

Bush Telegraph

The House Magazine of the Edinburgh Consortium for Rural Research

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH - FUTURE NEEDS

Following excellent presentations by CEH scientists during an ECRR lunchtime meeting on 18th September 2008 at Bush Estate, hosted by Professor Neil Cape, members were treated to an invited presentation and discussion led by Peter Singleton.

Peter is Head of Emerging Issues Unit, at the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) but he spoke to us 'wearing his hat' as chairman of the Horizon Scanning Project Board for the Environment Research Funders' Forum (ERFF).

The UK's 17 main funders of environmental research (including the Scottish Government and SEPA) have come together, as the ERFF, to identify priorities in tackling environmental change, to develop the evidence base, tools and processes needed to inform public and policy debates towards managing the changes, and to capitalise on resulting economic opportunities.



Peter Singleton speaking at the ECRR workshop on environmental research needs to 2020.

Over the past 18 months, ERFF has engaged in horizon scanning to identify the most important issues which could impact on the UK's interests over the next 20 years. Through this process, funders achieved a shared understanding of the environmental issues, the priority themes, and information to influence the strategies of individual members within shared objectives. The aim is to provide a joined-up approach to UK environmental science strategy.

An early outcome of this work has been the launch of the Living with Environmental Change (LWEC) programme to connect world-leading practitioners across the natural, social and engineering sciences, with policy-makers and business. The aim is to ensure that the UK provides international leadership and solutions to new environmental challenges, and to help capitalise on opportunities which emerge.

Examples of particular areas in which significant opportunities are seen to lie are in human health and the environment, monitoring and modelling. Of course, there will also be opportunities in the energy field, and LWEC is designed in collaboration with the Research Council's Energy Programme to capitalise on the complementarities and synergies to be found there.

In discussion, it was noted that the next major ERFF meeting, to take stock of progress and direction, will take place in October 2008. The outcome will no doubt shape new questions for the debate.

In the meantime, ECRR members wondered whether there might be an opportunity to stimulate additional action in Scotland. We could see the possibility of building on existing and emerging Scottish environmental science networks to benefit from those priorities established by ERFF, with a Scottish focus,

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and from the spirit of the joined-up approach which ERFF is promoting. ECRR, with its network of 25 institutions and University Departments, is clearly poised to participate in, and benefit from, such a strategy.

For further information about ERFF, visit www.erff.org.uk.

To view slides from Peter Singleton's presentation go to the ECRR web site at www.ecrr.org.uk

Chris Browitt
ECRR Scientific Director

Engaging the Public - The Beltane Partnership

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How is the knowledge generated by the huge range of research being undertaken at our universities and research institutes passed on to those who would best benefit from it? The main measured outcome from research projects are academic publications. However, research funders realise that the majority of people on whom research may have an impact who can benefit from research are not necessarily experts in the field being studied. Non-specialists might be the general public, industrialists, patient groups, politicians or even academics in another discipline.

In order to redress the balance the UK Higher Education Funding Councils, the Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust have launched a new initiative to establish a coordinated approach to recognising, rewarding and building capacity for public engagement. Six **Beacons for Public Engagement** have been set up in Manchester,

Newcastle, Norwich, London, Cardiff and Edinburgh with a national coordinating centre at Bristol.

The Edinburgh Beltane – Beacon for Public Engagement is a four year project led by the University of Edinburgh, but has an extensive range of partners (see inset). Named after the spring festival, when different communities would come together and matchmaking would take place, the Edinburgh Beltane partnership is based on existing collaborations in public engagement (PE) activities amongst its members.

The aim of all the Beacons for Public Engagement is to bring about a change in the culture of research organisations so that findings are shared in a meaningful way with the public. In addition the Edinburgh Beltane is working with the theme of encouraging citizen participation and understanding of areas of research relevant to public policy such as health and life sciences, energy and the environment.

The Edinburgh Beltane strategy involves two main approaches:

- Fostering growth of the skills and capabilities of researchers.
- Changing the perception about what it means to do public engagement through a number of key programmes.

