

## **Royal Society of Edinburgh**

- The paper seeks the Board's approval for an extension of one financial year (FY2022-23) to the current support given by SFC to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, subject to satisfactory agreement of a renewed funding agreement with the RSE.

## **Recommendations**

The Council is invited to:

- Note a summary of some of RSE's key achievements over the last three and a half years.
- Agree to extend funding for the RSE of £2.76M for the Financial Year 2022-23, recognising that predicting future affordability is challenging at this point in time.
- Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to finalise the details of the funding agreement with the RSE for the period concerned.

## **Financial implications**

- The funding contribution requested here would be a maximum of £2.76M over the Financial Year 2022-23, drawn from HE Non-Core Funds.

## Royal Society of Edinburgh

### Purpose

1. The paper seeks the Board's approval for an extension of one financial year (FY2022-23) to the current support given by SFC to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, subject to satisfactory agreement of a renewed funding agreement with the RSE.

### Strategic Framework implications

2. The RSE contributes directly to SFC's delivery of its strategic objectives for the nation:
  - To invest in excellent research and innovation that adds to current knowledge, delivers economic and societal value, enhances Scotland's international reputation and attractiveness, and makes the world around us prosperous, healthier and more sustainable.
  - To ensure colleges, universities and specialist institutions form part of a successful, world-leading, coherent and sustainable system of education that responds effectively to the future needs of learners and the skills needs of the economy and society, enhances our rich cultural life, and strengthens Scotland's international connections.

### Background

3. **The Royal Society of Edinburgh is Scotland's national academy**, an independent organisation founded in 1783, with a modern-day mission:
  - To inspire and support Scotland's most promising young talent across the research, business and public sectors to create value for the economy and society.
  - To engage on critical contemporary issues by providing an impartial forum for public debate and discussion.
  - To ensure that Scotland's policymakers and influencers have access to the best national and global knowledge.
  - To promote Scotland's interests and reputation worldwide.
4. The RSE is funded from a variety of sources, the largest of which is currently SFC on behalf of Scottish Government, SFC funding representing approximately 60%

of RSE income in 2020-21. This percentage (from SFC) has risen substantially from 40% in 2017. The increase is, at least in part, due to Covid-related loss of income, hopefully temporary. Other significant sources of income are other public bodies and investment income

5. In recent years SFC support for RSE has been governed by an Outcome Agreement. At its meeting of February 2018 the Board noted the key points of the RSE's draft Outcome Agreement for the Financial Years 2018-19 to 2020-21 and delegated authority to the Interim Chief Executive to agree the Outcome Agreement on behalf of SFC (SFC18/09). When that agreement came to an end in March 2021 SFC's Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability was underway. Rather than negotiate a new multi-year funding agreement before the directions to be established by the Review were known, the Board agreed to extend funding for RSE by one year to the end of FY2021-22 (SFC 21/15).
6. The RSE has put forward a **case for support** (attached to the end of this paper).
7. That case highlights that SFC funding for RSE has remained relatively static in recent years, increasing only in line with uplifts to general funds to institutions. This has resulted in a real terms decrease in funding from SFC of over £450k over the last four years at a time when the UK Government is significantly increasing support for its four national academies. RSE have indicated that this, added to reductions to other income sources as a result of Covid, will limit the scale of their ambition going forwards and that a significant increase in Scottish Government support through SFC is necessary to ensure our National Academy is able to play its full role
8. It is important that certainty of future income from SFC is given to the RSE at this point in the year, with only four months to the end of our current award, recognising the large fraction of the RSE's income which SFC's grant represents.
9. In advance of the outcome of the Scottish Government's Spending Review process for its (and therefore SFC's) budget for FY2022-23, the executive suggests that a cautious approach is, regrettably, necessary. While a multi-year funding settlement and consideration of an appropriate level of award for future years is very much to be desired, the executive considers that this more comprehensive consideration will need to await a clearer financial outlook.
10. A further one year extension of current funding levels is therefore proposed with a longer term funding settlement to be considered by the Board once a more settled understanding of the SFC budget for FY2022-23 and the projections beyond that are known.

## RSE Achievements FY2018-19 – 2021-22

11. The FY2018-19 – 2020-21 Outcome Agreement (extended into FY2021-22) set out a package of activity which would directly contribute towards SFC's objectives, under three key themes: Research Capacity and Leadership; Outreach and Impact; and International Connections. Some examples of successful RSE delivery in each of these three areas are set out below:

### *Research Capacity and Leadership*

- **RSE's Research Awards Programme** including supporting interdisciplinarity through a continuing programme of small grants and developing a new award designed to bring early career researchers in STEM and social science to come together with other partners from outwith academia to tackle a national societal challenge.
- **Enterprise Fellowships.** Supporting entrepreneurialism and the commercialisation of research, an independent evaluation pointed to the success of the scheme. Since its inception the programme has supported the creation of over 220 companies, four-fifths of which were still operational after five years (compared with an average of c45% for new technology starts-ups and spin-outs) and a return on investment of 10:1 to the UK economy.

### *Outreach and impact*

- **Summer Programme, Curious** (<https://www.rse-curious.com>). Launched in 2019 as part of wider work to better connect with a wider range of people, this three week programme of events to coincide with the Edinburgh Fringe has gone from strength to strength attracting over 2200 attendees across 40 events this year.
- **Women in Science exhibition.** Prompted by the need for positive role models, identified in RSE's 2018 report Tapping all our Talents 2, the exhibition aimed to raise the profile of female scientists and show that science is an exciting career choice open to anyone. Alongside the physical exhibition, a digital version was created and shared online and with schools, a touring version has been everywhere from Belladrum to Borders College and a version on display at Edinburgh Airport is estimated to have been seen by in excess of 3 million people helping celebrate Scotland and its scientific expertise.

