

Development and Scientific Liaison and Information Services

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The Institute year of 2001/2002 marked the start of a significant process of change in the Scientific Liaison and Information Services Unit. The planned retirement of Dr. Bill Macfarlane Smith and the subsequent resignation of Tim Heilbronn (to work full time in his own craft business) coincided with the introduction of different roles and different priorities for the SLIS Unit. That change of focus will be fully operational by the end of the 2002/2003 annual report period and so, in many ways, this is an interim report.

The clear wish of the Institute's Senior Management Group is that the SLIS Unit should focus on developing key corporate priorities and that press activities should be focussed on promoting the positioning and the profile of the Institute. Therefore, we have moved towards the concept of developing a media and marketing plan that will guide a range of proactive PR activities. Furthermore, our current approach is to seek an even greater direct involvement of the Institute's key scientists in the provision of information, press notes, public lectures and short talks for visitors.

However, as indicated above the roles of SLIS have been reviewed and the priorities now include:

- development of the Institute's proposed Science Park and associated land management
- assisting with corporate planning and corporate change
- promoting good business practice and providing additional private sector business advice within the Group
- development of more effective corporate links with the EU
- assisting with the enhancement of the Institutes positioning and profiling
- development of Visual Aids, Library, Visitor Management and Education/Press activities

The proposed Science Park, with a potential development value of around £100m, is the largest and the most important development ever promoted by the

Institute. Successful implementation will enable and assist in the spin out of companies based on our science and will attract UK and international companies who will wish to work with our science. It will be a national level economic development project and in the role of Development Manager, the Head of SLIS is leading this project with support from Scottish Enterprise Tayside and the two Councils of Dundee City and Perth and Kinross.

As such, it is proposed to concentrate the Institute's research activities at an expanded Mylnefield site and to seek a change of use of Gourdie (to housing and business uses) in order to generate development value to invest in the Science Park. The Park will occupy some 34 hectares at the North Bullionfield area of the Mylnefield site. Key aspects of the project that have been put in place include an outline planning application in respect of the Science Park, an outline planning application for the change of use at Gourdie and a submission to SEERAD seeking the transfer of all existing land and assets to the SCRI Group. Subject to agreeing a final funding package it is hoped that the first buildings in the Park will be occupied in 2005.

This critical project is now integral to the Institute's corporate and scientific objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan. That Plan now also incorporates a clear expression of the Institute's vision and the route map by which that vision will be secured.

In terms of basic press and visitor related activities the Institute has:

- explained its research to biological science students
- given 33 public lectures
- participated in 4 science festivals, garden shows, etc. to take our science to the general public
- hosted 1,322 individual and groups of visitors
- welcomed local teachers and their pupils to the Institute
- produced 288 refereed and 184 non-refereed papers and articles in the past year

One measure of our impact is the 190 plus press references to SCRI's work during the year 2001/2002.

As in previous years Politicians have appreciated the importance of SCRI's research, and the Institute has been visited by a range of MPs, MSPs, MEPs and local council representatives. We continue to liaise with the Information Officers from the other SABRI's, SAC and RBGE and to contribute to reSEARCH, the newsletter of the Agricultural and Biological Research Group of SEERAD.



In the Visual Aids section, the SCRI web site has been maintained and the basis of a new site reflecting the new Institute structure has been put in place. Digital photography has virtually replaced the use of film, allowing a faster, more tailored service for customers. We now also have a facility for digital video editing. We designed, constructed and mounted a series of exhibits during the year, including a gold medal winner at the Dundee Flower Show for the best display from a public body. As more presentations are made using computer projectors, the time that was devoted to preparing lecture slides in the past is increasingly being spent on specialist graphics, and on technical graphic and photographic support for scientists.

The SCRI Librarian has played a leading role in RESCOLINC (the Research Council Libraries and

Information Consortium). The Consortium has been negotiating with publishers to supply electronic access to their scientific journals. The organisational models employed by the publishers to licence online access to their scientific journals have had little relevance for Research Institutes and consequently a great deal of time and patience has been required to reach agreement. Nevertheless, access to titles from Blackwell Publishing, Nature Publishing and Elsevier Science has been arranged and negotiations with Science are ongoing. Questions still remain about the integrity of the archive and our continuing access to it.

The vast majority of journals are still taken in print format and are now well accommodated in the newly refurbished library. The new shelves are more sturdy than those they replace and, with new lighting, the stock is more easily used.

The end-users in agriculture and horticulture continue to take a great interest in the Institute's research and, indeed, support aspects of it through their membership of SSCR. Information is disseminated through the Annual Report and through Crop Walks for soft fruit and potatoes (the latter in conjunction with SAC and BPC) that attracted 50 and 300 visitors respectively in the year 2001.

In the future the work of SLIS will continue to develop and evolve in three related areas:

- firstly, to develop and deliver key strategic change aspects such as the Science Park
- secondly, to assist in the creation of a suite of enterprises, based around our science, as envisaged in our Corporate Plan Vision
- thirdly, to provide our internal and external customers with the highest quality and Institute relevant visual aids, library, media and information activities