Public Engagement Fellowships are part time secondments enabling academics and researchers to concentrate on public engagement developments. The Fellowships allow academics time for personal development and to make valuable contacts and partnerships in the PE sphere, but also importantly the Fellows act as ambassadors for Public Engagement in their institutions.

Public Engagement Challenges provide seed funding for new Public Engagement ventures which then compete to win financial support for further development.



An **Annual Programme of Events** give opportunities for researchers from all disciplines to get involved, and **Training and Staff Development** provides the skills and confidence necessary to take the next step into the public engagement arena.

Academics that excel at public engagement are often perceived as not favourably contributing to an institutions reputation and the Edinburgh Beltane will endeavour to change this view. By working with **Human Resources Departments** we hope to establish rewards in the promotion policies for those who are successful in public engagement. Excellence in public engagement should be recognised and we will be encouraging all the institutions to establish **Public Engagement Awards** similar to the recently announced Tam Dalyell Prize at the University of Edinburgh.

The Beacons for Public Engagement initiative represents a significant shift in the Research Councils' approach to public engagement with research. It recognises how important it is for researchers to play their part in society and policy making. With the expertise available in its partnerships, we feel that the Edinburgh Beltane will be a successful a means of encouraging, supporting and helping researchers to play their role.

The Edinburgh Beltane – Beacon for Public Engagement Partners

The University of Edinburgh,
Heriot-Watt University, Napier
University, UHI Millennium
Institute, Edinburgh College of
Art, Queen Margaret University,
Edinburgh Consortium for Rural
Research, National Museums
Scotland, Optos plc, Our
Dynamic Earth, Roslin Institute,
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh,
Royal Observatory Edinburgh
Visitor Centre, SETPOINT
Scotland East, The Herald, The
Royal Society of Edinburgh, The
Sutton Trust, UK GRAD Scotland
& Northern Ireland Hub



*Dr Heather Rea, Edinburgh Beltane Project
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INSPIRING NEW GENERATIONS

The Roslin Institute recently welcomed three secondary school students to join it so that they could gain work experience. The three students, with interests in careers in medicine, veterinary medicine and scientific research were enthusiastic, receptive and appreciative of the programme that had been organized for them. Thanks to the willingness and assistance of members of staff, the students were able to gain a wide perspective on the work carried out in the Institute and had the opportunity to get 'hands on' experience within the Large Animal, Small Animal, and Poultry Units and on the farm learning about the use of animals in research. Background, objectives and future implications of some projects were also discussed and explained, as were Home Office responsibilities under the Animals Scientific Procedure Act 1986. They had the opportunity to see transgenic sheep, pigs and poultry, were involved with IVM/IVF, microinjection and PCR and assisted with anaesthesia, pig surgery and postoperative care for the Transcontinental Transport Study.

Harriet Brettle from the Dame Alice Harpur School, Bedford thoroughly enjoyed her time at the Institute saying "I had a brilliant time at The Roslin Institute. I saw so many aspects of the research done at Roslin and was really surprised by the variety of projects. Everyone there was so helpful and friendly and my work experience there really inspired me to pursue a career in science. Thank you very much for the opportunity."

Both The Roslin Institute staff and the students invested a good deal of energy into these work experience placements. We are sure that in the future, this investment will

have its reward with young and innovative individuals seeing science as their future.

WINNING SCIENCE

Professor John Woolliams won the 2008 Royal Agricultural Society of England's research Medal. The Society considered John to be "an outstanding candidate for the award having demonstrated how excellent science can be translated into practical outcomes which are of real value to the agricultural industry. This epitomises the 'Practice with Science' philosophy of the Society."

As Research Group Leader at The Roslin Institute John has been working on the application of sustainable breeding programmes in livestock and has made significant contributions to several areas of animal science at both theoretical and applied levels.

Professor David Hume, Director of The Roslin Institute said, "This award is not only a recognition of John's personal contribution but helps us all in maintaining the public profile of the Roslin Institute as an important contributor to the agricultural industries of the United Kingdom."

RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE

Professor Cheryl Ashworth was elected onto the Council of the Society for Reproduction and Fertility at its recent annual meeting in Edinburgh.