## *International connections*

- **Celtic Academies Alliance.** Bringing together the RSE, Royal Irish Academy and Learned Society of Wales, the CAA aims to support a better understanding of the distinctive needs and priorities of the devolved nations and strengthen Scotland's visibility and voice, particularly in relation to UK research and innovation policy.
12. In addition to planned activities RSE responded to emerging issues such as Covid:
- **Covid 19 reboot.** Developed to a tight timeframe to support academics adversely affected by Covid to 'reboot' their research. The Call generated 124 applications from across Scotland's research institutions. The RSE made 29 awards totalling £470K, with 79% of awardees being women, 58% identifying as early career, and 67% stating that they had taken on additional caring responsibilities due to Covid-19.
  - **Post-Covid Futures Commission** (<https://www.rsecovidcommission.org.uk>). Established in Spring 2020 as the pandemic took hold, to contribute to Scotland's recovery and renewal, the Commission has provided important insights on building national resilience; the development and deployment of data evidence and science; inclusive public service and public dialogue and participation with a series of recommendations to policy-makers and others.
13. As well as delivering a substantial package of activity the RSE has been on a journey of change over the last four years to enhance its relevance, profile and public value. This work will continue going forwards and is centred around four key priorities:
- **Taking a more strategic approach** including a programme of reviewing key activities and developing delivery strategies and strategic planning. Going forwards a new strategic framework will be developed and a delivery plan implemented.
  - **Communicating better** work to date includes: building a specialist communications team; better marketing of RSE activity; and overhauling the website and magazine. they will continue to prioritise building their external communications and media presence as well as more active dissemination of outputs.
  - **Engaging differently** to connect with a wider range of people. Work to date includes piloting innovative engagement methods; working with a broader range of partners; getting out and about (pre-Covid) to different places; and

developing a strategic regional approach to increase our presence across Scotland. This work will continue going forwards along with an overhaul of their Young People's programme.

- **Diversifying and mobilising the Fellowship** to encompass excellence wherever it occurs and to enable more active engagement of Fellows. This has included reviewing the nominations process and introducing changes such as revised criteria for election and additional places for under-represented groups and providing a greater range of ways for Fellows to get involved in RSE and share their expertise. Looking forwards this work will continue and RSE will also look to pilot a communities of interest group.

### **Draft Funding Agreement FY2022-23**

14. The RSE's mission overlaps extensively with both SG and SFC objectives touching on a wide range of areas and this is recognised in SFC's funding, which has a dual purpose:
  - Supporting the existence of Scotland's national academy.
  - Supporting RSE's direct contribution to SFC's delivery of its strategic objectives.

### ***Scotland's National Academy***

15. The RSE plays a key role in life of the nation with scope to play an even greater one. The 1,600 strong fellowship provide an asset and a resource for the nation, providing independent and impartial knowledge and expertise to support informed decision-making in Scotland. COP26 has demonstrated the demand for research-informed policy development. As a non-lobbying organisation RSE can play a key role in bringing together practitioners and academics from all disciplines, from across Scotland, to tackle multi-disciplinary challenges such as achieving a just transition to net zero.
16. The RSE has strengthened its strategic role over the previous four years of funding and is dedicated to providing a resource for the whole of Scotland. They are committed to widening and deepening their engagement across the country increasing accessibility to the wider public and engaging them in key issues as well as inspiring the next generation of researchers.
17. As a national academy, RSE plays an important role in representing Scotland both within the UK and globally. For example, the recent RSE Saltire awards will strengthen existing and build new relationships within Europe, and RSE are uniquely placed to build on these relationships at a national level through their partnerships with the European national academies.

### **Contributing to SFC's strategic objectives**

18. RSE and SFC are in discussion on areas where RSE actions can contribute directly to SFC's strategic objectives. Key points from the emerging funding agreement, informed by the RSE's case for support, include:
  - **Building research capacity and leadership, and supporting innovation** for example, through continuing and extending the successful Enterprise Fellowship scheme; providing targeted research grants with specific countries, or addressing particular challenges / priorities; and delivering a programme of activities which support leverage, collaboration (across institutions and countries) and development of talent / research leaders.
  - **Supporting public engagement on key issues, dialogue and debate** for example, through continued development and delivery of RSE's summer programme, *Curious*, continuing to develop innovative engagement mechanisms for public events; and a programme of schools engagement activity.
  - **Enhancing Scotland's connectivity and voice** taking advantage of RSE's UK and international networks and connections as Scotland's National Academy, and those of its Fellows, to raise the world profile of Scotland's world-leading researchers and research base and to maximise global collaboration opportunities through continued and strengthened relationships with other national academies; growing connections and routes into UK Government; directly supporting international collaborations and exchanges; and showcasing Scotland's talent; the RSE will refresh their international strategy.
19. The executive are also working with RSE to identify areas of mutual interest where RSE can help to take forward recommendations from the SFC Review. This may lie in areas outside of research and innovation including tertiary education and working with schools to support learning and widening access.

### **SFC funding for RSE FY2022-23**

20. The support from SFC to the RSE in the current Financial Year (FY 2021-22) is £2.76M, approximately 60% of the RSE's income.
21. The Board is asked to agree a one year extension to the SFC's support for the RSE at the above level of £2.76M with the finalisation of the details of the funding agreement delegated to the Chief Executive.

### **Risk assessment**

22. Providing funding to the RSE is a low risk as it is a well-managed and stable organisation.

### **Equality and diversity assessment**

23. An equality and diversity assessment for the principal activities of the RSE will be required of the RSE as a condition of funding.

### **Recommendations**

24. The Council is invited to:
- Note a summary of some of RSE's key achievements over the last three and a half years.
  - Agree to extend funding for the RSE of £2.76M for the Financial Year 2022-23, recognising that predicting future affordability is challenging at this point in time.
  - Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to finalise the details of the funding agreement with the RSE for the period concerned.

### **Financial implications**

25. The funding contribution requested here would be a maximum of £2.76M over FY2022-23, drawn from HE Non-Core Funds.

### **Publication**

26. This paper will be published on the SFC website.

### **Further information**

27. Contact: Stuart Fancey, Director of Research and Innovation, tel: 0131 313 6559, email: [sfancey@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:sfancey@sfc.ac.uk).



