

Research Services

Communication and Information Services The Communications Team is concerned with promoting good relations with stakeholders both within and outwith the Institute. They arrange visits, conferences, exhibitions and events to promote SCRI's scientific research to industry, politicians, the general public and school children. The successes have included industry events such as the SCRI/LEAF open day "Sustainable Agriculture – research from laboratory to field" attended by many farmers and representatives of associated industries and the open days based around the Advanced Higher curricula for biology and chemistry; these were attended by students from 30 schools.



The Visual Aids unit has continued to provide a service in presenting the work of the Institute. Scientific posters were made showing details of SCRI research at conferences throughout the world. 3000 photographs were taken for use in publications and displays during the year and archived for record purposes. The website was

restructured and a new content management system was put in place.

The Institute's Library is continuing to make as much electronic information available at scientists' desktops as possible. Subscriptions to electronic bibliographic databases and journals take up the bulk of the budget but there is still scientific literature in print which is housed in the Library.

Information Technology underpins all our computerised information systems, business processes and information requirements. There are approximately 500 PCs on site used as general purpose IT systems (email, word processing, spreadsheets, etc.), specialist computational systems and various network and infrastructure systems, which support and enhance the capability of our technology requirements. The Storage Area Network continues to develop and further increases the data capacity and resilience of the system. Our internet connection is via FATMAN (Fife And Tayside Metropolitan Area Network) which in turn connects us to JANET (UK Joint Academic Network). This year we have moved entirely from Novell Netware to Windows Active Directory, which has allowed us to consolidate our resources on to one platform. A key responsibility for IT is in ensuring secure connections for all information transfer, and this is achieved by the use of firewalls, spam filtering, automated virus checking at all points and automatic patch delivery to systems. In addition to the responsibility for the running of the infrastructure and servers at the Institute, IT is involved in the development of web-

enabled database applications and portal/workflow enhancements.

Finance and Corporate Services The finance department consists of a small team of six people who provide financial support and advice to research and other activities of the Institute through planning, management, and control of its business operations.

A wide range of activities is undertaken which can be summarised as stewardship, input into the strategic planning process, and transaction processing. There is, in addition, active participation in the Institute's risk assessment procedures.



The department is responsible for putting in place internal control systems that are suitable for the needs of the business and ensuring that these systems, and adherence to them, are reviewed by independent audit. The department's procedures aim to safeguard the assets of the Institute. In addition current practices are continually reviewed to improve value for money.

The department works closely with research and support departments to develop strategic financial and operational plans and provides regular updated forecasts to support decision making processes.

The finance department is responsible for producing financial accounts, including the annual statutory accounts, which comply with current statutory and regulatory obligations, and in addition aims to produce accurate, timely and meaningful management information to enable Institute management to monitor performance against budgets.

The department endeavours to ensure that all income due to the Institute is recorded and received timeously,

and that payments to suppliers are accurately made in accordance with targets and guidelines.

Human Resources In 2006 the department developed a new HR Strategy to support the delivery of the SCRI Group Science Strategy 2006 – 2011. During 2006 major pieces of work for the HR department included:

- establishing an HR Committee to provide advice and support to the HR team;
- running a development programme for members of the Senior Management Board including sessions on understanding the corporate role of the SMB and managing change;
- working with the SMB to develop a staffing plan; and
- identifying key topics to be addressed under the Diversity agenda.

The HR department has also been heavily involved in managing the restructure process at SCRI and the appointment of new staff into senior positions during the year.

Health and Safety, Quality Assurance and Environmental Management

The results of auditing the integrated management system by external auditors SGS indicated improvements in health and safety, quality assurance and environmental management against the standards OHSAS 18001, ISO 9001:2000 and ISO 14001:2004. There were 19 accident and incident reports over the year, two of these being reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations as they led to work absences of more than three days. Both members of staff are now back at work.

This year staff were given a choice of health and safety objectives to achieve which related to their work. These could involve some form of health and safety training or risk assessment of a task or work area. The success of the scheme will be reviewed following staff appraisals at the end of the year.

Behavioural health and safety training was carried out early in the year for supervisors in the Engineering and Maintenance Department and in Field and Glasshouse Services. Other training has been on the use of abrasive wheels, nail-gun use, first aid, laminar flow cabinet



fire safety, manual handling, breathing apparatus team operations and laboratory gas handling. In addition a Safety Day was held which covered basic first aid and topics such as tractor safety, working at height, fire safety and chemical hazards.

A policy of no smoking in any enclosed spaces on the Institute was introduced in accordance with the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005 and associated regulations which came into force on 26th March 2006.

Risk Management is overseen by the Audit Committee of the Governing Body. The remit of the Committee includes the implementation of the Institute's risk policy, ensuring that the Institute has a reliable and comprehensive system of internal control and risk management, as well as encouraging the development of a culture of risk awareness and risk management for all staff.

