

EPIC

Working at the Science-Policy Interface

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Purpose, challenges and opportunities

Purpose

- The Centre's purpose is to conduct and synthesise research, integrated with knowledge and expertise, to inform policy in relation to animal disease outbreaks in Scotland.

Challenges

- Policy and decision-making are not based on scientific evidence alone, but influenced by political will, existing governance structures, public opinion, and other exogenous factors

Opportunities

- The current EPIC model, developed over eleven years, utilises academic experts working closely with policy-makers, to contribute to evidence-based decision-making. (See Boden et al. 2020)

EPIC's Aims

- I. Coordination and prioritisation of EPIC's response to policy demands in and outwith emergencies
- II. Early detection of endemic and exotic zoonotic and animal disease threats to Scotland
- III. Improving biosecurity, farmer decision-making and traceability from farm to fork
- IV. Improving preparedness and response to outbreaks of economic importance to Scotland
- V. Improving long-term preparedness and response to exogenous risks to livestock production
- VI. Creating a more effective and robust data and quantitative modelling ecosystem for





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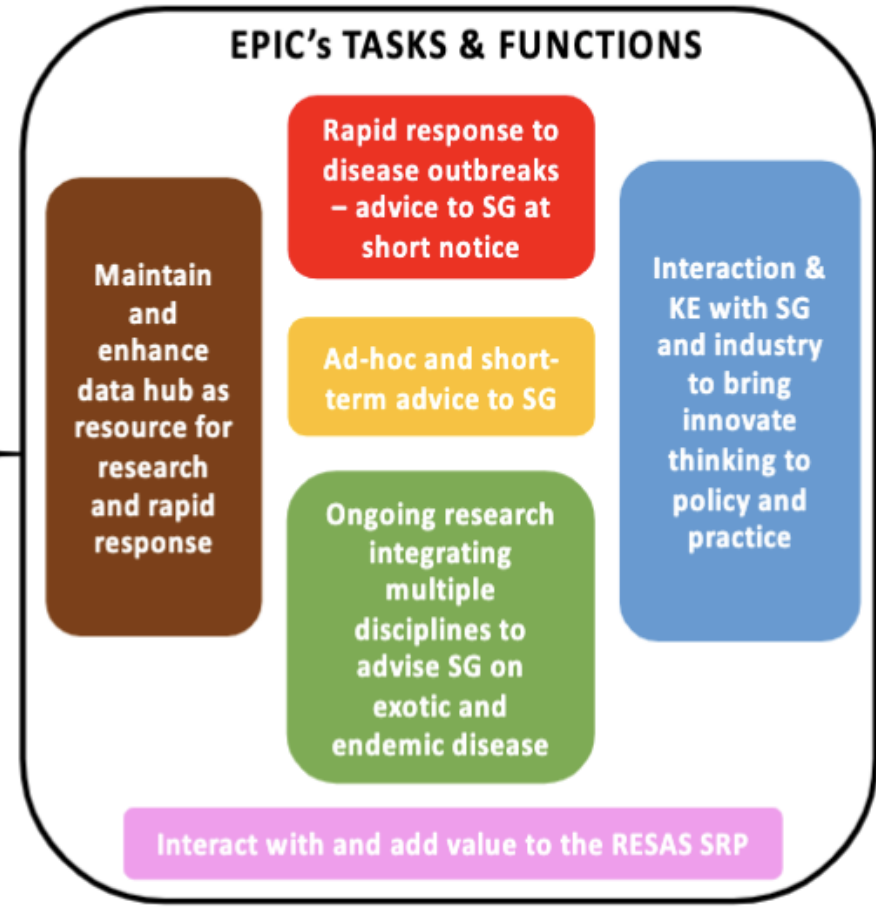
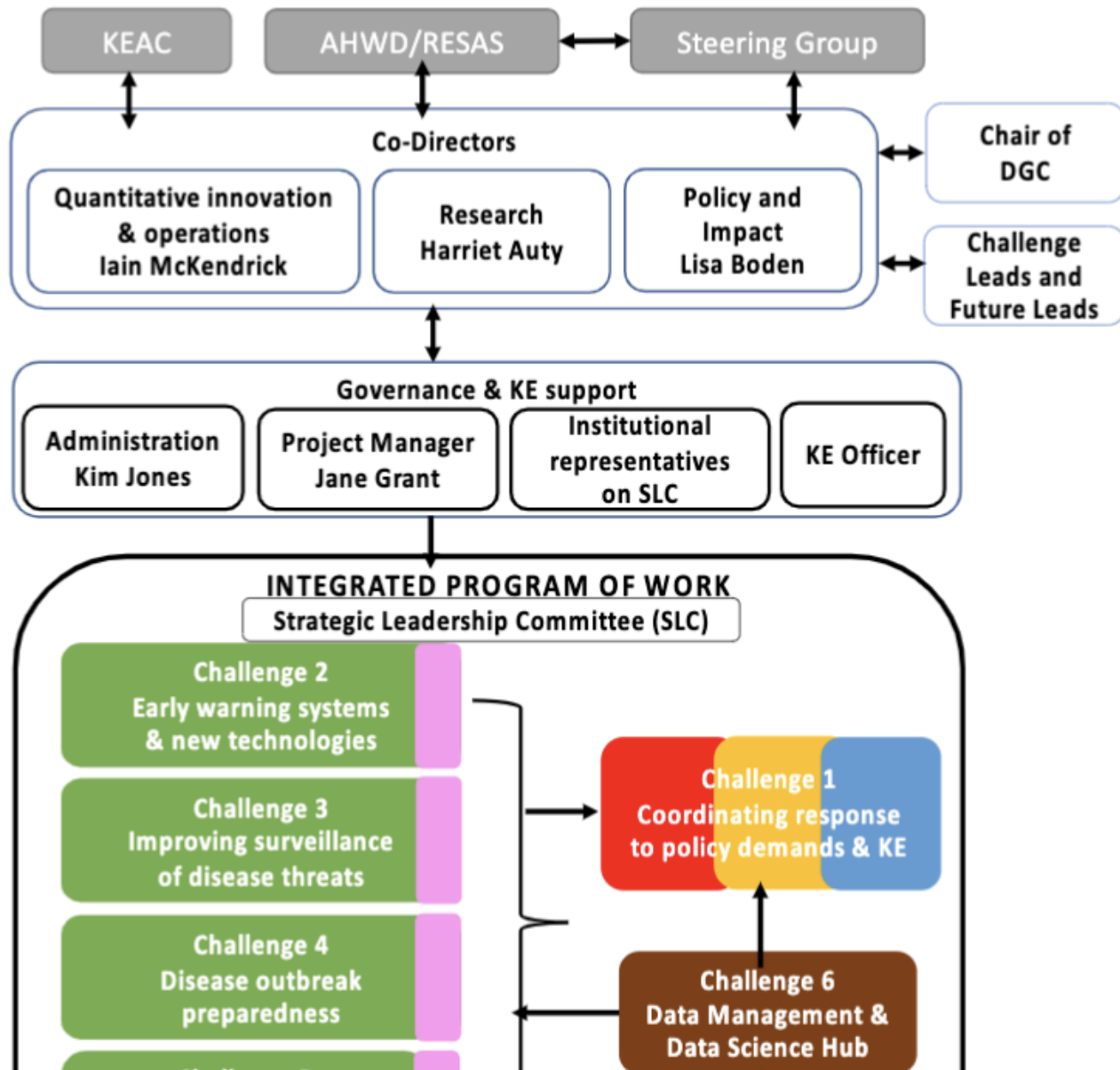
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Model for provision of risk-based evidence for policy-making