Cheryl, who also holds a visiting professorship at the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC), runs research that centres around the field of reproductive biology and current projects underway in her group are investigating the effects of altered prenatal nutrition, prenatal stress and genotype on feto-placental function and the development of key organ systems in offspring. More information about Cheryl's work can be found on her web pages: <http://www.roslin.ed.ac.uk/research/people.php/Cheryl.Ashworth/>.

ROSLIN FOUNDATION

Following the transfer of staff, research activities and related assets into the University of Edinburgh, the old legal entity will continue as the Roslin Foundation. The Foundation will remain as a registered charity and will hold the residual financial reserves of the old Institute, which will be invested in supporting the research activities of The Roslin Institute. The foundation will also provide support for postgraduate studentship positions and assist in claiming intellectual property on novel developments.

As the major shareholder of Roslin BioCentre (RBC), the Foundation will manage the Wallace and Logan buildings, supporting the existing tenants as well as encouraging new ones to move to the campus. It will also, through the RBC, run the on-site nursery, Forest Friends, to which staff will continue to get access to at a reduced rate.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Roslin Foundation will be Malcolm Bateman, previously Director of Finance of Roslin Institute.



Professor Cheryl Ashworth

Biomathematics & Statistics Scotland



Professor David Elston

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

For 21 years BioSS has now been providing mathematical and statistical underpinning for government-funded agricultural research in Scotland. Concentration of such expertise in a single body with distributed staffing has been one of the distinctive features of the Scottish system. As time has gone by, BioSS has been working ever closer with an increasing range of end users. So, we decided to mark our coming of age by organising the first BioSS-led knowledge exchange event. This was a half-day meeting held in March 2008 at Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, on "Improving science and society through an understanding of variation, uncertainty and risk", which is also our vision Statement. The event featured two external speakers working in statistics and policy in addition to presentations from BioSS's four Principal Consultants.



*Professor David Elston at the BioSS
knowledge-exchange meeting*

MEETING PROGRAMME

Informing Policy with Statistics - Ms Mary Sweetland, Deputy Director, NHS Scotland Information and Statistics Division and former Vice-President of the Royal Statistical Society

Underpinning Plant Variety Development & Crop Management - Mr Jim McNicol, BioSS Principal Consultant for Plant Science

Improving the Wellbeing of Farm Animals - Dr Iain McKendrick, BioSS Principal Consultant for Animal Health and Welfare

Developing an Evidence Base for Environmental Policy Making - Dr Mark Brewer, BioSS Principal Consultant for Ecology and Environmental Science

Quantifying the Relationships Between Nutrition and Human Health - Dr Graham Horgan, BioSS Principal Consultant for Human Health and Nutrition

The roles of mathematical modelling in epidemic preparedness and response - Professor Neil Ferguson OBE, MRC Centre for Outbreak Analysis and Modelling, Imperial College London

TIME LINE

In the early 1980s, there were small statistics groups at three of the Scottish biological/agricultural research institutes - the Macaulay and Rowett institutes in Aberdeen, SCRI in Dundee, along with the AFRC (Agricultural and Food Research Council) Unit of Statistics at the University of Edinburgh. The coincidence of a number of senior retirements among this statistics community led to a rethink, and an AFRC Visiting Group in 1985 proposed the establishment of a single organisation - to be dubbed the Scottish Agricultural Statistics Service (SASS) - to integrate the provision of statistical research and advice in support of the Scottish agricultural institutes and colleges.

In 1986, Rob Kempton was appointed director of the new organisation, which began formally on 1st April 1987. Funding for SASS came from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, and, as a legal entity, SASS was part of SCRI. The headquarters were located in the University of Edinburgh, deliberately not in any particular institute so as to retain a level of independence.

Further Visiting Groups recommended increased research funding for SASS, and SASS placed increased emphasis on both the stochastic side of mathematical modelling and on bioinformatics to meet the requirements of a changing research environment. This meant that SASS was no longer broad enough a term, and so a change of name came about to Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland.

