

## CROSS PARTY GROUP (CPG) ON SCOTLAND'S UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

12.30-14.00 on Thursday 26 February 2015, Committee Room 2, Scottish Parliament

### Note of Meeting

#### Present:

Elizabeth Smith MSP	Scottish Parliament	CPG Convener
Iain Gray MSP	Scottish Parliament	CPG Deputy Convener
Liam McArthur MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Drew Smith MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Hanzala Malik MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Una Bartley	Open University in Scotland	
Terry Brotherstone	University of Aberdeen	
Joanne Buchan	Colleges Scotland	
Colin Calder	Colleges Scotland	
Neil Cowie	North East Scotland College	
Roisin Alana Di Giacomo	Glasgow Caledonian University	
Robbie Francis	Thorntons Law LLP	
Diane Harbison	BioCity Scotland	
Grant Jarvie	University of Edinburgh	
Susannah Lane	Universities Scotland	
Eve Lewis	sparqs	
Malcolm MacLeod	University of Stirling	
Megan McHaney	NUS Scotland	
Charles Marriott	Universities Scotland	
Finlay MacCorquodale	Edinburgh Napier University	
Theresa Merrick	University of Aberdeen	
Kevin Ralston	Colleges Scotland	
Michael Rayner	University of the Highlands and Islands	
Jennifer Ross	Scottish Parliament	
Jane Scott	Queen Margaret University Edinburgh	
Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland	
Heather Sloan	Universities Scotland	
Peter Varley	West Highland College	
Sophie Walker	Scottish Parliament	
Eoin Welsh	West College Scotland	
James Wilson	Universities Scotland	
Andrew Witty	Colleges Scotland	

#### Apologies:

David Belsey	EIS Scotland
Moira Gibson	University of Edinburgh
Paul Little	City of Glasgow College
Stewart Maxwell MSP	Scottish Parliament
Judith McClure	Scotland China Education Network (SCEN)
Claire Shepherd	Thorntons Law LLP
Richard Simpson MSP	Scottish Parliament
Rob Wallen	North East Scotland College

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

### **1. Welcome and introduction from the Convener**

The Convener, Ms Smith MSP, welcomed everyone to the Group's third Annual General Meeting. The Convener explained that there would be two parts to the meeting: first, the AGM; and second the topical meeting to discuss the topic of Scotland's research strengths.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

### **3. Annual Return Form / Summary of the Group's activities to date**

The Convener explained two documents had been provided to the Group. Firstly, a summary detailing the Group's activities in 2014 including a note of who has been attending and speaking at these meetings. Secondly, the official paperwork to be submitted to Parliament, the Annual Return Form. The Group approved the content of the Annual Return.

### **4. Election of Office Bearers**

The Convener indicated that as part of the AGM process, office bearers had to be elected.

#### Convener

The Convener asked Group members for nominations for the role of Convener. Ms Smith indicated that she was happy to continue in the role if that was supported by the meeting.

Mr Alastair Sim proposed Ms Smith as Convener, Seconded by Liam McArthur MSP

#### Deputy Convener

The Convener asked Group members for nominations for the role of Deputy Convener. The Convener indicated that the current Deputy Convener, Ms Kezia Dugdale MSP, could no longer continue in the role following a new position in her party's Shadow Cabinet.

Mr Alastair Sim proposed Mr Iain Gray MSP as Deputy Convener, Seconded by Mr Drew Smith MSP

## **5. MSP Attendance**

The Convener welcomed any thoughts from Group members as to how more MSPs can be encouraged to attend future meetings the CPG on Scotland's Colleges and Universities. It was noted that MSP members on the Group are doing what they can to encourage colleagues along.

Meeting closed.

## **TOPICAL MEETING**

### **1. Welcome and Introduction from the Convener**

The Convener, welcomed everyone to the twentieth meeting of the Cross Party Group. The Convener thanked Alastair Sim and Universities Scotland for sponsoring the lunch for the meeting.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

### **3. Introduction to the topic of Scotland's Research Strengths**

The Convener introduced the speakers on the topic of Scotland's Research Strengths, noting the timeliness of the discussion following the publication of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2015 results in December.

