

Witness Name: Sheila Rowan

Statement No.: 1

Exhibits: SR

Dated: 02 May 2023

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SHEILA ROWAN

In relation to the issues raised by the Rule 9 request dated 10/02/2023 in connection with Module 1, I, SHEILA ROWAN, will say as follows: -

Personal Details

1. My name is Sheila Rowan, I am a Professor, and hold the Chair of Natural Philosophy at the University of Glasgow. I was seconded from the University at the level of 3 days/week to carry out the role of Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA) to the Scottish Government during the period 13th June 2016 to 12th June 2021.
2. During my tenure the CSA role encompassed activity including advocacy for the importance of science to society, activity to help inform Scottish Government policy for science, and helping to ensure that the Scottish Government could access scientific advice to inform policy, in particular, by appropriate sourcing of scientific advice in areas that fell outside the remit and expertise of other specialist scientific advisors in Scottish Government.
3. I have prepared this statement myself, with the support of factual information supplied by Scottish Government Covid Inquiries Response Directorate, referenced in this statement.

Systems, processes and structures for pandemic preparedness

4. In the period of my tenure as CSA, the systems, processes, and structures associated with the specific topic of pandemic preparedness sat outwith the primary activities associated with the CSA role.

5. A non-exhaustive set of examples of the primary day-to-day activities of the CSA role during my tenure included: supporting Ministers on their national or international engagements related to scientific research, the translation of research to economic benefit and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education; representing Scottish Government at meetings with Scottish and UK bodies responsible for the funding of research and translation of research to economic benefit; convening and Co-chairing groups of external stakeholders in the area of STEM education to develop and synthesise advice to Scottish Government on its policy for STEM education; supporting the Scottish Government's interests in scientific outreach and public engagement including by Chairing meetings of the Chief Executives of Scotland's dedicated Science Centres and Festivals; liaising with civil servants across Scottish Government to understand their needs relevant to science advice for policy including subsequent sourcing of advice on topics including, but not limited to, Space Technology and Satellite Applications, Scotland's Science Landscape, Genomic Medicine, Cyber Resilience and Future Technology Developments, Robotics and Autonomous Systems, and Quantum Technology; meetings with individual (or groups of) Chief Scientific Advisors of UK Government Departments and/or other Devolved Administrations to liaise on topics of mutual interest to the respective Governments.

6. I note that in August 2021, after my term as CSA had finished, the Scottish Government constituted a new committee – the Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness (SCoPP) which produced an interim report in August 2022 [*SR/1 - INQ000103004*]. This Committee is charged with advising the Scottish Government on matters including pandemic threat intelligence, assessment and response, priorities for research, and strengthening the pandemic response infrastructure and priorities. I consider this to be a valuable addition to the structures informing pandemic planning and preparedness in Scotland.

Public health, social care, and epidemiology

7. Policies for public health, public health-related science, social care and epidemiology were not included as part of the areas for which I, as CSA, held primary responsibility. In line with advice frameworks in Scottish Government [SR/2- INQ000130956], the provision of advice to government to inform policy on those topics normally sat within the roles of other specialist advisors.

Lessons learned from pandemic planning exercises to inform pandemic planning, preparedness and resilience; Audit Scotland report – NHS in Scotland, pages 20-22

8. In the period of my tenure as CSA, the specific topic of pandemic preparedness sat outwith the primary activities associated with the CSA role.
9. As noted in paragraph 6 of this statement, I believe that the constitution by Scottish Government of a new committee – the Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness (SCoPP) – is a helpful step in reviewing, updating and informing national pandemic guidance in Scotland as recommended in the Audit Scotland report – NHS in Scotland 2020 [SR/3 - INQ000148761], and I note that the SCoPP has published an interim report relevant to this topic [SR/1 - INQ000103004].
10. Unless stated otherwise, the facts stated in this witness statement are within my own knowledge and are true. Where they are not within my own knowledge, they are derived from sources to which I refer and are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
11. References to exhibits in this statement are in the form [SR/number - INQ000000].
12. I have considered the Module 1 List of Issues dated 4th April 2023 and shared with me on the same day. I confirm that I have no further comments to make in relation to those issues, within the context of the questions asked of me as Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA) to the Scottish Government from 13th June 2016 to 12th June 2021 in the Rule 9 Request issued to me on 10th February 2023.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed: NR

Dated: 02/05/2023