## RSE Case for Support

### 1. Our Purpose and Role

The Royal Society of Edinburgh was established in 1783 for the advancement of learning and useful knowledge. That remains its mission to this day – the development and deployment of knowledge and expertise for the benefit of Scotland and the wider world. Supporting the intellectual life of the nation, its Fellowship of leading thinkers and practitioners from across academia, business and public service give of their time and expertise freely in the service of RSE's mission. **This breadth of expertise combined with an independence of purpose, international connectivity and strong convening power, makes the RSE an invaluable and unique resource for the nation.**

Scottish society currently faces challenges unprecedented in peacetime. Climate change threatens the whole planet but responses must also be local. Covid has not only imposed a toll on the nation's health and economy but exposed weaknesses in the way we did things in the past and deep-seated inequalities in society, which have no simple explanations or remedies. Brexit poses big economic concerns, as does the transition from oil and gas. Scotland's demography raises particular issues around economic growth, social cohesion and the future of public services. The constitutional question defies easy resolution.

These linked challenges cannot be addressed through the perspective of one academic discipline or sector but require deep thinking and, perhaps, new paradigms crossing the natural and social sciences and humanities and going beyond academia. It is here that the RSE offers something quite distinctive, a body of Fellows drawn from all academic disciplines as well as business and civil society providing an immense repository of independent expertise that can be harnessed for the benefit of Scotland.

As Scotland's National Academy, the RSE plays an important role providing independent advice to inform public policy and supporting the generation and sharing of knowledge through research grants, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral discussions, international collaboration and public engagement.

### 2. Our Contribution

The RSE contributes directly to a number of the objectives and priorities set out in the SFC's Strategy including: supporting excellent research and innovation that adds to current knowledge and delivers economic and societal value; promoting Scotland's interests within the wider UK: strengthening Scotland's international reputation and connections; and supporting a coherent education system. This

complements, but does not displace, the work of universities, colleges and research institutes.

Our work and capabilities also align with many of the observations and recommendations set out in the SFC's recent review of Coherence and Sustainability, particularly in relation to: sustaining research and enhancing knowledge exchange; international education and; building deeper collaborations and partnerships across disciplines, institutions and sectors.

More specifically, RSE supports:

- **Advancing learning and understanding**, supporting the intellectual life of the nation by recognising and promoting excellence in academic and wider endeavour, supporting research and through convening interdisciplinary, inter-sectoral discussions and conferences on key issues.
- **Building research capacity and leadership and supporting innovation** through a programme of research grants, developing research networks, Enterprise Fellowships, Young Academy of Scotland (YAS), and international engagement and collaboration.
- **Informing policy development and delivery** through provision of independent expertise, policy advice, connecting experts into the advisory process (most recently in response to Covid), and providing a safe space for policy thinking and discussion.
- **Supporting public understanding of, and engagement with, research and science and dialogue on key issues** through public events, school talks and innovative mechanisms for knowledge-sharing and mobilisation.
- **Harnessing capacity and expertise across the higher education sector** through multi-institutional discussions and initiatives such as the Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance and through facilitating research collaboration.
- **Enhancing Scotland's connectivity and voice within the UK** through RSE's networks and connections as Scotland's National Academy and through initiatives such as the Celtic Academies Alliance.
- **Strengthening Scotland's international reputation and connections** through international engagement and collaboration with sister academies around the world and initiatives such as the Women in Science exhibition which help raise the profile of, and celebrate, Scotland's world-leading researchers and research base.

The relevance and benefit of these contributions to SFC and Scottish Government ambitions is set out in **Annex 1**.

### **3. A Review of 2018-21**

#### **a) Organisational Development**

The RSE has been on a journey of change, over the course of the 2018-21 Outcome Agreement, to enhance its relevance, profile and public value. This change programme has been based around four key priorities:

- **Taking a more strategic approach to what we do**, being clear about the outcomes we are seeking to achieve and attentive to the value, relative value and added value of activity. Work to date includes: introducing strategic business planning; development of delivery strategies for our international and public engagement programmes; reviewing activity and key programmes of work such as our Research Awards Programme and a review of governance. Current and future activity include development of a new strategic framework; translation of the Strategy into a delivery plan with identified priorities; building relationships with strategic partners to support enhanced impact and reach.
- **Better communicating our work**, recognising that to achieve greater impact and reach we need to be better known about and more accessible. Work to date includes: building a specialist communications team; better marketing of RSE activity such as our events and research awards; revamping our in-house magazine ReSourceE (<https://rse.org.uk/resources/magazines>); overhauling our website; and building a stronger media and social media presence. Priorities include further enhancing our media presence; reviewing and relaunching our Science Scotland magazine as a mechanism for sharing and celebrating the Scottish science base; and more active and creative dissemination of outputs and sharing expertise including greater use of videos and visuals.
- **Engaging differently** to connect with a wider range of people as Scotland's National Academy for all of Scotland. Work to date includes piloting innovative engagement methods; working with a broader range of partners; getting out and about (pre-Covid) to different places; and developing a strategic regional approach to increase our presence across Scotland. Priorities include: working with local partners to facilitate and deliver activity across Scotland with an initial programme of work focused on the North and West; supporting informed public debate and dialogue building on the experience of RSE's Post-Covid Futures Commission; and refreshing our young peoples' programme.

- **Diversifying and mobilising the Fellowship** to encompass excellence wherever it occurs, and to enable more active engagement of Fellows. Work to date includes: a review of the nominations process and introduction of a number of changes including revised criteria for election and additional places for under-represented groups; providing a greater range of ways for Fellows to get involved in RSE and share their expertise; engaging Fellows on key issues including strategy, governance and regional engagement. Current and future priorities include: piloting one or two communities of interest; exploring other mechanisms for stimulating and garnering ideas and facilitating cross-sector, inter-disciplinary working; and further work to enhance diversity within the Fellowship considering a wide range of characteristics including age, gender, geography and sector.

There has also been a body of work, which continues, to modernise working practices and systems and support an effective and efficient organisation.

