



The James Hutton Institute

**BOARD MEETING**

Held at Invergowrie  
**23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011 at 09.00**

**Chair:** Ray Perman (RP)

**Board members:** David Boxer (DB) Wayne Powell (WP)  
 Julia Brown (JB) George Salmond (GS)  
 Brian Clark (BC) George Thorley (GT)  
 Laura Meagher (LM) Alan Werritty (AW)  
 Sandy Morrison (SM)

**Apologies:** Allan Stevenson (AS)

**Attendees:** Iain Gordon (IG)  
 Karen Shaw (KS)

**Secretariat:** Anne Pack (AP)

1	<b>Minutes</b> The minutes were approved
2	<b>Register of Interests</b> AW declared that he was recently appointed to the Science Advisory Committee at Scottish Natural Heritage. RP said that this did not constitute a conflict of interest.
3	<b>Matters arising</b> RP went through the Action points All Actions were completed.
4.1	<b>Chief Executive's report</b>  IG said that it had been an active two months since the last Board meeting, during which time the key areas being dealt with, which were covered in detail in the report, were: RESAS restructuring, RESAS cuts, collaboration and the development of the Corporate Strategy. <i>Restructuring</i> Bob McIntosh, under whose directorate RESAS sits, is supportive of the institute. Bob is Head of Forestry Commission Scotland. BC asked if the institute had any expertise on forestry. IG said that he had met with Bob in April, which led to a delegation from The James Hutton Institute meeting

with Forest Research. As a consequence of that meeting, a partnership agreement is being developed to create a joint approach to our research on land use and forestry. IG said that it was his view that, although there had been no decision to devolve forestry into Scotland, Scottish Government (SG) would try to wrest forestry from Defra in the near future. Our partnership agreement would put us in a good position to bid for a closer relationship with the Scottish component of forest research in the future.

#### *RESAS cuts*

IG outlined the likely impacts of the RESAS cuts on the institute over the next 3 years. Scottish Government wanted the institute to take cuts from our Underpinning Capacity budget. IG said that he was concerned about focusing cuts in this budget line as the Underpinning Capacity is important for the development of new areas of research in the organisation and would have a detrimental effect on our studentship programme. IG met with senior staff to discuss scenarios on how to meet the funding cuts and there was general consensus that we should look across the RESAS Programmes, Centres of Expertise and Strategic Partnership as well as the Underpinning Capacity. KS represented the institute at a meeting with RESAS where a joint approach to meeting the budget cuts was presented by the MRPs. SG's response to the proposals is awaited. Rebekah Widdowfield will visit the Institute on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December to discuss funding cuts with the Directorate.

KS said that SG had carried over £400k for the administration of a Voluntary Exit (VE) scheme. MRPs have agreed that staff cuts will have to be made, and The James Hutton Institute would prefer it was under the VE scheme.

IG said that discussions will be held with the Macaulay Trust and the Mylnefield Trust to request funding to meet any shortfall on the studentship programme. GT said that the Board should drive the subsidiaries, rather than request funding from them, as they are principally in place to serve the institute. RP said that it is something the Board would need to address. Both subsidiaries have produced 5-year business plans.

**Action: RP to arrange a discussion with the Board on plans for the remit of the subsidiaries.**

#### *Collaboration*

A delegation, including IG, recently made a two-day visit to The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) in Wallingford, at the request of Mark Bailey, Director, to discuss collaborative opportunities. A partnership will be developed with CEH in order to make joint approaches to bodies in the UK, Europe, the Far East and South America. CEH has a long track record, and engagement with them will provide eligibility to funding rounds in areas including ecosystems services.

IG said that he had met several times with Professor Ian Diamond, Principal of the University of Aberdeen (UoA). As a result, plans are being developed to strengthen the engagement between UoA and The James

