

THE ROYAL  
SOCIETY  
OF EDINBURGH

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2007 – 2012



Focused on providing  
public benefit

## INTRODUCTION

This document sets the Society's strategic direction for the next five years. It is both inward- and outward-facing. Inwardly it establishes the way ahead for RSE Fellows and staff. Outwardly it seeks to encourage others to work in partnership with us to provide public benefit activities. It builds on our unique multi-disciplinary strengths and on the foundations laid by our previous strategies.

It clarifies :

- **The difference we aim to make through our activities**
- **Strategic priorities to help us make that difference**
- **Key objectives for each priority**

Appendix I summarises ***Our Strategy*** in practical terms.

## ABOUT THE RSE

The RSE is an educational charity, registered in Scotland. Independent and non-party-political, we provide educational public benefit activities throughout Scotland and by means of a growing international programme. The RSE was founded in 1783 under a Royal Charter for ***the Advancement of Learning and Useful Knowledge***. It has c.1400 Fellows, who are peer-elected and drawn from all parts of Scotland and beyond; and has c.30 staff responsible for executing its activities. Its Fellowship embraces the full spectrum of the sciences, medicine, engineering and technology, education, law, the arts, humanities, social sciences, business, industry, the professions and public service. This multi-disciplinary perspective makes it unique amongst the United Kingdom's learned societies.

## OUR MISSION AND ROLE

In fulfilling our Royal Charter today, our mission over the next five years will be to provide public benefit through the continued advancement of *learning and useful knowledge*. Our role will be to:

- **Promote and recognise excellence in and the application of all areas of learning**
- **Be a source of independent and expert advice on matters affecting the wellbeing of Scotland and its people**
- **Advance public discussion on matters of national and international importance**

# making a difference

## THE CONTEXT IN WHICH WE OPERATE

**We are a charity** – this has certain financial and reputational advantages, but can also restrict our scope to extend activities, or enter into new areas into which a “business” is able to venture.

**We work in partnership** – with carefully selected bodies in the public, private and charitable sectors, which share common public benefit goals with us.

**We are multi-disciplinary** – many of the issues affecting Scotland and its people today are complex and require expertise in many different subjects. Our Fellowship has expertise across a whole spectrum of disciplines. This enables us to tackle problems from the many different angles often required.

## THE DIFFERENCE WE AIM TO MAKE

What difference are we seeking to make through what we do over the next five years? All of our activities aim to contribute to the following public benefit outcomes:

- **Enhancing the capacity of world class science and culture researchers working in Scotland**
- **Increasing Scotland’s research and development connections internationally**
- **Improving connections between business and academia**
- **Enhancing the capacity of school age children to adopt science as a career**
- **Enhancing the public’s understanding of science and culture issues**
- **Informing and influencing public policy decisions**

Clarifying the difference we are seeking to make provides a clear strategic purpose, to which all our activities will, in some way, contribute.

We contribute and operate alongside and in partnership with many other individuals and organisations which share and contribute to making these differences. Whilst the true benefits of an activity can take many years to come to light and external factors can derail the best intentions, during the next five years and beyond we shall evaluate what difference our contributions make. The results will be made widely available for all to see and assess for themselves.

## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We will contribute to making a difference through our programmes of activities. These are not discussed in this strategy, but will be set out in our annual *Operational Plans*. In drawing together these Plans we will be guided by our strategic priorities, which will be a main focus of our activities. Our strategic priorities over the next five years are:

- **Developing our partnerships and connections with others**
- **Providing independent advice on major issues affecting public policy**
- **Developing our arts and humanities activities and their interface with science**
- **Broadening public engagement**
- **Diversifying our funding sources**

Achieving these aspirations will support our ability to make a difference.

# developing partnerships

## OUR KEY OBJECTIVES

For each strategic priority we have set key objectives to be met. These are listed below, together with a summary of progress made in relation to each priority. Specific action plans will be set, detailing what we shall do to achieve our goals.

### **Developing partnerships and connections with others**

We currently work in successful partnership with a wide range of organisations, including our sister learned academies – both in the UK and overseas: the Scottish Executive; Scottish Enterprise; Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland; BBSRC; PPARC; BP; the Gannochy Trust; the Caledonian Research Foundation; the Scottish Funding Council; the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers; the Royal Society of Chemistry; and Wolfson Microelectronics plc.