## **b) Key Achievements**

The RSE has delivered a wide range of activity over the course of the last Outcome Agreement working with governments, academia, civic society and the wider public. The details of this activity and its impact is set out in the impact report to the SFC. Key achievements over the lifetime of the agreement include:

- **New Flexible Research Awards Programme.** Following a comprehensive review and consultation with stakeholders a new awards programme was launched in Spring 2021 supporting research capacity and leadership, collaboration (across disciplines, institutions and countries) and leverage of additional research monies. The initial round saw 96 awards made to researchers from across 10 universities and involving collaborations with 13 different countries. Open to researchers from all disciplines and at all career stages, the design of the new awards programme allows us to flex the scheme to support specific priorities, for example to target relationships with specific countries, or addressing particular challenges such as climate change or an ageing population.
- **Saltire Research Awards.** Making best use of the flexibility accorded by the new awards programme, RSE developed and delivered the Saltire Awards to support mobility of ideas and academics in a post-Brexit research landscape. Over £1.8M was awarded to 93 awardees in Scotland across 25 European countries via Early Career Fellowships, Network, Facilitation, and International Awards. On a smaller scale, the **COP26 International Climate Change Network Grants** have helped

strengthen international collaboration to address ongoing climate change impacts and support international learning.

- **Covid 19 reboot.** Developed to a tight timeframe to support academics adversely affected by Covid to 'reboot' their research, these awards highlighted RSE's ability to respond flexibly and creatively to address an emerging issue. The Call generated 124 applications from across Scotland's research institutions. The RSE made 29 awards totalling £470K, with 79% of awardees being women, 58% identifying as early career, and 67% stating that they had taken on additional caring responsibilities due to Covid-19. The awards were designed to involve an element of peer networking to facilitate mutual support and wider connections and collaborations.
- **Enterprise Fellowships.** Supporting entrepreneurialism and the commercialisation of research, an independent evaluation adjudged these a success. Since its inception the programme has contributed c£77M to annual gross value added (GVA) in Scotland, led to the creation of almost 1,400 jobs and supported the creation of over 220 companies, four-fifths of which were still operational after five years (compared with an average of c45% for new technology starts-ups and spin-outs) with a return on investment of 6:1 to the Scottish economy and 10:1 to the UK economy.
- **Post-Covid Futures Commission** (<https://www.rsecovidcommission.org.uk>). Established in Spring 2020 as the pandemic took hold, to contribute to Scotland's recovery and renewal, the Commission has provided important insights on building national resilience; the development and deployment of data evidence and science; inclusive public service and public dialogue and participation with a series of recommendations to policy-makers and others. It also enabled us to connect and engage with a wider range of people in different ways (for example through film, videos and a hackathon) and develop relationships with a wider set of partners. The Commission has delivered a prodigious series of outputs (including 12 public events, 12 roundtables, 3 reports, 41 blogs, 31 videos and 15 podcasts) and stimulated a range of follow-up conversations with policy-makers and parliamentarians.
- **Summer Programme, Curious** (<https://www.rse-curious.com>). Launched in 2019 as part of wider work to better connect with a wider range of people, this three week programme of events to coincide with the Edinburgh Fringe has gone from strength to strength this year attracting over 2200 attendees (from 55 countries and every continent bar Antarctica) across 40 events and involving 130

contributors including 45 Fellows. Now a central plank of RSE's engagement programme, Curious has enabled us to explore and develop different ways of sharing and discussing research and expertise, for example, through our tea and talk series, and extend our partnerships.

- **Women in Science exhibition.** Prompted by the need for positive role models, identified in RSE's 2018 report Tapping all our Talents 2, the exhibition aimed to raise the profile of female scientists and show that science is an exciting career choice open to anyone. Alongside the physical exhibition, a digital version was created and shared online and with schools, a touring version has been everywhere from Belladrum to Borders College and a version on display at Edinburgh Airport is estimated to have been seen by in excess of 3 million people helping celebrate Scotland and its scientific expertise.
- **International collaboration and human rights work.** Working with 26 sister academies, and individuals and groups worldwide, RSE's international work showcases Scotland's research base and supports on-going engagement and collaboration with international partners on issues of national and global significance. Most recently, alongside a programme of international research grants and joint projects, we have: co-hosted expert-led, high-level roundtables; partnered with Leopoldina, the German Academy of Sciences, on a two-day Human Rights and Climate Change Symposium, attracting 475 individual registrations from 31 countries; participated in the UK Human Rights Committee, responding to academic-at-risk cases; established the RSE Africa Working Group to establish mutually beneficial connections with African partners, reaching out to the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) to establish an MOU; and delivered the Saltire awards (see above) supporting European connections and collaboration post-Brexit.
- **Celtic Academies Alliance.** Bringing together the RSE, Royal Irish Academy and Learned Society of Wales, the CAA aims to support a better understanding of the distinctive needs and priorities of the devolved nations and strengthen Scotland's visibility and voice, particularly in relation to UK research and innovation policy. The initiative has already begun to bear fruit with the Alliance approached to provide input and advice on the UK's R&D roadmap, research culture and UKRI's new Strategy.
- **Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance.** RSE played a leading role in development of this cross-sector initiative to enhance understanding of the contribution of the arts and humanities to Scotland's economy and society and now employs a SAHA

officer funded by the 12 partner institutions. The Alliance highlights RSE's ability to bring different institutions together to support and strengthen collaboration.

- **Strategic Regional Approach.** Consistent with RSE's role as Scotland's National Academy for the whole of Scotland, we recently launched our new approach to enable RSE to extend its footprint and presence across Scotland working with local partners. This new investment enables us both to listen to, and share knowledge with, multiple communities across Scotland, enhancing inclusion, participation, and engagement with research.
- **Young Academy of Scotland Charter for Responsible Debate.** Based around informed, respectful and inclusive debate, YAS developed guidance for how people can disagree with each other while also creating common ground. The Charter was refined via extensive stakeholder engagement and launched in summer 2021 securing the support of a number of parliamentarians as signatories.

The importance of these achievements and their relevance to SFC are summarised in **Annex 2.**

#### **4. Objectives and Activities 2022-25**

##### **a) Building research capacity and leadership**

In the next three years, the RSE will consolidate delivery of its **new Research Awards Programme** offering research grants which support: the development of research leaders; the advancement of learning and understanding; collaboration across disciplines, institutions and countries; and leverage of additional research monies. Comprising **small grants; international awards; workshops and networks; and personal research fellowships**, one advantage of the new awards programme is its flexibility, for example, to target relationships with specific countries or to address particular challenges, without having to design a new programme, so reducing overheads and lead-in times.