Sadly, Rob Kempton passed away in 2003, but his legacy lives on: BioSS continues to thrive by building on Rob's vision of an outward-looking organisation integrating modern methodologies with contemporary applications. Our past successes have been due to finding so many collaborators who have been willing: to interact openly with us; to share their objectives, proposals and data with us; to meet us halfway, by trying to learn the principles and language of our discipline as well as educating us in the essentials of their own fields; to accept however reluctantly that the complexities of mathematical notation can aid rigour of exposition. We thank all past and present collaborators, and look forward to the future with confidence and enthusiasm.

Moredun Research Institute



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OPEN DAY AT MOREDUN

Ten years ago, Moredun Research Institute moved from its original home of Gilmerton Road in Edinburgh to the custom build Pentlands Science Park in Midlothian. In celebration of this anniversary, Moredun opened its doors in August and welcomed over 200 guests to an Open Day to showcase its science and the contribution the Moredun Group had made to animal health and welfare as well as Scotland's economy. Guests were literally spoilt for choice with over a dozen talks and seminars to choose from, as well as tours of the animal accommodation and several laboratories to look round. There were also plenty of practical demonstrations for guests to take part in and staff were on hand all day to chat about their work and the impact Moredun is making on animal health and welfare throughout the world.

The event was officially opened by Moredun's Honorary President, John Cameron. Mr Cameron, who was once the largest sheep farmer in the European Union with about 10,000 ewes, praised Moredun for its work



Visitors on the farm tour at the Moredun Open Day.

and admitted that it has been one of its champions for many years. He remarked that Moredun's mission statement in 1924 – 'to prevent and control infectious diseases of livestock' – is equally valid, if not more so today. "No wonder Moredun has such enthusiastic support from farmers when present research topics include worm control – still one of the biggest costs to livestock producers now complicated with resistance to particular anthelmintics, Johne's disease,

widely regarded as the biggest veterinary problem in the cattle industry, and the farmers other two scourges – abortion and pneumonia."

ANIMAL HEALTH ROADSHOW

Moredun organises a National Animal Health Roadshow each year, consisting of a series of specialist animal health meetings for both farmers and their vets to attend, and learn more about farm animal health issues. These meetings provide information about certain diseases, how they are spread, diagnosed, controlled and prevented. Moredun hopes that these events will encourage farmers to work with their vets and make a more informed choice about how they can maximise the health and productivity of the animals in their care.

This year's roadshow will feature health concerns including Johne's disease, sheep abortion, cattle lameness, liver fluke, hydatid disease and diseases of the newborn lamb. There are some thirteen meetings being held between 3 and 27 November throughout the UK. Full details can be found on the Moredun website www.moredun.org.uk/events.



A visitor 'trying her hand' in the lab at the Moredun Open Day

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds – Scotland



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PEATLAND BIRDS AND FORESTRY

The blanket bogs of north Scotland – the 'Flow Country' – make up the largest single area of this habitat in Europe, and perhaps 4% of the world's peatland resource. The area is very important for breeding birds like Dunlin and Golden Plover. This importance is reflected in the fact that the Flow Country contains 10% of all the land in the UK that is specially protected under the European Birds Directive.

The Flow Country was affected in the 1980s by extensive afforestation with non-native conifers, leading to major declines in breeding wader populations. These new plantations may also have had 'edge effects' on adjacent

open habitats, but this has been disputed. Between 1988 and 2000, on peatland never planted with trees, RSPB monitoring (supported by SNH and JNCC) showed that there was a 43% decline in Dunlin numbers (Sim et al. 2005), equivalent to about 6.5% of the UK breeding population. 'Edge effects' could have contributed to this and other declines.

A further RSPB study, soon to be published in the journal *Bird Study*, investigated the pattern of bird counts from Flow Country surveys, in 1988 and 2000, in relation to forests. For this work, we used detailed measures of habitat features important to birds, made in 2000. We then analysed bird counts, and changes in count, in relation to these habitat measures, and the distance of survey areas from the nearest forest. Analyses were performed for three key peatland wading bird species, Golden Plover, Dunlin and Greenshank, and also for Red Grouse, a species of economic importance in the area.

Our results (Hancock et al. 2008) showed evidence of forest edge effects for Dunlin and Red Grouse. For a given habitat quality, Dunlin counts in 2000 were lower, and Red Grouse declines more likely, close to forests. There was little or no similar evidence for Golden Plover and Greenshank.

