



Research
England

Pete Wishart MP
Chair, Scottish Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA
Sent via email

16 May 2024

Dear Mr Wishart,

I was delighted to give evidence to your Committee earlier this year, on behalf of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), as part of your Committee's inquiry into *Science and Scotland*. I am writing in response to your letter of 8 May, regarding the Strength in Places Fund (SIPF).

There are three SIPF projects that are led from Scotland.¹ They have a total UKRI grant value of £82m, out of the total programme funding to date of £312m, and are bringing in co-investment from other partners. The projects are:

- The Living Lab led by the University of Glasgow (£38m UKRI investment).
- The Smart Data Foundry led by the University of Edinburgh (£22.5m UKRI investment).
- Digital Dairy Chain led by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) (£21.3m UKRI investment).

The third project listed also covers part of Cumbria. All the SIPF projects were assessed for their potential for impact, the quality of the research and innovation in the project, how the project was going to be delivered and whether the level of funding was appropriate and represented value for money. In addition, consideration was given to the potential to increase local collaborative links to help develop clusters.

Given the nature of the programme, no specific targets were set for co-investment to encourage applications from all regions and nations of the UK.

UKRI is not party to the specific factors that would contribute to the success of applications to the programme that were based within, or partly within Scotland. We can only say that a number strongly met the assessment criteria. There were around 85 applications for each round of SIPF funding. We received 19 applications at the Expression of Interest stage from Scotland for each round of funding and this was the highest from any NUTS1² classification. However, other NUTS 1 classifications (referred to within this classification as 'regions' although noting Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are represented at a national level) with high rates of application did not experience the same level of success. It could also be that Scotland had more projects at the

¹ <https://www.discover.ukri.org/strength-in-places-fund/>

² NUTS1 regions are now known as International Territorial Levels (ITLs). At present they mirror the former NUTS1 regions.

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required scale for SIPF, they may have had strong collaborations already in place, or were better able to access the necessary evidence required. It may have been that they received appropriate support and advice from the devolved administration. Anecdotally, we also understand that there may have been a meeting set up by interested parties, to facilitate interest in the programme from a wide number of partners. A meeting of this type may be easier to facilitate in Scotland, noting the number of research organisations, which could have led to a clearer focus within proposals.

We were delighted with the range and strength of the applications we received from researchers and innovators based in Scotland on the SIPF programme. We wish them every future success.

I hope your Committee finds the above information of use.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jessica Corner'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Professor Dame Jessica Corner FMedSci, MAE, RN

Executive Chair, Research England

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Scottish Affairs Committee

Professor Dame Jessica Corner
Executive Chair for Research
England, UKRI
By email

8 May 2024

Dear Professor Dame Jessica Corner,

I would like to thank you once again for appearing before the Committee on 4 March 2024 and for your valuable contributions to the Scottish Affairs Committee's inquiry into *Science and Scotland*.

The Committee has heard a great deal about the Strength in Places Fund, with Professor Kim Graham noting that Scotland's bids received a quarter of funding under this programme. It would assist the Committee in its work if you were able to provide us with your understanding of why Strength in Places has been such a particular success for researchers in Scotland.

I would be grateful for a response by Friday 17 May.

Yours sincerely

Pete Wishart MP
Chair, Scottish Affairs Committee