This flexibility proved invaluable for the **Saltire Awards** and we will look for other opportunities to grow RSE's research portfolio for the benefit of Scotland. This includes seeking funding from new sources, at Scottish, UK and international level, including governments, international organisations and foundations. The Enterprise Fellowship programme has highlighted the value of awardees coming together as a cohort. Building on that experience, we will also develop opportunities for research awardees to come together and interact as a cohort and **research network**,

reinforcing interdisciplinary dynamics and connections. We are currently reviewing our **prizes and medals** with a view to launching a refreshed suite of awards recognising excellence and impact in 2022.

#### *Key Deliverables*

- Core programme of research awards covering all disciplines and career stages.
- Additional targeted awards (subject to additional funding).
- Legacy awards (funded from donations).
- Saltire awards (subject to Scottish Government funding).
- Research network(s) supporting innovative and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Refreshed suite of RSE medals and prizes recognising achievement and impact.

### **b) Supporting innovation**

The RSE is committed to supporting the application of research including through commercialisation and entrepreneurship. We are currently reviewing RSE's successful **Enterprise Fellowship Programme** to take account of changes in the entrepreneurial landscape since its inception in 1997 and ensure it remains at the cutting edge of entrepreneurial support. We have therefore paused the scheme for a period of 6-12 months with a view to welcoming new applicants to the programme in 2022 subject to securing the necessary funding. This will be a priority for the coming year. We will also continue to provide input and advice and convene discussions to inform **innovation policy** at both a Scottish and UK level.

#### *Key Deliverables*

- Refreshed Enterprise Fellowship programme.
- Sustainable funding for the programme.
- Roundtable discussions and advice on innovation policy.

### **c) Advancing learning and understanding**

In addition to awarding research grants that support the creation of new knowledge and learning through collaboration and knowledge exchange, RSE supports new thinking and understanding through **conferences and workshops**. Again, we take advantage of our cross-disciplinary fellowship and connections with government and civil society to bridge the academic-practitioner divide.



Drawing on our roots in the Scottish Enlightenment, we are also exploring different ways of bringing Fellows together to explore issues beyond the standard disciplinary boundaries. ‘Communities of interest’ is an initiative to engage Fellows from across the RSE in new ways of thinking through series of workshops and seminars, with the discussions disseminated in various forms. These, we hope, will have more than a purely local interest but will place Scotland at the heart of new thinking in natural science, social sciences and humanities.

At the same time, we recognise the role of RSE in supporting a wider and deeper understanding of research and science. The RSE’s Post Covid Futures Commission, highlighted the need to enhance the ability to access and engage with evidence and data. Building on that work, RSE will explore developing a series of **sessions for key practice groups**, including politicians and the media, on key scientific issues and questions or issues which have a scientific underpinning. We will also examine what role RSE could play in supporting the accurate reporting and presentation of scientific information on key topics such as vaccines and new and emerging diseases.

#### *Key Deliverables*

- Conferences and workshops.
- Fellows’ discussion groups / communities of interest.
- Practitioner sessions on data, evidence and science.

#### **d) Informing policy development and delivery**

In the next three years, we will continue to draw on our breadth of academic and practitioner expertise to provide advice to both the Scottish and UK Governments and Parliaments and to support policy thinking and innovation. We will do this through **Chatham House roundtables** to provide a safe space for policy thinking (including horizon-scanning, policy scoping and road-testing of ideas); providing **policy advice on key issues** and; leading **in-depth inquiries** of specific issues. Following on from recent inquiries on Women in STEM (2018) and on energy (2019), we are currently finalising plans for an **Inquiry on asylum support**.

We also anticipate work in the coming years on: research and innovation policy; education policy (including school reform and implementation of the recommendations from the SFC Coherence Review); responding to the challenges of climate change following our 2011 Inquiry and recent work in the lead up to COP26; and exploring the constitution / governance in the lead up to a potential second independence referendum building on work in 2013/14 with the British Academy on ‘Enlightening the Constitution’. We envisage this future policy work incorporating a

strong public engagement dimension with RSE well-placed to facilitate wider public dialogue and debate on key and contentious issues informed by evidence and expertise.

Covid-19 demonstrated the need for Government to be able to draw on specialist external expertise at pace. While RSE Fellows have been engaged in many of the Scottish Government's Covid-19 advisory groups we feel there is an opportunity for Scotland to make better use of the breadth of expertise within the Fellowship. Drawing on that experience and building on the work of RSE's Post Covid Futures Commission we will also explore with Scottish Government and the academic community the development of a **rapid response service** that enables the Government and wider public sector to rapidly access good quality, independent evidence and expertise from across the academic community in emergency situations.

#### *Key Deliverables*

- Policy advice.
- Roundtable discussions with policy-makers.
- Dialogic events with the public.
- Inquiries.
- Responsive advice service (subject to discussions and funding) connecting policy makers to academic experts.

#### **e) Supporting public engagement and dialogue on key issues**

As outlined above, RSE has transformed its approach to engagement in recent years seeking new and different ways to connect with a wider and more diverse audience. The experience of the Post Covid Futures Commission and the earlier work on the constitution and climate change, have provided important lessons on how to facilitate engagement with marginalised groups; how we make our activity, outputs and communications more accessible and inclusive; and how we define and value different forms of knowledge and expertise.

We plan to build on this experience over the coming years through a broad, inclusive and continually evolving public engagement programme that enables us to continue to extend our reach demographically and geographically and support learning and discussion. As part of that, and building on the work of the Post Covid Futures Commission, which engaged a diverse range of partners (from the disability charity, Enable, to cultural organisations such as the National Theatre of Scotland) we will seek further opportunities to work with partner organisations and community groups

to extend our impact and reach. We recognise the importance of two-way engagement and RSE will continue to explore how best to support two-way public dialogue and informed debate on key issues such as use of personal data, Net Zero and educational futures tying in with our policy advice work outlined above.

