

# Research services

**Communication and Information Services** The Communication team's key role is to support research and other support services to achieve the objectives of the Corporate Plan and to promote SCRI and its activities to a range of internal and external stakeholders. We arrange visits, conferences, exhibitions, events and undertake public relations work to raise awareness and understanding of SCRI's scientific research to industry, politicians, school children and the general public to name but a few. Our successes include the launch of the Living Field CD, distributed to every school in Scotland; industry events such as Potatoes in Practice; as well as many visits by students from school, college and university, farmers and special interest groups.



The Visual Aids team provides publicity material in the form of leaflets, publications, posters, exhibits and maintain the website to promote SCRI.

The Institute's Library is continuing to develop further and make available information from scientist's desktops. Subscriptions to electronic bibliographic databases and journals are increasing but there is still a substantial proportion of scientific literature in print which is not duplicated in electronic format that is housed in the Library.

**Information Technology** underpins all our computerised information systems, business processes and

information requirements. There are approx 500 PC's on site used as general purpose IT systems (email, word processing, etc.) and various networks and infrastructure to support and enhance the capability of our technology requirements. We recently installed a Storage Area Network (SAN) to further increase the data capacity and resilience of the system, including high capacity backup. Our internet connection is via FATMAN (Fife And Tayside Metropolitan Area Network) which in turn connects us to JANET (UK Joint Academic Network). 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 Administration** 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 internal audit. The department's procedures aim to minimise the occurrence of fraud and misappropriation of funds, and the safeguarding of 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 also 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** The 4 members of the HR Team provide support to the managers and staff at SCRI helping them to lead and develop staff effectively and by ensuring fair and effective recruitment and induction of the 31 staff who started work at SCRI in 2004/2005. HR also encourages staff to take advantage of the wide range of development opportunities offered with 52% of the staff taking part in formal training events and 21 staff achieving promotion during 2004/2005. The HR team is also responsible for ensur-

ing the development and implementation of appropriate policies to reward staff effectively which included the introduction of a childcare vouchers scheme as well as ensuring that SCRI was successfully reaccredited as an Investors in People organisation in 2005.

**Health and Safety, Quality Assurance and Environmental Management** Auditing within the three disciplines intensified this year. Adding to certification under the international Quality Assurance standard ISO9001:2000, SCRI and MRS were awarded certificates for compliance with the Environmental Management standard ISO14001:2004 in spring 2005. Thanks are due to Scottish Enterprise Tayside for meeting fifty per cent of the cost of the pre-audit consultations. In autumn, the SCRI group was subjected to its first integrated management system audit examining all three disciplines together. The outcome was that health and safety management was certified compliant with the standard OHSAS 18001, complementing the other two certified systems.



SCRI was also awarded the Scotland's Health at Work (SHAW) Bronze award in May 2005. In addition, a Business Continuity Plan has been produced and exercised.

**Risk Management** is overseen by the Audit Committee of the Governing Body, the Institute Director, the Institute Secretary, the Institute Deputy Director of Finance and Administration, the Institute Engineer and the Institute Health and Safety Co-ordinator. Other members of Institute staff may be co-opted as required. The remit of the Risk Committee includes ensuring the implementation of the Institute's risk policy, ensuring that the Institute has a reliable and comprehensive system of internal control and risk management, and encouraging the development of a culture of risk awareness and risk management in 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 & 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.

Equipment and instrumentation continues to become increasingly sophisticated and the Institute's engineers acquire new skills to adapt to the increasing demands.

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 and further efficiency gains will be sought. The Engineering & Maintenance 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 m<sup>2</sup> of glasshouse facility available, ranging from cold glasshouses to sophisticated containment glasshouses with associated laboratories. In addition, the Institute has 13,000 m<sup>2</sup> of polytunnels and net structures. Twenty five staff



service the demand from scientists 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 Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department. The Institute has a meteorological site where data are collected for use by the Meteorological Office, SCRI scientists and the local community.

The Institute also has available approximately 172 ha of farmland on which to conduct a wide range of agricultural, horticultural and environmental trials. 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.

The Institute is a LEAF Innovation Centre and a series of display boards on food webs, beneficial organisms and pests has been erected at strategic points within the Institute as part of the Invergowie Path Network initiative.

A 0.15 ha site has been developed into an educational resource aimed at the local community and schools, and the Living Field Community Garden will show the links between science, agriculture and the environment by the use of demonstration plots, interactive exhibits and information boards.

Various projects under the Countryside Premium Scheme were continued and extended, including tree wind-breaks, species-rich grassland, beetle banks and mixed native hedgerows. The presentation of experi-

ments has been improved by the grassing of field roadways, reducing the need for herbicide sprays and enhancing the biodiversity within the grass sward.

Trials on minimum tillage and soil disturbance continue.

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



The larger events held during 2004/5 were a Christmas disco, lunch, fayre, and children's parties. In June, the Association holds a summer barbecue with an average of 250 staff, family and friends in attendance. Two quiz nights were held in the Fort Hotel in Broughty Ferry. In November 2005, an Institute ceilidh was revived after an absence of several years, and over 100 people attended. Other events that took place included a bowling/zap-zone night, and hill walking. Blood donor sessions are arranged several times a year and are coordinated to allow staff time to attend. The Association gives support to the golf, fishing, and football fraternities along with Corporate Sports membership at Dundee University, and Yoga and Tai Chi sessions. Three new activities have recently started – Egyptian belly dance, Keep fit, and Salsa.

Member's benefits include entry into a monthly draw to win meal and cinema vouchers. There are use of National Trust corporate admission cards, a Booker cash and carry card, subsidies to reduce costs of the Christmas lunch in the canteen, fresh cut trees and children's parties. *Which* magazine is provided in the SCRI library and is available for online access. The office bearers and committee are elected annually at the AGM where members are encouraged to nominate both local and national charities to be beneficiaries of the funds raised throughout the year. In 2004, five charities received £225 each. They were Rachel House Children's Hospice, Fife, Riding for the Disabled Association, National Asthma Campaign, Neurosurgical Ward 23B at Ninewells Hospital, and Advocating Together. For 2005, three charities will receive £340 each. They are, Dundee Blind & Partially Sighted, Dundee Women's Aid, and Menzieshill Community Centre.



The Staff Association remains an integral part of SCRI, as it contributes greatly to the corporate well being and was instrumental in helping SCRI gain a "Bronze" award status with Scotland Health at Work Initiative (SHAW).