	<p>Hutton Institute, through the University's Environmental Sustainability theme. Bob Ferrier and Colin Campbell are currently developing this with senior staff from the University. Similar conversations have been taking place with the University of Dundee (UoD). A formal arrangement is being developed on a strategy for plant sciences in relation to food security. Principals of both universities see the development of an environmental sustainability hub around central east coast Scotland as an opportunity.</p> <p>IG said that he will be meeting with the Principal of University of Edinburgh (UoE) on the 8<sup>th</sup> December. It is hoped that UoE will see the benefit of joining a Dundee/Aberdeen collaboration. Other universities need not be precluded from such an arrangement.</p> <p>IG reported on his recent trip to China, during which he signed a renewal of a Memorandum of Understanding with Nanjing Agricultural University, an important link, as their budget has increased tenfold in the past 5 years. Paul Hallett and Adrian Newton were in Nanjing immediately before IG, discussing the specifics of a new climate change facility at the University. JB said that SG, through Scottish Development International (SDI), were keen to highlight links with China. IG said that he would contact Phil Taylor, and ask him to provide a news story on IG's trip to China.  <b>Action: IG to ask Phil Taylor to provide SDI with details of IG's recent trip to China.</b></p> <p><i>Corporate Strategy</i>  An Away Day, facilitated by Dianne Haley, was held with senior staff to develop a Corporate Plan. The main things to note are that a strategy is being developed around the Implementation Plans of the Themes and Groups; income generation streams will be identified by theme, and a KE strategy will be developed by Bob Ferrier and Phil Taylor. The Corporate Plan, which will include the commercial subsidiaries and will cover 5 years, will go to the board in January.  <b>Action: IG will present the draft Corporate Plan to the Board in January 2012.</b></p>
4.2	<p><b>Chief Operating Officer's Report</b>  <i>BES structure</i>  KS said that as an ongoing priority, the BES structure continued to be populated. David Stone has been appointed Head of IT which completed the BES Leadership Team.  KS said that she interviewed for Director of Finance and Planning in October and took the decision not to appoint due to a mismatch in expectations with the preferred candidate. KS said she had therefore chosen to take on the job of setting the senior elements of the Finance team structure herself in an attempt to remove some of the roadblocks associated with the Head of Finance not relinquishing control of various parts of the Finance portfolio.  The rest of the Finance team structure is now being finalised. Initial issues within Finance are being resolved.</p>

	<p>The Board expressed surprise at this organisational change after the discussion at the October Board meeting on the need for the new role of Director of Finance &amp; Planning</p> <p>Nevertheless, the Board accepted the explanation &amp; KS was applauded for her candid review &amp; her willingness to revert to internal appointments. The Board agreed that KS was right to remain flexible &amp; review effectiveness of the appointed Managers &amp; the Structure in the next 6-12 months.</p> <p>Four candidates were interviewed for Head of Research Support. None of the candidates was wholly suitable for the position, so Scott Strachan has been invited to undertake this post temporarily until March 2012, when his initial performance will be reviewed. As the Head of Research Support is such a pivotal role to the Institute, Scott has been given no assurances and if necessary, the post will be re-advertised through appropriate professional societies in the spring.</p> <p><i>Infrastructure</i></p> <p>SG awarded the institute funding of £1.7m in October. Bids for work are currently going through the tender process.</p> <p><i>Financial</i></p> <p>KS sought the Board's approval on the new format and presentation of the accounts. The Board gave its approval.</p> <p>David Marshall and colleagues in Information and Computational Sciences have won a \$7M new contract with CIMMYT in Mexico as part of the Seeds of Discovery Programme funded through the MasAgro Programme of the Mexican Government. Renewable for up to seven years this will support a team led by David Marshall, Iain Milne, Paul Shaw and Joanne Russell developing visualization and analytical tools together with a data warehouse to support the analysis of wheat and maize germplasm resources and their exploitation in breeding programmes.</p> <p>The Board asked that IG convey their thanks and congratulations to David for this achievement.</p> <p><b>Action: IG to convey the Board's thanks to David Marshall for being awarded a grant of \$7m.</b></p> <p>KS explained that the proposed Head of Creative Partnerships post within the Communications team was a regeneration of three vacant posts. There is currently a big gap in the hierarchy of Communications and mindful of the need for succession planning, such a post would address this shortfall. KS said that only two Communications posts remained unfilled at this time. IG said that he was unconcerned with the delay and was confident that in time these posts would be filled.</p>
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6	<p><b>Health and Safety</b></p> <p>There was nothing to report from either site. GT, as the Board's representative for health and safety will attend the next health and safety meeting.</p>

7	<p><b>Commercial subsidiaries</b></p> <p><i>7.1 MSC Board minutes (draft)</i> This was received for information. It was reported that Analytical was ahead of plan, but consultancy was behind plan. Both would be reviewed at the MSC Board meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> Nov.</p> <p><i>7.2 MRS Board minutes (draft)</i> This was received for information. It was reported that MRS budget was on track.</p>
8	<p><b>Other committee reports</b></p> <p><i>8.1 Audit and Finance</i> There was nothing to report.</p> <p><i>8.2 N&amp;R</i> There was nothing to report. GT said that he would have a discussion with RP after the meeting.</p> <p><i>8.3 Advisory Committee on Science</i> BC thanked members for providing positive comments on the document he had circulated on the review of science. BC said that he would flesh out the document during discussion at the ACS meeting in the afternoon. BC thanked members for completing the questionnaire circulated on the 'buddy' system. Members were placed in their preferred areas. The system will be reviewed in one year. IG asked if the Board would consider providing similar support to BES. <b>Action: KS to liaise with BES Group Heads to assess the interest in a mentoring arrangement with Board members. KS to report back to the Board in January.</b></p>
9	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><i>9.1 Corporate calendar</i> IG said that AP had prepared a calendar for the Board's convenience with key dates.</p> <p><i>9.2 Values</i> IG said that he had met with the appointed change management consultants, Gill and Willie Banks. By mid-December a set of values will be made known. The plan is to link values to behaviour, and behaviour to performance.</p>