These results provide further support to the current programme for forest re-structuring in the Flow Country, suggesting this may have additional benefits for birds of adjacent open areas. These potential benefits will be the subject of a future study.

References:

Sim IMW, Gregory RD, Hancock MH & Brown AF (2005) Recent changes in the abundance of British upland breeding birds. Bird Study, 52: 261-275.

Hancock MH, Grant MC and Wilson JD (2008) Associations between distance to forest and spatial and temporal variation in abundance of key peatland breeding bird species. Bird Study, in press.



Some conifer plantations in the Flow Country are close to high quality blanket bog habitats important to birds like Dunlin and Golden Plover. Photograph by Norrie Russell of Forsinard Flows RSPB Reserve

Scottish Agricultural College



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FARMING'S RETREAT FROM THE HILLS?

In recent years there have been growing concerns that there are fewer and fewer livestock on Scottish hills with potentially negative consequences for the social, economic and environmental sustainability of upland areas. In this context, SAC's Rural Policy Centre has examined some of the evidence on what is happening to livestock numbers at the national, regional and local scales in order to provide the evidence that is required for policy debates about upland management.

An examination of the census data showed that sheep numbers have declined dramatically since 1999, most notably in the North West, with many areas seeing a reduction of between 35 and 60 percent. The data on the number of sheep per unit carrying sheep and the number of holdings with sheep suggest that this reduction in sheep numbers is primarily part of a process of down-sizing. Cattle numbers have also declined, although not so dramatically and not in the same areas. The analysis highlights that the decline in livestock numbers is extremely complex with a great deal of spatial variation even within single geographical areas (such as Highland).

SAC found that to a significant extent these changes are related to the economic situation with most hill livestock production being financially uneconomic. The price that farmers receive for their livestock is often below the costs of production and much of the farming in hill areas only continues because of the support payments provided by government.

CONSEQUENCES

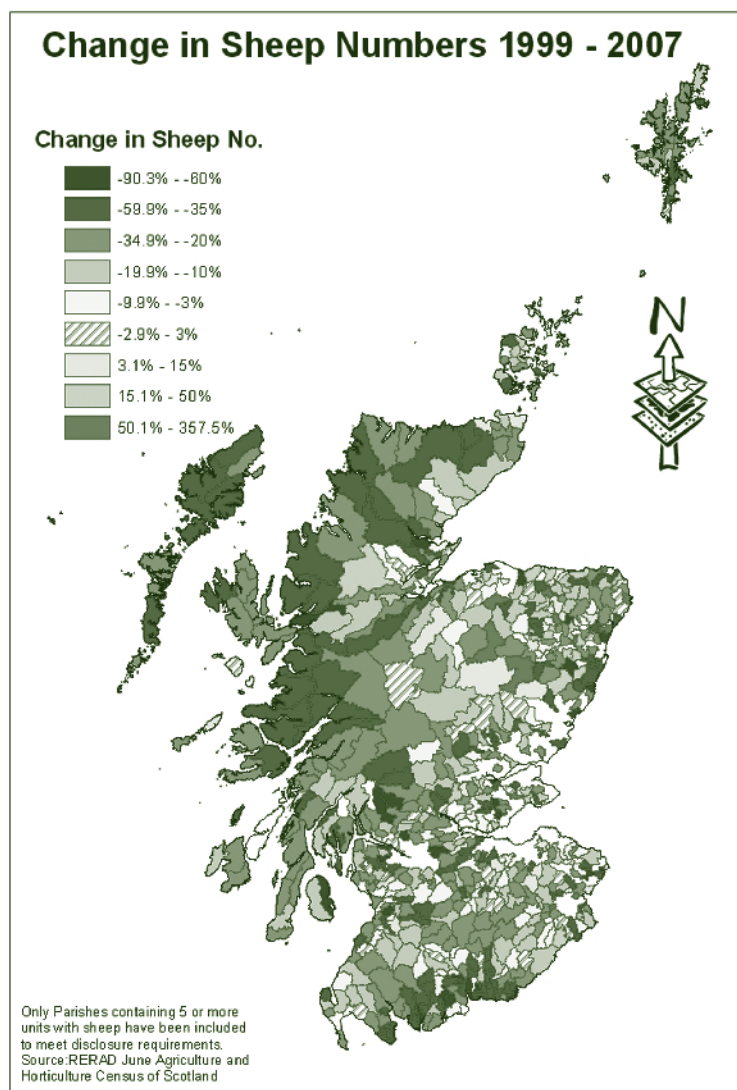
Biodiversity – Although grazing levels were considered to be too high in large parts of

