possibility of appointing someone externally, on a one-year contract is being explored.

An Executive Assistant will be appointed to KS and the two science directors, to assist with reporting on funding streams and Company Secretary duties.

Formalities are being finalised to appoint Phil Taylor to the role of Head of Communications.

Tender process

KS said that the tendering process for various services was underway. It was very time-consuming, but essential in order to co-ordinate services across the two sites. Internal and external auditors were appointed in May. The legal team, from two separate companies were recently appointed as were the Energy Procurement Consultants.

The possibility of sharing services with other MRPs has not yet been fully explored.

Health and Safety

Moira McMaster and George Young put together a report for the Board. KS asked for feedback. It was agreed that statistics and not narrative was required, along with the level of risk. An annual report will be sufficient.

6	Financial
	<p>KS said that there were currently innumerable variables operating, but that we were broadly on track, financially. AS complimented KS on the very good financial information. He asked if the Theme Leaders had enough financial information to manage their budgets. There was discussion on the amount of money held in interest accounts. KS said that Caz and Carla were knowledgeable about how much to withhold from instant access. AS asked that information on debt risk could be included in future.</p> <p>The financial system will be consolidated on both sites, as a priority.</p> <p>A maintenance funding bid paper prepared for SCRI in March was included in the papers. KS said that she is now also in receipt of a similar paper from the Aberdeen site and will be consolidating them for submission to the Scottish Government.</p>
7	<p>Away Day</p> <p>It was agreed to revise the arrangements for the Away Day on the 23rd of September. The Board meeting will take place the evening before at Norwood Hall, and will be followed by dinner, allowing the whole of the following day for strategic discussion.</p> <p>A facilitator will be engaged for the day, and Dianne Haley who helped with the transition, will attend to help develop the 2011 Draft Business Plan. A questionnaire and SWOT analysis will be circulated to Board members prior to the Away day. LM suggested getting assistance from the socio-economics group with the compilation of the questionnaire.</p> <p>Action: IG will circulate a questionnaire and SWOT analysis prior to the Board Away Day.</p> <p>The Away Day will be attended by the Board, The Chief Executive, The Chief Operating Officer and the two Science. Nigel Kerby (MRS) and Bill Donald (MSC) will be asked to make presentations prior to the Board Dinner on the 22nd of September.</p>
8	<p>HR</p> <p><i>8.1 Update change management programme</i></p> <p>IG said that this process was proceeding more slowly than he had hoped. The selection process for change management consultants will go to tender shortly. The process of change management will be driven internally by change champions, appointed by HR, who will have been advised by the consultants. £100k over two years has been provided to support these activities. IG thanked Laura for sharing her skills and expertise in this area.</p> <p><i>8.2 Restructuring programme/possible RESAS funding</i></p> <p>KS said that structures must be in place before we can draw down money for redundancies. KS said that she would speak to Ian McWilliam, SG, about voluntary redundancies. It is planned to open up the scheme to all staff within Business Enabling Services, and not just those at risk. IG said that this represented a separate pot of money to any which would be made available for a similar scheme geared towards science staff.</p> <p>Action: KS to speak to Ian McWilliam about the voluntary redundancy scheme.</p>
9	Commercial subsidiaries

	<p><i>9.1 and 9.2 Draft Board minutes of MSC and MRS</i></p> <p>IG asked members to consider how MRS aligns with our strategy. Prior to the merger, MRS transferred funds <i>via</i> Gift Aid to SCRI, as a tax-efficient way of funding projects. This no longer applies, and a change of culture in the way we operate should be adopted.</p>
10	<p>Other committee reports</p> <p><i>10.1 Audit and Finance</i> The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Audit and Finance Committee was approved by the Board.</p> <p><i>10.2a Minutes of N&R meeting on 17th May</i> These were received for information.</p> <p><i>10.2b Senior Executive Remuneration</i> IG, KS and AP withdrew for the discussion of this item. SS attended and will report separately on it.</p> <p><i>10.3 Advisory Committee on Science</i> These were received for information.</p>
11	<p>AOB</p> <p>AS asked that a standing agenda item for 'Register of Interests' be added for future meetings. Action: AP to add 'Register of Interests' to future Board meeting agendas.</p> <p>RP asked that a Code of Conduct be drafted for review by the Board. Action: KS to prepare a Code of Conduct for the meeting on 23rd September.</p> <p>RP said that he had been under the impression that Ian Ivory was the Chair of the Mylnefield Trust, but had discovered that Peter Berry is. There are four independent Trustees, three of whom have prior connections to the Dundee site. RP and IG are to become Trustees of The Mylnefield Trust, but must be elected by The James Hutton Institute Board. The Board gave its unanimous approval.</p> <p>The Trust will meet on the 11th of August, when it is planned to propose that the trust changes its strategy to focus on a smaller number of bigger projects, subject to receipt of proposals which fall within its charitable objects. The Mylnefield Trust has been funded by donations from MRS Ltd but since JHI is itself a charity, there is no reason why MRS should not make a donation directly to the institute. With no other source of income it is difficult to see a long-term future for Mylnefield Trust.</p> <p>RP asked members to consider the proposed dates for Board meetings in 2012 and feedback any problems to AP. Action: Members to feedback any problems with proposed 2012 Board meeting dates to AP.</p>

	<p>GS said that the Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC), of which he is a member were approached by BBC's, The One Show, seeking science, technology and engineering news stories for their next series. This would be a good publicity platform for The James Hutton Institute. The deadline for submission of ideas to Secretariat, Anne Glover, is 3rd August.</p> <p>Action: IG to discuss potential stories for The One Show with Phil Taylor.</p>