Our **summer programme, Curious**, is now an established part of the public engagement programme. It will be complemented in the next three years by a series of **signature lectures** engaging renowned experts and speakers on matters of topical interest. We will also continue to deliver a range of **school talks** and explore new ways of engaging with young people within and beyond the formal education system.

We are committed to being Scotland's National Academy for the whole of Scotland and a key priority for the years ahead will be implementing our **strategic regional approach** to enhance RSE's presence across Scotland working with local partners. Work is already underway in the North and West to develop a regional programme working with University of the Highlands and Islands and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

We will also build on recent work to share knowledge and expertise from within the Fellowship in more accessible ways including through **articles, blogs, podcasts and short 'talking heads' videos**.

#### *Key Deliverables*

- Summer programme, Curious.
- Signature lectures.
- Dialogic events with the public.
- School talks and refreshed young people's programme.
- Regional programmes and partnerships.
- ReSourceE magazine.
- Articles, blogs, podcasts and talking heads.

#### **f) Enhancing Scotland's connectivity and voice within the UK**

RSE is part of a wider network of academies in the UK which gives us unique and varied routes into UK Government thinking and discussions. The **Celtic Academies Alliance** is giving us a greater presence and visibility within the UK Government, supporting more engagement on matters which impact on Scotland and the other devolved administrations. In the next three years, we will build on the initial progress of the Alliance to support more ongoing discussions with UK Government and key

bodies such as the UKRI with a particular focus on research and innovation policy and matters relating to the governance of the UK. As a National Academy, our independence from Government and impartiality, places us in a strong position to support a better understanding of Scotland's different needs and contributions free from any perception of political bias.

RSE also plays an important role in supporting connectivity between institutions across Scotland. This is particularly the case for the universities where we are seen as having credibility but not being a competitor organisation making us well-placed to lead, and act as a home for, cross-sector initiatives (such as the **Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance**) supporting collaboration and ensuring the system is more than the sum of its parts. Over the next three years we will explore wider possibilities to support connectivity and facilitate collaboration across the tertiary education sector.

RSE will also continue to support the **Young Academy of Scotland** which brings together young professionals from all sectors and from across the country to work together on projects that benefit Scotland and the world.

#### *Key Deliverables*

- Celtic Academies Alliance.
- Young Academy of Scotland.
- Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance.

#### **g) Strengthening Scotland's international reputation and connectivity**

RSE plays an important role in enhancing Scotland's reputation abroad through international research projects and partnerships with sister academies around the world and through its internationally-recognised journals. In the next three years, the RSE's international focus will continue to facilitate bilateral connections and collaborations with other countries, whilst also expanding targeted multi-lateral networks, for example, working with the African Academy of Sciences on increasing the number of women in the Academy and recognising the role of arts and humanities. These collaborations will be underpinned by key themes that are of national importance to Scotland *and* enable significant learning from other countries. This will enable the RSE to identify and deliver specific added value within an international context. As part of that work we plan to develop an RSE-led, multi-academy **series of debates / roundtables** on issues and key challenges (e.g. antimicrobial resistance) to facilitate a sharing of knowledge and expertise and learning from elsewhere.

We will also undertake a scoping process to generate a **refreshed international strategy** which identifies priority countries and areas for RSE engagement. This will include capacity-building around European relations to ensure the maintenance and further development of links with European partners post-Brexit, supported by further rounds of Saltire Awards (subject to Scottish Government funding).

As part of refreshing the Strategy we will also explore how we can further harness our **unique international connections** as an Academy, including through our membership of the All European Academies (ALLEA), and through our Fellowship. We currently have 172 corresponding fellows, 55 of whom are based in Europe, as well as many Fellows from overseas who work in Scotland providing us with strong links into countries around the world.

RSE is also working alongside the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews to create a **Scottish Council on Global Affairs** – a global affairs think-tank with international reach and reputation.

Key deliverables:

- International research projects and partnerships.
- Refreshed international strategy.
- Programme of multi academy roundtables.
- Publication of two academic journals: *Earth and Environmental Science Transactions of the RSE* and *Proceedings of the RSE Section A: Mathematics*.
- Development of Scottish Council on Global Affairs.

## 5. RSE-SFC Collaboration

While the scope and contribution of RSE goes beyond SFC and Scottish Government objectives, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss *specific* opportunities and initiatives where RSE and SFC might productively work together on areas of shared interest and in the context of the SFC Coherence and Sustainability Review. This might include, for example:

- Work on the entrepreneurial translation of research into public good including contributing to the design of an entrepreneurial campus.
- Joint exploration of key issues or questions relating to tertiary education or research and innovation, for example, roundtables to inform further development and delivery of recommendations in the SFC's Coherence and Sustainability Review.
- An examination of the 'impact' agenda in research funding.
- The administration of additional research grants and initiatives supporting both excellent discovery research and / or mission-oriented research.

- Piloting a number of challenge-oriented research collaborations across disciplines, institutions, sectors and, potentially, countries.
- Working together on a joint initiative celebrating research and innovation
- Exploring opportunities to connect SFC's and RSE's respective work with schools to support learning and widening access.

## 6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The RSE is committed to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) throughout its operations, as illustrated through the following examples in Research, Engagement and Communications.

Our refreshed **Research Awards Programme** was launched in April 2021, with EDI at its core. Our Terms and Conditions have been reshaped to ensure that awards are open to all academics, at all stages of their career, from all disciplines and at all research institutions. In calls such as the Covid19 Research Reboot Awards (2021), we piloted financial support for those with caring responsibilities. We sought guidance on how to support those “intersectionalities” of BAME, LGBTQI+, and those experiencing disadvantage/caring responsibilities, since evidence showed disproportional impacts from Covid19. We are building learning from this into the 2022/2023 Research Awards Programme. We remain vigilant to any proposals that might support or promote inequalities, and are scoping Unconscious Bias Training for proposal assessors (Fellows).