the British uplands throughout much of the late twentieth century (leading to heather loss and damage to vegetation and soils), the situation in some places has now reversed with little or no livestock, which may lead to problems associated with under-grazing. In general, though, SAC suggests that a reduction of grazing on hill land will benefit some species but be detrimental to others. Having a range of different management systems, including some which have little or no grazing livestock is perhaps the key to maximising biodiversity in the uplands.

Communities – SAC found that the Highlands and Islands have seen the greatest decline in the number of full-time farm occupiers at the same time as witnessing the slowest

growth in part-time occupiers working 50 percent of their time or less. There has also been a rise in the number of spouses working less than 50 percent of their time on farm, suggesting that spouses in particular are shifting to find employment off-farm. Since agriculture plays an important role in many rural economies and communities either directly, through employment, or indirectly, through the way that farm businesses are linked to other businesses in an area, these changes are potentially significant for the future of rural communities.

The report can be downloaded from: <http://www.sac.ac.uk/ruralpolicycentre/>



Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh



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INTREPID BOTANISTS

Two Edinburgh botanists braved difficult conditions while carrying out vital research in the forests of the Congo for a new groundbreaking book.

Being stranded by flooding, attacked by bees and dining on dried fish and caterpillars are just some of the challenges faced by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's Dr David Harris while carrying out research with Dr Alexandra Wortley for their new illustrated manual *Sangha Trees* – a unique and vital documentation of 522 species of forest trees growing in the Congo Forest Basin.

Dr Harris said: "There is always going to be hazards working in such environments but one of the worst problems was the bees. Honey bees and sweat bees, attracted by perspiration, swarm around. They get in your eyes, nose and ears, even insect repellent doesn't seem to deter them. I followed local practice and rolled up leaves to put in my ears – we couldn't hear very well, but it was



Examining specimens

on plants in Central Africa by functioning as both an identification guide and a training manual. It is targeted at biologists in need of accurate identifications and scientific names for trees".

Dr Harris has worked as a taxonomist in Central Africa for more than 20 years and is Herbarium Curator at RBGE. Researcher Dr Wortley has worked with him for the past three years. The project receives Darwin Initiative sponsorship.



Dr David Harris with Congolese colleagues

WIDENING ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS

Leading museums, zoos and research institutes around the world are signing up to an innovative information-sharing website developed at RBGE.

With the official launch of the Biodiversity Collections Index on Sept 1st 2008 organisations ranging from the National Museums of Scotland to the Atlas of Living Australia and Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC can find each others reference collections of dried, pickled, frozen or otherwise preserved specimens of botanical and zoological interest.

The concept for Biodiversity Collections Index came from an initiative by RBGE in cooperation with two other major research institutes: the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, Copenhagen and Biodiversity Information Standards (TDWG). A Memorandum of Understanding signed by the three last year paved the way for the development of more effective international communication in the sourcing of important research specimens, through the development of a single internet-based resource which can be shared by the global scientific community.

The project is led by Roger Hyam from RBGE who explained: "Reference collections held in herbaria, museums and like-minded institutes make it possible for researchers around the world to interrelate and validate scientific studies. Without them our understanding of the natural world would be hampered. The Biodiversity Collections Index has been developed to empower researchers with the ability to locate more quickly the materials they need. And, at the same time, it enables them unambiguously to state the location of materials used in their published scientific papers".

More information on the Biodiversity Collections Index can be found on:

<http://www.BiodiversityCollectionsIndex.org>

In Brief. . .

NEW HEAD OF FOREST RESEARCH

Dr James Pendlebury is the new Chief Executive Officer of Forest Research, the scientific research and technical development agency of the Forestry Commission.