We have also successfully worked on initiatives with other organisations, for example, the Scottish Parliament, Scotland Europa and the British Council. Internationally, we have relationships and agreements with the leading National Academies of China, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Taiwan.

We will seek to sustain and develop these partnerships and the activities that flow from them. We will also seek to develop new ones.

Our key objectives over the period will be to:

- **Establish closer links with the business and industry sectors and deliver more activities in partnership with them**
- **Establish closer links with the Scottish Parliament and undertake more activities which support its work**
- **Implement a new scheme of International Scholarships**

### **Providing independent advice on major issues affecting public policy**

Since 2001, we have undertaken major independent public policy inquiries in relation to: the foot and mouth outbreak; the Scottish fishing industry; Energy; and mediating medical negligence cases. We have also proactively provided advice through smaller Working Groups, for example, in relation to Avian Influenza, Infectious Salmon Anaemia and bionanotechnology and in response to many governmental and other public consultations. Identifying topical issues and providing proactive and timely advice on them will be our overarching approach.

Our key objectives over the period will be to:

- **Undertake inquiries into major issues affecting Scotland**
- **Implement “horizon scanning” and briefing processes and through them provide advice on important topical matters**

# interface and engagement

## **Developing arts and humanities activities and their interface with science**

Our activities already cover cultural issues, for example, our public lectures programme continues to cover a broad range of relevant topics, including Scottish cultural policy, Pictish Art, Viking civilisation and Scottish political theatre. We administer prizes and awards promoting research and collaboration in the arts and humanities, including two prestigious prize lectures, funded by BP and CRF. They also feature in our multi-disciplinary activities, such as our major inquiries through which we provide policy advice.

There is, however, more that we could and should be doing and we will seek to achieve this through the following key objectives:

- **Implement a new arts and humanities awards scheme which supports and encourages research and collaboration**
- **Include arts and humanities topics within our activities for school-age children**
- **Increase the number of joint initiatives we have with Scottish cultural institutions**

## **Broadening Public Engagement**

In recent years we have made a deliberate effort to improve the balance of our Fellowship to better reflect our multi-disciplinary standing, and to strengthen our ability to make an even greater public contribution.

We have improved our communications with our Fellowship and with the wider public, for example, creating a new website, publishing a Fellows' monthly e-bulletin; publishing *Science Scotland* – a magazine distributed across the world promoting Scottish science, and web-casting some of our activities. Some 2000+ people attend our public events annually.

We are therefore making good progress in relation to our Fellowship and public engagement, but much more is needed.

Our key objectives to achieve this are to :

- **Improve the overall balance and range of newly-elected Fellows, whilst maintaining excellence**
- **Provide web-casting and/or on-demand viewing of all our public events**
- **Implement new activities to improve science and culture communication**

## **Diversifying our funding sources**

Much of our income derives from sources on whose behalf we operate specified programmes. We therefore currently have little in the way of discretionary funds enabling us to be proactive in relation to new activities or to expand existing ones. As the table at Appendix II shows, much of this income comes from the public sector. This demonstrates the value that we provide to public sector organisations from our ability to deliver a wide range of activities in our existing programmes.

We recognise the perceived imbalance this funding arrangement brings and our key objectives to start to address this are to:

- **Significantly increase the income generated through our property asset**
- **Increase the proportion of programmes of activity supported by charitable trusts and the corporate sector**

## our strategy (*appendix I*)

### OUR ACTIVITIES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO:

- Enhancing the capacity of world class science and culture researchers working in Scotland
- Increasing Scotland's research and development connections internationally
- Improving connections between business and academia
- Enhancing the capacity of school age children to adopt science as a career
- Enhancing the public's understanding of science and culture issues
- Informing and influencing public policy decisions

### OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES TO HELP US MAKE THIS CONTRIBUTION ARE:

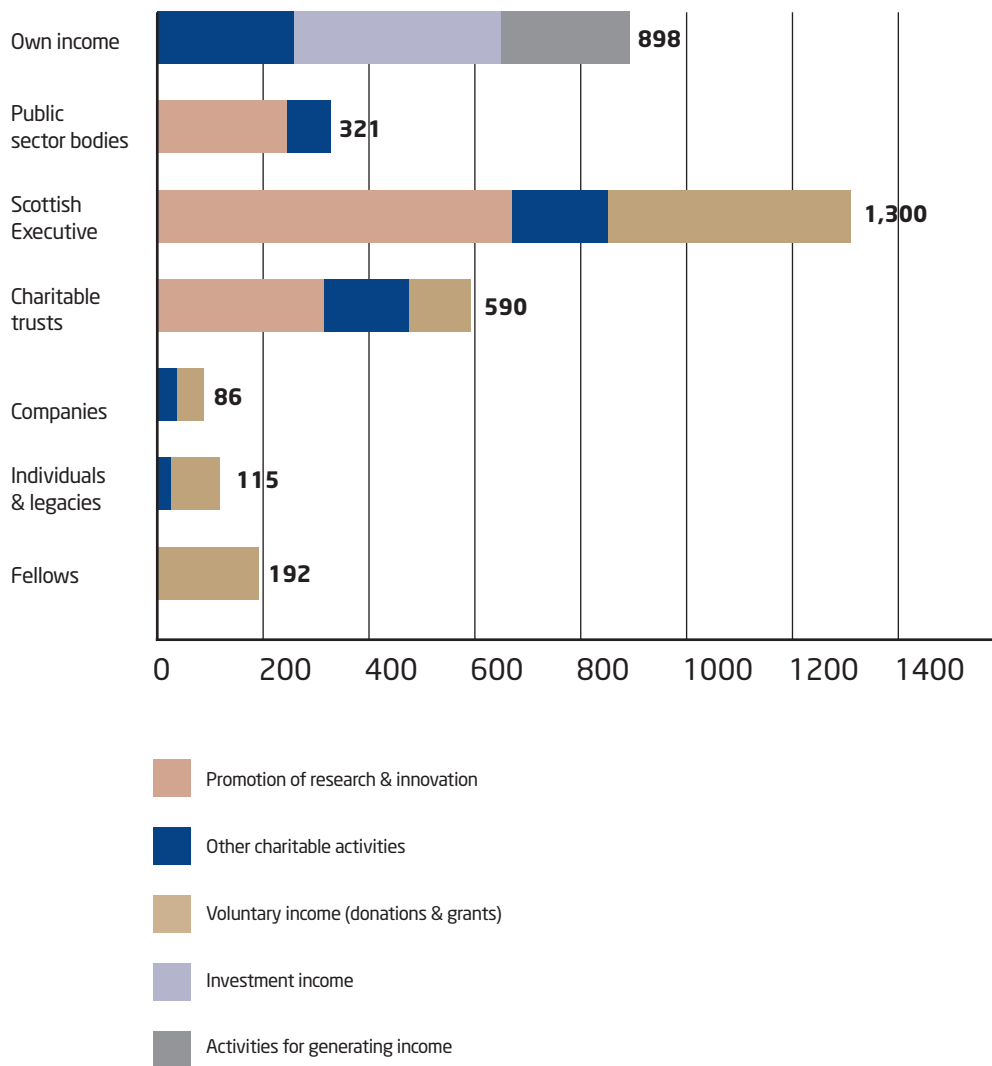
- Developing our partnerships and connections with others
- Broadening our public engagement
- Providing independent advice on major issues affecting public policy
- Developing our arts and humanities activities and their interface with science
- Diversifying our funding sources

### OUR KEY OBJECTIVES THROUGH WHICH WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR STRATEGIC ASPIRATIONS ARE:

- Establish closer links with the business and industry sectors and deliver more activities in partnership with them
- Establish closer links with the Scottish Parliament and undertake more activities which support its work
- Implement a new scheme of International scholarships
- Undertake inquiries into major issues affecting Scotland
- Implement and undertake "horizon-scanning" and briefing processes and through them provide advice on important topical matters
- Implement a new arts and humanities awards scheme which supports and encourages research and collaboration.
- Include arts and humanities topics within our activities for school-age children
- Increase the number of joint initiatives we have with Scottish cultural institutions
- Improve the overall balance and range of newly-elected Fellows, whilst maintaining excellence
- Provide web-casting and/or on-demand viewing of all our public events
- Implement new activities which improve science and culture communication
- Increase the proportion of programmes of activity supported by charitable trusts and the corporate sector

# income sources in 2007/08 (£'000)

*(appendix II)*



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Scottish Charity No SC000470

Second Edition (amended)

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ISBN: 978-0-902198-95-1