Our **Engagement** with public, policy and wider stakeholders has seen a deliberate shift to a more inclusive approach, in order both to reach, and secure input from, the breadth of Scottish society. We have partnered with organisations across the public, private and third sectors to enhance awareness of the RSE and what we can offer and draw in other forms of knowledge and learning most recently through the Post Covid Futures Commission. We are promoting *geographic* inclusion through a new Strategic Regional Approach, ensuring that the RSE creates and maintains a presence across Scotland. We are also addressing *inclusion of individuals*, through (as examples): British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation at major events; easy-read versions of recent publications; a remuneration policy to support the participation of those who could not otherwise take part in RSE events due to financial and other constraints (such as caring). We are pulling these initiatives together into an EDI Approach to Engagement for FY2022/23.

Our **Communications Team** is fundamental to delivering an EDI-based approach. They work hand-in-hand with the Research and Public Engagement Teams on the above initiatives, including: ensuring that Research Awards calls reach the greatest

breadth of potential applicants (using SFC and other networks) and that the Terms and Conditions are expressed clearly; that the public engagement events have the maximum reach through multiple communication channels and media (including videos, blogs, vlogs etc.), and making sure our publications and newly-refreshed website are fully accessible.

**Future work:** We are in the process of integrating our EDI initiatives into an organisation-wide plan so that the learning from different parts of our work are built into a systematic approach towards improvement that can be monitored and evaluated on an annual basis.

## 7. Funding and Finance

The RSE is grateful for the financial support of the SFC. The continued erosion of the monetary value of the grant over the past decade, however, is increasingly limiting the contribution that the RSE can make and Scotland’s ability to fully realise the potential of its National Academy as an asset and resource for the nation.

Our core grant of £2.76 million is just £305k higher than it was ten years ago and 7% lower in cash terms than it was in 2010/11 when RSE received £2.9 million – equivalent to £3.6 million today. As shown in the table below our core grant has not kept up with inflation resulting in a £466K funding gap over the last three years.

	SFC grant	RPI inflation	Applying inflation
2018/19	2,703,000	2.6%	2,773,278
2019/20	2,703,000	0.5%	2,787,144
2020/21	2,764,900	3.2%	2,876,333
2021/22	2,764,900	3.1%	2,965,499
	10,935,800	9.4%	11,402,255
Comparing actual receipt vs inflated			<b>466,455</b>

In contrast, the UK Government has been significantly increasing its funding support for its four UK National Academies which are set to receive £207 million from BEIS in the current financial year (up from £153 million in 2017/18, a 35% increase over four years). This growth in core budgets is set to continue with the UK Government Spending Review 2021 affirming and extending a multi-year commitment to increase funding for the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and National Academies core budgets to 2024/5.

We appreciate that a level of funding akin to the population share of the UK Government’s investment in its NAs needs to be worked towards and cannot be

delivered overnight, and that increasing RSE's budget by a similar order of magnitude is not possible in the current financial climate. However, in order to avoid having to cut back core public benefit activity (including UK and international links and influence) and to enable us to continue our development as a Society of import and impact (for example, through a more developed public engagement programme), we are seeking an increase in core funding of £1.8 million over the three years of the agreement (perhaps with a staggered uplift of £400K in Year 1<sup>1</sup>; £600K in year 2 and; £800K in Year 3). This would start to fill some of the real terms loss of income in recent years, and serve as the first step toward a more sustainable funding settlement for RSE as Scotland's National Academy serving Scotland to best effect.

We believe that RSE offers substantial value for money with the Fellowship representing a significant in-kind investment. Fellows give of their time and expertise freely in assessing research grant applications, preparing policy advice papers, giving evidence to Government and Parliamentary inquiries, and engaging the public. We are currently undertaking work to update analysis of the monetary value of that pro bono contribution to the RSE's outward facing work – previously estimated at £1 million to £1.5 million per annum. This does not include the unpaid contributions Fellows provide directly to Government and other bodies and where RSE can play an important brokerage role connecting academics into the advisory process.

We are also looking at how we can develop our fundraising capacity and capability to secure additional monies from other sources. This is particularly critical, with Covid having led to a significant (c£0.5 million) reduction in our income from venue, rental and investment – which looks set to continue into at least 2023/24 – and with costs (such as employer pension contributions) continuing to rise.

## **8. Governance**

The RSE is governed by a Council consisting of Fellows who are appointed by their peers through a competitive election process. It is responsible for setting the Society's overall governance, policy and strategies, including producing the Society's Strategic Framework. It has responsibility for approving the annual budget and operational plan, approving the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts, and stewardship of the investments and other assets of the Society.

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<sup>1</sup> Taking into account inflation would require a £290K increase in the budget to £3,054,564 in 2022/23.



## ANNEX 1

### RSE's CONTRIBUTION

What RSE Offers	Activity	Relevance SFC	Relevance SG
<b>Building research capacity and leadership and supporting innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted research grants.</li> <li>• Supporting talent.</li> <li>• Enterprise Fellowship Network.</li> <li>• Alumni Network.</li> <li>• International Relations.</li> </ul>	<p>Core SFC objective to invest in excellent research and innovation.</p> <p>Programme supports leverage, collaboration (across institutions and countries) and development of talent / research leaders.</p> <p>Flexibility and creativity e.g. to target relationships with specific countries, or addressing particular challenges / priorities.</p> <p>Conversion of research base into successful companies and economic return via EF programme.</p>	<p>Supporting Scotland's research excellence.</p> <p>Supporting leverage of funds from elsewhere.</p> <p>Facilitating international connectivity.</p> <p>Developing entrepreneurial talent.</p> <p>Economic impact.</p>
<b>Advancing learning and understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research grants.</li> <li>• International collaborations.</li> </ul>	<p>Underpins high quality research base.</p>	<p>Underpins high quality research base.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-Fellowship and cross-sectoral discussions.</li> </ul>	Enhances international connectivity.	<p>Enhances international connectivity.</p> <p>Provides ‘soft power’.</p> <p>Builds intellectual capacity and reputation of the nation.</p>
<b>Informing policy development and delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice papers.</li> <li>• Chatham House discussions.</li> <li>• Short-term ad hoc advice.</li> <li>• Inquiries.</li> </ul>	<p>Supports open discussion and futures thinking – RSE can ask questions which SFC and SG can’t.</p> <p>Independent and impartial advice – no ideological starting points or agenda.</p> <p>Convening power – RSE can bring together a wider range of expertise (academic and practitioner).</p>	<p>Supports open discussion and futures thinking – RSE can ask questions which SFC and SG can’t.</p> <p>Independent and impartial advice – no ideological starting points or agenda.</p> <p>Convening power – RSE can bring together a wider range of expertise (academic and practitioner).</p>
<b>Supporting public engagement and dialogue on key issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer programme.</li> <li>• Public events.</li> <li>• Schools programme.</li> <li>• Innovative engagement mechanisms.</li> </ul>	<p>Supports learning and understanding.</p> <p>Supports understanding of (and public support for) research.</p> <p>Inclusive dialogue with wider society critical to effective application of research and ability to realise potential of</p>	<p>Supports learning and understanding.</p> <p>Supports understanding of (and public support for) research.</p> <p>Showcases Scotland’s research and expertise.</p>

