

Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

The 71st meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of the Scottish Funding Council was held on 29th November 2019 in the Board Room, Apex 1, 99 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HD.

- Present:** Professor Lesley Yellowlees (Chair)
Dr Caroline Cantley
Professor Nicholas Fyfe
Dr Alicia Greated (by phone)
Mhairi Harrington
Douglas Mundie
Professor Andy Porter
Ms Sara Rae
Dr Helen Reddy
- Observers** Morven Cameron, HIE
Helen Cross, UKRI
Laura Dougan, SG
Dr Pieter van de Graaf, SG
Alison Munro, SE
- Guests:** Karen Watt, CEO, SFC
- Officers:** Morag Campbell, Dr Stuart Fancey, Jenny Jamieson,
Robin Lee, Keith McDonald, Hazel McGraw,
Morven Pritchard, Andrew Youngson
- Apologies:** Professor Anne Anderson
Dr Jano van Hemert
Professor Julian Jones
Professor Wayne Powell
Carolyn Reeve, BEIS
Professor Jonathan Seckl

The Chair welcomed members to the 71st meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee which had been convened at fairly short notice to consider collectively how best to move forward the Heathwaite Report. The Chair also welcomed Karen Watt, CEO to the meeting.

The Chair welcomed three new members to the meeting: Professor Nicholas Fyfe, Ms Sara Rae and Dr Helen Reddy. Professor Julian Jones had also joined the Committee as a new member but was unable to attend the November meeting.

The Chair invited Helen Cross to provide a brief update from UKRI. The Infrastructure Road Map report had been published. Budgets were understandably unclear due to the upcoming general election.

Director's update

The Director noted the following:

- The Muscatelli report was published on 27th November 2019.
- The Executive had met with the CEOs and Chairs of the Innovation Centres to help develop next steps for the Innovation Centre programme.
- SFC was in the process of collating case studies for the 'Little Book of Research' and the design process was ongoing.
- A number of parallel consultations and studies had recently been published and the Executive would talk about these reports and their correlation at the December committee meeting.
- The Director had enjoyed attending the Scottish Research Partnership in Engineering (SRPe) on 13th November 2019. Dr Cantley noted that it had been a successful event which had attracted a vibrant community from across Scotland.

19/41 Minutes of previous meeting 4th September 2019 (RKEC/19/min3)

The minute from the previous meeting was approved subject to two minor edits. Morven Cameron had not attending the meeting and there was a misspelling of Pieter van de Graaf's name in the text. The Clerk would edit the minute.

19/42 Building on the recommendation of the Heathwaite Review

(RKEC/19/21)

Background

At its meeting in September 2019 the SFC Board invited RKEC to develop a detailed response to the Heathwaite report.

This paper invites discussion around the report's recommendations and the draft principles which would guide development of any intervention model. Through a workshop session the Committee will also be invited to discuss in detail the practical aspects of how this model might develop.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to:

- Discuss in detail SFC's response to recommendation 1 and to explore and challenge the proposed principles which would guide development of the proposed intervention.
- Discuss SFC's response to recommendations 2, 3 & 4 in light of the proposed response to recommendation 1 above.
- Advise the Executive on the practical aspects of how this model may develop.

The Director provided a framework for discussion with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation. This presentation focussed on global challenges, the impact of place-based policy, the climate change emergency, aligning the national performance framework goals to all SFC activity and the importance of reflection and evaluation to secure the right way forward. The SFC Board have asked the Committee to come back with a recommended approach that is bold and innovative.

To begin the discussion, the Chair outlined the six proposed principles that will define the development of a model of support and asked members to consider each principle. The following points were made during the discussion by members:

- The word 'challenge driven' could be changed to 'opportunity driven' to better describe the purpose of research pooling activity.

- The committee should be clear as to what is meant by 'excellence' and 'excellent' in terms of defining research.
- Each of the six principles are impacted by the wider context
- Pooling has fostered positive cultural change and lessons have been learnt from leadership experiences of research pools. These should be preserved and a strong infrastructure developed.
- Funding relationships, strategic partnerships and the effectiveness of collaboration can be indicators of longer term sustainability in pooling initiatives that go beyond SFC funding
- Internationalisation should be included in any impact statement relating to pooling outputs.
- College innovation should factor as part of the pipeline around any research pooling strategy
- Aspects of knowledge exchange have a broader PEST impact
- Research excellence is the key ingredient for delivering the right impact
- There must be a healthy pipeline of knowledge exchange for any social impact to be felt by wider society. The pipeline must be inter-connected and responsive at all stages.
- Research and innovation are in the same system.
- The climate emergency should be an end objective to ensure complexity doesn't hinder the agility of the programme.
- Any success will rely on buy-in and engagement from research communities and acknowledge past investment
- Emphasise 'bold' instead of 'realistic' as an ambition
- Consider the benefits of referencing 'added value' as a measure
- The branding for research pools needs strengthened and their reputation mainstreamed with clear key performance indicators and objectives
- The Team Scotland approach should be embraced throughout the programme
- Inclusivity for all players in the research landscape is vital

19/43 Forward agenda (RKEC/19/22)

The Chair and the Committee noted the forward agenda.

The proposed meeting dates were agreed for 2020 with the exception of March. The Executive agreed to consider other impacts such as the SFC board before confirming this date.

The Committee agreed that the December meeting will last 3 hours and

finish at 1pm (instead of 12.30pm).

The joint meeting with Universities Scotland's RKEC is due to be held in May. The Clerk will confirm details shortly including venue.

19/44

AOCB

The Executive will share papers on the University Innovation Fund with members by email before the December meeting to support discussion.

Mhairi Harrington asked for a further update on the College Innovation Fund bid announcements. The Director confirmed that letters were about to be issued but acknowledged that the process was late.

Future meetings

19th December 2019

Thursday 5th March 2020

Friday 19th June 2020

Tuesday 25th August 2020

Thursday 3rd December 2020

Annex A: Summary of workshop discussions (amalgamated)

- Include studentships in large research investments.
- Rebrand and relaunch the pools
- Look to increase collaboration between different pools
- Agree research priorities at a principal level to reduce friction
- Innovation has become fashionable and we must not lose sight of research
- Research timescales are 5 to 10 years until they make an impact. The 'challenge' approach could enable the 'act of investment' to be incrementally promoted
- Other sources of funding should be considered: i.e. institutions, SIPR.
- Scotland should be treated as the 'place' in terms of research pooling and its relationship to the place agenda.
- Consult with a broader sector on priorities, for example academic/research communities/ policy bodies/business/government/stakeholders for Scotland
- Look at the multidisciplinary opportunities of the research pools and cross collaboration
- Amalgamate the current mapping exercises to create a wider brand
- All business should be targeted for potential engagement and not just those already established within pooling communities
- Do we want a super pool or a coordinating body to meet new ambitions?
- How do we prioritise funding when concepts and themes are broadly interpreted?
- Consider subsets of national priorities. For e.g. transport and energy are subsets of net zero. In terms of health, where do you focus when there are potentially numerous subsets?
- SDG goals can help Scotland's ability to respond to global challenges
- Team Scotland requires that we play to our strengths
- We need to build networks of people that collaborate easily together
- What structure allows for maximum flexibility in reacting to changes? Consider pipeline positioning.