#### **Dr Diane Harbison, Managing Director, BioCity Scotland**

Dr Harbison explained BioCity has a UK-wide footprint and acquired its Newhouse site in 2012; the company is not just a landlord, but also creates and grows life science companies such as pharmaceuticals, biotech, medical technology, healthcare and e-health firms. BioCity Scotland has 24 companies on site and tenants include the University of Dundee and Edinburgh Napier University.

Dr Harbison said that universities are a vital part of the network and highlighted that 42% of new companies created in Scotland are spin outs from universities.

Dr Harbison explained that there have been a lot of changes in the global biopharmaceutical industry and as part of this there has been a change in the industry model in relation to innovation. The industry has moved from a model of closed innovation, where companies must create the most and best ideas, control IP and believe the smartest people work for them, to a model of open innovation in which companies make the most of internal and external ideas, share their own and others' IP and recognise that smart people work everywhere, including in universities.

The Group heard that there are lots of open innovation collaborations underway across the industry and that collaborations come in many shapes and sizes, for example between public and private research companies or between academic and biomedical industry scientists or between not-for-profit and for-profit enterprises.

Dr Harbison said that good partners in collaboration should have a shared vision and collaborative spirit, a willingness to negotiate 'win-win' deals, a culture of partnership and willingness, clear communication channels and mechanisms for problem resolution. There has to be a focus on the return on the relationship, understanding strategy before setting structure and the "mutual" benefit of the collaboration. Dr Harbison outlined the challenges of bringing two cultures to work together effectively so that a shared communication and understanding could be developed and talked about the benefits to both partners from collaboration, such as increasing the innovation pool and access to deep knowledge and enabling technologies.

Dr Harbison praised universities' track record on innovative collaboration with industry and highlighted some key collaborations including the Dundee Kinase Consortium, a collaboration with six pharmaceutical companies that has seen an original 1998 agreement renewed several times, most recently in 2012, and is considered a model for Industry/Academic collaboration.

**Mr Michael Rayner, Dean of Research, University of the Highlands and Islands, and Chair of the Scottish based REF Managers' Group for REF 2014**

Mr Rayner talked about the performance of Scotland's universities in the [Research Excellence Framework \(REF\) 2014](#), the results of which were published in December 2014.

Mr Rayner said that the REF 2014 results were excellent for Scotland's higher education sector overall and demonstrated a strength and breadth of excellence. Mr Rayner pointed out that the impact of Scottish Higher Education Institutions' research was having a major impact on lives and livelihoods. His challenge to the sector is to recognise its impressive outputs and publications but not to stand still and look to secure even greater quality in the future.

Mr Rayner told the Group that the REF 2014 scores remain with institutions for at least five years and there is a need to use these years well. Scotland has world class research in all its HEIs and all need to be supported properly for this to continue. Mr Rayner noted that Scotland's universities were delivering considerable value for money in terms of their research outputs and highlighted that some of the biggest returns on investment had come from some of the smaller institutions such as the University of the Highlands and Islands and Queen Margaret University Edinburgh.

REF 2014 involved 154 higher education institutions, 18 from Scotland; 1,911 submissions of which 229 were from Scotland; 52,061 academic staff of which 6,349 were from Scottish institutions; 191,150 research outputs of which 22,872 were from Scotland; and 6,975 impact case studies of which 837 were from Scottish institutions.

Mr Rayner explained that research was judged to be one of five 'overall' quality levels, ranging from four star 'exceptional' to unclassified, with universities aiming for as much research as possible to be assessed as either four star 'exceptional/world leading' or three star 'excellent/internationally excellent'. For the first time in such an exercise, a non-academic measure was included: impact measured how far the research benefitted people at large, in a range of contexts.

Importantly, all of Scotland's universities were found to be producing research of four star 'exceptional' and three star 'excellent' quality, meaning every institution is producing world-leading research.