		<p>new technologies.</p> <p>New, innovative approaches to knowledge sharing and mobilisation.</p>	
<p><b>Harnessing capacity and expertise across the HE sector</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-sectoral conversations.</li> <li>• Cross-sectoral collaborations e.g. Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance.</li> </ul>	<p>Helps ensure the system is more than the sum of its parts.</p>	<p>Helps ensure the system is more than the sum of its parts.</p>
<p><b>Enhancing Scotland's connectivity and voice within the UK</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celtic Academies Alliance.</li> <li>• Seven Academies Network.</li> <li>• Links with UKG.</li> </ul>	<p>Routes into UK Government thinking and policy development (esp. on R&amp;D).</p> <p>Supporting understanding of the different needs and contributions Scotland can make.</p>	<p>Routes into UK Government thinking and policy development.</p> <p>Supporting understanding of the different needs and contributions Scotland can make.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening Scotland's international reputation and connections</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International grants.</li> <li>• Exhibitions.</li> <li>• Science Scotland.</li> <li>• ALLEA.</li> </ul>	<p>Raises profile of Scotland's research base and research talent.</p> <p>Supports international research collaboration.</p>	<p>Raises profile of Scotland's research base and research talent.</p> <p>Provides 'soft power'.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relations with sister academies overseas.</li></ul>	Exchanging innovation through bilateral and multilateral partnerships.	
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## ANNEX 2

### Key Achievements 2018-21

Key Achievements	Why Important	Relevance to SFC
<b>Women in Science exhibition</b>	Supporting girls and women in STEM. Large reach (airport, digital version, touring version). Highlighting expertise within the Fellowship. Helped raise profile Scottish research and researchers.	Supporting girls into STEM. Raising profile of female scientists. Showcasing Scottish research and researchers in Scotland and internationally.
<b>RSE Summer Programme, Curious</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More inclusive and engaging way of sharing and discussing knowledge and expertise.</li> <li>• Mobilising Fellows and supporting partnership working (including with HEIs).</li> <li>• Curious 2021: 40 events over 15 working days with 130 speakers and &gt; 2200 attendees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports learning and understanding of research across greater diversity of audiences.</li> <li>• Gives a profile to leading researchers.</li> </ul>
<b>Post-Covid Futures Commission</b>	Mobilising cross-sectoral,	Learning from Commission will inform

	<p>multidisciplinary expertise to address a key societal challenge.</p> <p>Enabled testing of new and different ways of doing things (hack, films, live illustrations).</p> <p>Built relationships with a wider set of partners.</p> <p>Engagement with a wide range of groups (young people, media, business, community groups).</p>	<p>future ways of working and engagement.</p> <p>Supports learning and knowledge exchange.</p>
<b>Development of new Research Awards Programme</b>	<p>Ensures research awards are focused on where can best add value.</p> <p>Provides flexible framework for responding proactively to challenges (e.g. Covid Reboot grants and COP awards) and for administering additional monies.</p> <p>Supports leverage, collaboration and development of talent / research leaders.</p>	<p>Supports leverage of research funds, collaboration and development of talent / research leaders.</p> <p>Provides opportunity for targeting additional funds to specific SFC priorities.</p> <p>Enables proactive targeting towards research need.</p>
<b>Saltire Research Awards</b>	<p>Bid focused on outcomes being sought offering an alternative approach to initial plans.</p> <p>Large programme delivered to tight timeframe.</p>	<p>Supports international research connectivity and collaboration.</p>
<b>Covid Reboot Grants</b>	<p>Addressed key emerging need among</p>	<p>Supports maintenance of research</p>

	disadvantaged group of academics.	capacity. Supports diversity and inclusion.
<b>Enterprise Fellowship Programme</b>	Enabling translation of academic research into life-changing businesses. Supporting development of entrepreneurial skills and talent.	Supporting commercialisation of research. Supporting development of entrepreneurial skills and talent.
<b>International Work</b>	Raises profile of Scotland's research base and research talent overseas. Supports international research collaboration.	Supports international research connectivity and collaboration.
<b>Celtic Academies Alliance</b>	Helping enhance influence and amplify Scotland's voice at a UK level. Supporting a better understanding of the needs and differing situations of the devolved nations.	Helps promote Scottish interests within the rest of the UK especially on research matters. Supports greater connectivity with UKRI and BEIS.
<b>Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance</b>	RSE leading force in development of initiative. Basis for other initiatives.	Supports emphasis on collaboration across institutions.
<b>Regional Strategic Approach</b>	Part of commitment to being Scotland's National Academy for all of Scotland and extending RSE's reach and impact. Supporting collaboration with regional partners.	Extends RSE's footprint and impact which can be harnessed for other activity.

	<p>Mobilising wider Fellowship.</p> <p>Facilitating a connectivity between national and local debates.</p>	
<p><b>Transformation of communications (Twitter, ReSourceE magazine, podcasts, new website)</b></p>	<p>Fundamental to enhancing impact and reach.</p> <p>Helping raise profile and change perceptions.</p> <p>Part of wider modernisation and professionalisation of RSE.</p>	<p>Ensures greater visibility to activity funded by SFC and / or undertaken with SFC.</p>