

Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Science and Technology

Minute of meeting held on 6 February 2013

AGM Business

1. **Attendance:** The meeting was attended by 4 MSPs (Dr Elaine Murray, Clare Adamson, Iain Gray, Liam McArthur and 21 people from outside the Scottish Parliament)
2. **Appointment of Office Bearers – Convenor, 2 Deputy Convenors, Secretary:** It was proposed and agreed that the Convenor should continue to be Dr Murray, that there should be two Deputy Convenors – Clare Adamson and Iain Gray and that the Secretary should continue to be Bristow Muldoon of the RSE.
3. **External support received by the CPG**

In the last year 2112/13 the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) provided finance for catering at two meetings – the total was under £500. The RSE and the Royal Society of Chemistry also provided the secretariat to the Group.

An annual report requires to be made to the Standards Committee – approval was sought for the Convenor to submit this report on the basis of the above information. This report would also include details of the meetings held.

General Business

1. **Introduction – Convenor:** Dr Murray introduced the meeting saying that she was delighted to be able to welcome the Chief Executive of the Science and Technology Facilities Council to the Scottish Parliament at a very exciting time for science in Scotland, with the news that had been released from CERN in Geneva only about six months earlier that the theories proposed by Professor Peter Higgs and others in the 1960's, of what has come to be known as the Higgs Boson had not been backed by experimental evidence in the particle accelerator the Large Hadron Collider.
2. **A presentation by Professor John Womersley, Chief Executive of the Science and Technology Facilities Council.**

Professor Womersley delivered a presentation on the work of the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC - one of the seven UK Research Councils) undertook in the field of supporting major large scale science facilities, including the contribution to the international facilities at CERN, Geneva, but also including providing the grant support for major facilities in the UK, including the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh.

Whilst much of the focus of the work of the STFC is involved in seeking answers to fundamental science, from understanding sub-atomic particles through to explaining the

origins of the universe, he also sought to explain that there have been many practical applications that have originated due to the nature of this work, including the development of the World Wide Web, which started as a means of scientists being able to share experimental data internationally, to many of the advanced scanning equipment which allows doctors to investigate health problems in a non-invasive way.

He also expressed his excitement that the work that the STFC contributed towards at CERN has led to data that indicates the theory of Professor Higgs is correct.

In order to communicate the work that the STFC was involved in that same week there was an exhibition of the CERN work in the entrance hall to the Scottish Parliament – a collaboration of many nations – that exhibition was attended by many hundreds of members of the public, including school children. It also included an evening event that was addressed by, amongst others, the Deputy Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, John Scott MSP and also by Professor Peter Higgs himself.

Bristow Muldoon (Secretary)

bmuldoon@royalsoced.org.uk