Mr Rayner said that Scotland's overall REF 2014 performance saw 76.93% of research judged to be four star or three star. Compared to Scotland's performance in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) the amount of research judged to be four star almost doubled from 15% to 29% and the amount of research judged to be three star increased from 37% to 48%. Some 85.83% of research from Scotland's universities was judged to be four star or three star in terms of impact.

Scotland's universities performed favourably compared to institutions in the rest of the UK. Comparing Scotland's overall profile to the UK average, 29.30% of research was judged to be four star compared to a UK average of 30.03% and 47.63% of research was judged to be three star, compared to a UK average of 46.10%. When combined, this equated to 76.93% for Scotland as compared to the UK average of 76.13%.

On impact, Scotland's universities performed better than the UK average with 45.66% of research judged to be four star in terms of impact compared to an average of 43.98%. Scotland also produced more three star research in terms of impact at 40.17% compared to a UK average of 39.93%.

Scotland's overall performance in REF 2014 was ahead of the UK average and English performance in a diverse range of areas including: Agriculture, Veterinary & Food Science; Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy; Art & Design; Biological Sciences; Chemistry; Education; English Language and Literature; General Engineering; History; Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts; Physics; Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience; and Social Work and Social Policy.

#### **Dr Peter Varley, Director, Centre for Recreation & Tourism Research at West Highland College**

Dr Varley told the Group that the West highlands have the brand as the Outdoor Capital of the UK and research and teaching work at West Highland College is looking to help cement that potential.

The Group heard that Dr Varley had initially set up an Adventure Tourism Management course and the School of Adventure Studies at this remote college. In its first year just three students took up the course and this number grew to seven in the second year. This year there are over 100 students on the course, and the first PhD student has just been confirmed; from Serbia. The Centre has also just launched the first MSc, in Ecotourism, at the college, and regularly hosts visiting researchers keen to study in the area.

West Highland College is a small institution and makes the most of its remote, fast-growing and unique status. The University of the Highlands and Islands is good at supporting the college and allowing the Centre to remain independent, responsive and flexible. Dr Varley said the centre is linked to a niche market in Scotland – outdoor and adventure tourism - and the college provides good links between students and the industry in Scotland. The ‘niche’ is important – it is this specialism that allows the Centre to attract international interest and to ‘punch above its weight’ vis-à-vis larger and more established universities.

Dr Varley talked about how he and a college board member managed to secure funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for a Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research (CRTR), which was established in 2011.

Staff and students from the CRTR at West Highland College have benefited from the research centre’s presence, including through participating in international conferences, research supervision, etc. and many students have therefore chosen to stay on to do an honours year to achieve a higher qualification. Dr Varley argued that overall the Centre’s success came about because of the research flexibility allowed by the college’s culture and small stature. Research-informed teaching is thus a major theme for the college, and the Research Centre is a major stimulant for this activity.

Dr Varley added that SFC Innovation Vouchers are a real boon to small colleges looking to do research. One such project was a collaboration between the CRTR and Glenmore Lodge, another was a ‘sea-biscuit’ product, and another has been research for the Glenfinnan Railway Museum. The CRTR worked closely with staff at the national outdoor training centre to widen the scope of the business, such as activities on offer, how it is positioned in the market and its potential impact in terms of outdoor confidence, health and well-being. The Centre is now a winner of a couple of far larger grants and contracts, however, and has targeted European INTERREG funding successfully.

#### **4. Discussion**

The Group participated in a lively discussion on issues including how colleges can be encouraged to do more research, managing university/business collaborations, moving from closed to open innovation and how universities can ensure teaching is informed by latest research.

#### **5. Date and topic of next meeting**

The Convener advised the Group that the date for the next meeting of the CPG in 2015 will be Thursday 26 April 2015, 12.30 – 2.00 pm in Committee Room 2. The topic of the 26 April meeting will be diverse learning opportunities.

Speakers at the meeting will include Skills Development Scotland (who will also sponsor the lunch) on new advanced apprenticeships and Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2015.

The Convenor thanked all of the speakers and attendees for their contributions.

Meeting closed.