The Committee is required to review all aspects of risk management, at least annually, to report to the Governing Body upon the efficacy of such systems and to advise the Governing Body upon the Institute's risk policy.

The Committee ensures that the Institute has a comprehensive system of internal control and risk training, determines the principal areas of risk, their likelihood and exposure, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the business, and are satisfied that controls and systems are in place to mitigate the company's exposure to the major risks.

Engineering and Maintenance Department Extensive laboratory administration and ancillary facilities are maintained by the Engineering department who are also responsible for electrical, heating, plumbing, data/telephony cabling, painting and joinery work. In addition major building work undertaken by subcontractors is supervised by the department.

The Institute operates from a site with disparate buildings housing administrative offices, research facilities and storage areas for scientific and farm equipment and plant material including the Commonwealth Potato Collection. The engineering department, in addition to

maintaining the estate's building stock, is also responsible for carrying out a programme of refurbishment which continually upgrades laboratories and administrative offices.

Utilities costs are a significant component of the running costs of the Institute and measures have been taken to reduce the Institute's consumption of energy; further efficiency gains will be sought. The Engineering department also undertakes routine maintenance and repairs to scientific equipment to restrict costs.

The department, through its farm workshop, provides a repair and maintenance service to the Institute's fleet of tractors and agricultural machinery.

Estate, Glasshouse and Field Services Among the facilities which distinguish the Institute from other organisations is a comprehensive range of glasshouse and controlled-environment cabinets and rooms. There are approximately 10,000 m² of glasshouse facility available, ranging from cold glasshouses to sophisticated containment glasshouses with associated laboratories. In addition, the Institute has 13,000 m² of polytunnels and net structures. Staff provide a support service to the scientific community throughout the year and are responsible for the production of consistent, high quality plant material under a large variety of experimental regimes. The provision of these facilities is made possible as a result of capital grant from the SEERAD. The Institute has a meteorological site where data are collected for use by the Meteorological Office, SCRI scientists and the local community.

Ruth McHutcheon, who is studying for a degree at Writtle College in Essex, spent 42 weeks working in the glasshouse on industrial placement. Her work included a study on the use of Dundee's green-waste "Discovery" compost as a partial peat replacement in the SCRI compost mix.

The area available to conduct a wide range of agricultural, horticultural and environmental trials remains at about 175 ha despite the loss of some land at Gourdie Farm to the Western Gateway Housing Development. This has been compensated for by the lease of adjacent land at Pilmore Farm. An expert service is provided in



relation to land preparation, sowing, drilling, harvest and clearance of residues. In addition to being responsible for the production of annual crops such as potatoes, brassicas and cereals, field staff also maintain the Institute's 10 ha of perennial soft fruit trials.

As part of the ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure, emphasis has been given to improving the biodiversity of the Institute in line with the objectives of Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF). A large *Leylandii* hedge has been removed and extensive repair work carried out to the adjacent drystone dyke. Individual hardwood trees and a new mixed native hedge have been planted. Prior to the successful LEAF Open Day held in May, additional display boards were erected at strategic points along the extensive public pathway system.

Spring barley is grown extensively as a break crop to remove the footprint of previous field trials, especially perennials such as soft fruit. The harvested grain is sold through the Scottish Quality Cereals Scheme. Part of this quality assurance scheme requires the Institute to follow the aims of the Voluntary Initiative to minimise the impact of pesticides on the environment. All spray equipment is inspected regularly and all staff are registered.

An additional 0.13 ha has been added to the Living Field Community Garden to encompass the growing of rare arable weed species. This educational resource continues to develop the links between schools, science and agriculture.



The Staff Association has been very active providing social events for all staff and raising money through many of the events for the nominated charities.

The successful seasonal events that were held included the Christmas Fayre, lunch, disco, meal and summer barbecue. Two events were revived after an absence of several years, the young children's Christmas party in the canteen, and the ceilidh in November at the Hilton hotel.

The Association gives support to the golf, fishing, hill walking, and football fraternities along with the Corporate Sports membership at Dundee University. There are Yoga, Keep Fit, Salsa, Indian head massage, and Tai Chi sessions.

Members' benefits include entry into a monthly draw to win meal and cinema vouchers. There is use of National Trust cards and a Booker cash and carry card. A subscription to "Which" magazine is provided for members in the SCRI library and is available to access online. Members are offered 25% off the full cost of any event/activity when they participate. Subscription fees remain at £1.50 per month and membership, currently around 200, is open to anyone working at SCRI. Any individual who has maintained membership for 10 years or more and leaves is entitled to a £25 cheque. Members select the charities each year. For 2005/6, three charities received £415 each. They are, Dundee Blind and Partially Sighted, Dundee Women's Aid and Menzieshill Community Centre.