Dr Pendlebury, aged 47, is based at Forest Research's Northern Research Station on the Bush Estate at Roslin. He was previously head of the Forestry Commission's team of specialist advisors, and has had a distinguished career in research, management and market development in the timber and forestry sectors in several countries. He holds a BSc Honours degree in forestry from Aberdeen University, and was awarded a PhD from the same university for a thesis on the preservation characteristics of tropical hardwood species from Malaysia.

He has held timber research positions in several countries, including the UK, USA, South Africa and New Zealand. He has been head of the TNO Centre for Timber Research in The Netherlands and more recently Chief Executive Officer of Highland Birchwoods in Scotland. Since joining the Commission he has held posts including business policy advisor for Forestry Commission Scotland and a period on secondment to the Scottish Government's Renewable Policy Team.

Dr Pendlebury is a graduate of the Cabinet Office Leaders UK programme to develop management excellence in the public service, and a member of the Institute of Wood Science, the Institute of Directors and the International Research Group on Wood Preservation.



Dr James Pendlebury, Head of Forest Research Service

RESEARCH EMPHASIS DAY AT R(D)SVS

In May 2008 the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies hosted its Research Emphasis Day which gave a chance for students, school alumni, vets and other invited guests to hear about the high quality research that is being undertaken within the School. This is the first Research Emphasis Day since The Roslin Institute transferred to the University of Edinburgh and became affiliated with R(D)SVS.

The highlight of the afternoon's session was the Charnock Bradley lecture by Dr Ilaria Capua, an international authority in Avian influenza (AI) and Newcastle disease and Head of the National, FAO and OIE Reference Laboratory for these diseases.

Dr Capua demonstrated some of the problems created as a result of differences in culture and poultry husbandry across the world. She highlighted a number of tools for control that should be developed. Scientifically there is a need for an increase in the knowledge of the pathobiological and virological aspects of transmission, virulence and epidemiological markers of AI. Dr Capua concluded with a plea for a common research policy to maximise the efforts in both the animal and human avian influenza fields.

SAC WINS RESEARCH SUPPORT

SAC (Scottish Agricultural College) has had considerable success in winning a number of new contracts and grants, including eight projects submitted in April 2008 to various funding bodies: Defra, Levy boards, Scottish Government, DFID and the EU.

Major new Defra projects in animal science included:

- Investigating the management and welfare of continuously housed cows;
- Promoting a duty of care to animals in young people;
- Farrowing environments to optimise animal welfare and economic performance
- Effects of hot climates on transcontinental transport of breeder pigs.

INNOVATION SHOWCASE

The Scottish Crop Research Institute will take part in an Innovation Showcase Business Day on 18 November 2008, which provides an opportunity for businesses to discover the academic expertise available at the University of Dundee, University of Abertay Dundee and SCRI.

The showcase day will feature a programme of seminars highlighting the importance of innovation to businesses and introduce the financial assistance available to Scottish companies who wish to innovate.

ROWETT MERGER

The Rowett Research Institute merged with the University of Aberdeen on 30 June 2008. The merger creates the new Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health, embedded within Aberdeen University's College of Life Sciences and Medicine. The intention is for a complete relocation from Bucksburn to Foresterhill within four years. The website for the new Institute is www.abdn.ac.uk/rowett.

INCREASING RESPONSIBILITIES



Professor Mary Bownes

Professor Mary Bownes has been appointed to the board of Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE). HIE is the Scottish Government's economic development agency for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. It works with private businesses and public and third sector organisations to build sustainable economic growth from Shetland to Argyll and from the Outer Hebrides to Moray.

Apart from being Chairman of the ECRR Main Board Mary has roles as Edinburgh University's Vice Principal for Research Training & Community Relations and as Professor of Developmental Biology. She also has a strong commitment to science communication: amongst initiatives which she has led are:

- Scottish Initiative for Biotechnology Education;
- Researchers-in-Residence scheme which places researchers in schools throughout the UK.
- The Beltane Project, part of the UK Beacon for Public Engagement project (see page 2 of this issue).

SNH CONFERENCE: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Scottish Natural Heritage is holding a conference on the topic of 'Species Management: Challenges and Solutions for the 21st Century'.

The conference will explore through a series of invited presentation key issues such as:

- Species management as a shared responsibility
- The ecological and socio-economic aspects of species management
- The strategic and adaptive approaches to management

The long-term aim for all species management is for thriving, and where possible self-sustaining and self-regulating populations of native species distributed throughout their natural range.

The conference is being held at Heriot-Watt University's Riccarton campus, from 29th - 31st October 2008. More details are available at www.snh.org.uk/conference2008/

SHARING THE JOURNEY AT BUSH ESTATE

Edinburgh Technopole is currently developing Tripshare for the Bush Estate with a number of partners. Tripshare has been created so that motorists can search for other members who are doing similar journeys at similar times. As a member of the scheme, you can quickly and easily find someone who shares your commute, reducing travel costs as well as congestion and pollution.

If you would like more information, please contact Judith Sanderson at Bush House on 0131 445 8698 or Judith.Sanderson@grosvenor.com



Bush Estate

ECRR DIARY 2008/09

Nov 13	Directors' lunch	Edinburgh University, School of Biological Sciences, King's Buildings	12.30
	Beltane presentation		13.15
	AGM & Main Board meeting		14.15
Dec 12	Executive Committee meeting	Heriot Watt University	10.30
	Directors' lunch		12.30
Feb 2	Directors' Lunch	Venue TBA	12.30
Feb 17	ECRR Annual Lecture	Professor John Beddington, UK Chief Scientist, RSE, George St, Edinburgh	15.00 17.00
Mar 2	Executive Committee	Venue TBA	10.30
	Directors' lunch		12.30
Apr 29	Directors' Lunch	Venue TBA	15.00
	Main Board & AGM		17.00
May 13	ECRR Forum	Scotland's changing rural biodiversity	8.45
Jun 8	Executive Committee	Venue TBA	10.30
	Directors' Lunch		12.30

SCOTLAND'S CHANGING RURAL BIODIVERSITY: POLICY AND ACTION NEEDS

A forum organised by the
Edinburgh Consortium for Rural Research
in association with Aberdeen Research Consortium and the Scottish Biodiversity Forum

Many parts of rural Scotland hold important biodiversity, often – but not always – within protected sites. This biodiversity – from the species to the landscape scale – has diverse values for Scotland's economy and people. Both species and habitats are influenced by a wide variety of forces of change at various scales, from the local (land management decisions), to the global (climate change). Within this complex context, the Scottish Government is committed to halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. However, while we know that some progress has been made towards this target, knowledge of the current status of biodiversity across rural Scotland – especially outside protected sites – is variable. There is an urgent need to understand the current state of our biodiversity, possible future impacts of these drivers of change, and how we can manage our biodiversity effectively across large spatial scales and in integrated ways across sectors.

The aim of this one-day forum is to present and discuss current knowledge on the status and values of Scotland's rural biodiversity and to explore successes and failures in achieving biodiversity goals, how these goals are and could be integrated into key policies, and how diverse partners can work together at landscape and other scales to achieve biodiversity and other goals. In addition to presentations, there will be adequate time for discussion in the plenary sessions. To complement these sessions, individuals will be asked to present posters which will be available for discussion over a long lunch period and during the concluding reception.

Audience: Researchers, practitioners, policy-makers

Posters will be a key element of the meeting. Individuals will be asked to submit the titles and abstracts of posters by 14 February 2009. Proposals will indicate which of the four main themes they refer to; posters will also be welcome on the theme of measuring biodiversity. Decisions on the acceptance of posters will be made by 14 March 2009. The poster session will take place during the 90-minute lunch break and the concluding reception. There will be an award for the best poster, based on voting by participants.

Registration fee: £50; £25 for students and unwaged.

Further information: Please contact Professor Martin Price, Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College UHI, Crieff Road, Perth PH1 2NX. Email: martin.price@perth.uhi.ac.uk

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FUTURE ISSUES

Contributions to the Bush Telegraph are welcomed. All contributions, comments and suggestions can be emailed to Mike Steele at mike.steele@sac.ac.uk.

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