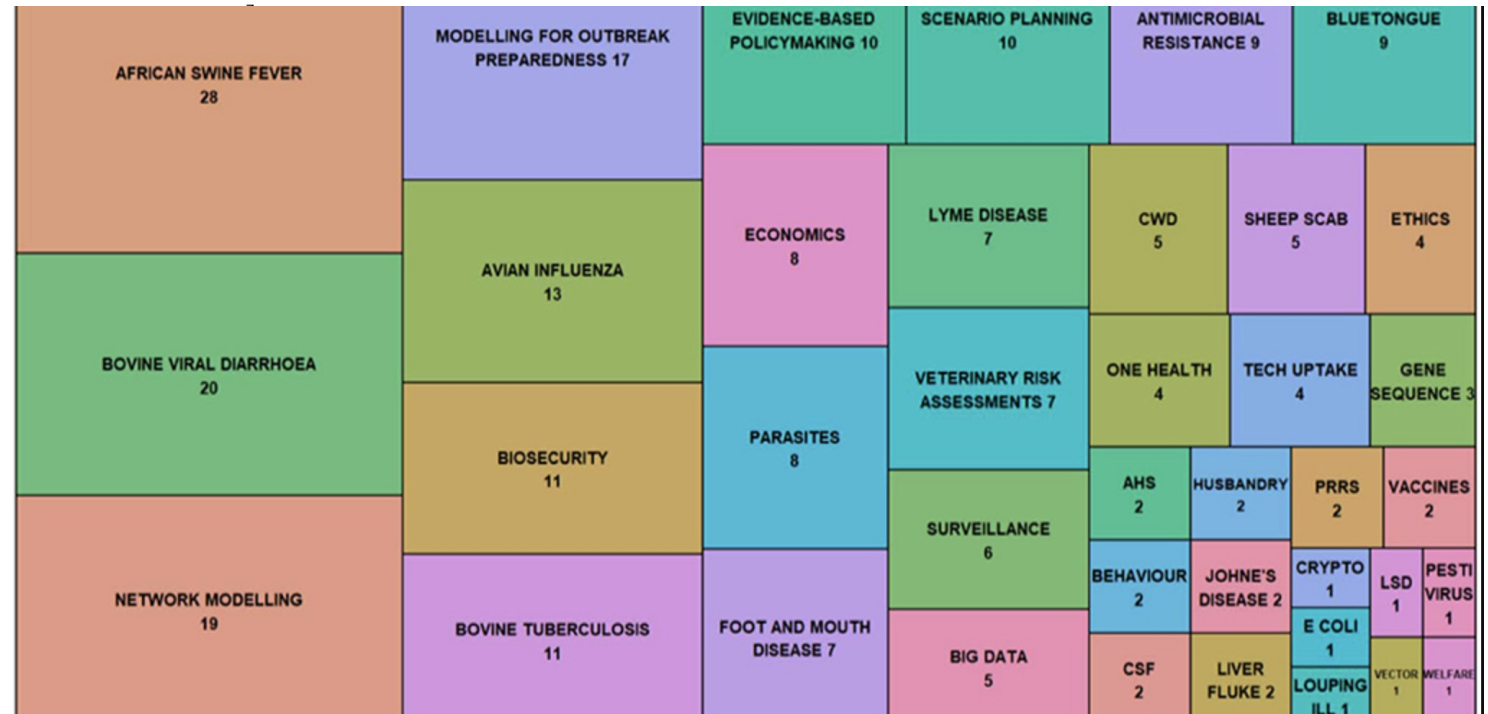
- Maximises interdisciplinary expertise to Scottish Government for disease outbreak emergencies
 - State of readiness
 - Uninterrupted access to appropriate expertise, tools and data
 - Existing effective ongoing interface with policy
- Model of blended delivery (see next slides)
 - Long-term policy needs
 - Agility to switch to emergency response

EPIC, Scottish Government's Centre of Expertise in Animal Disease Outbreaks: A Model for Provision of Risk-Based Evidence to Policy


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Knowledge brokers to ensure
effective communication

Co-constructing research questions

Address the 'right' questions at the 'right' time

Collaboration ->
co-construction of scientific
questions

Policy and industry
stakeholders benefit from
research that is relevant,
appropriate, and contributes
to the policy agenda

Researchers benefit from a
clearer understanding of the
policy environment, enabling
more directed research with



Strategies that work on the ground

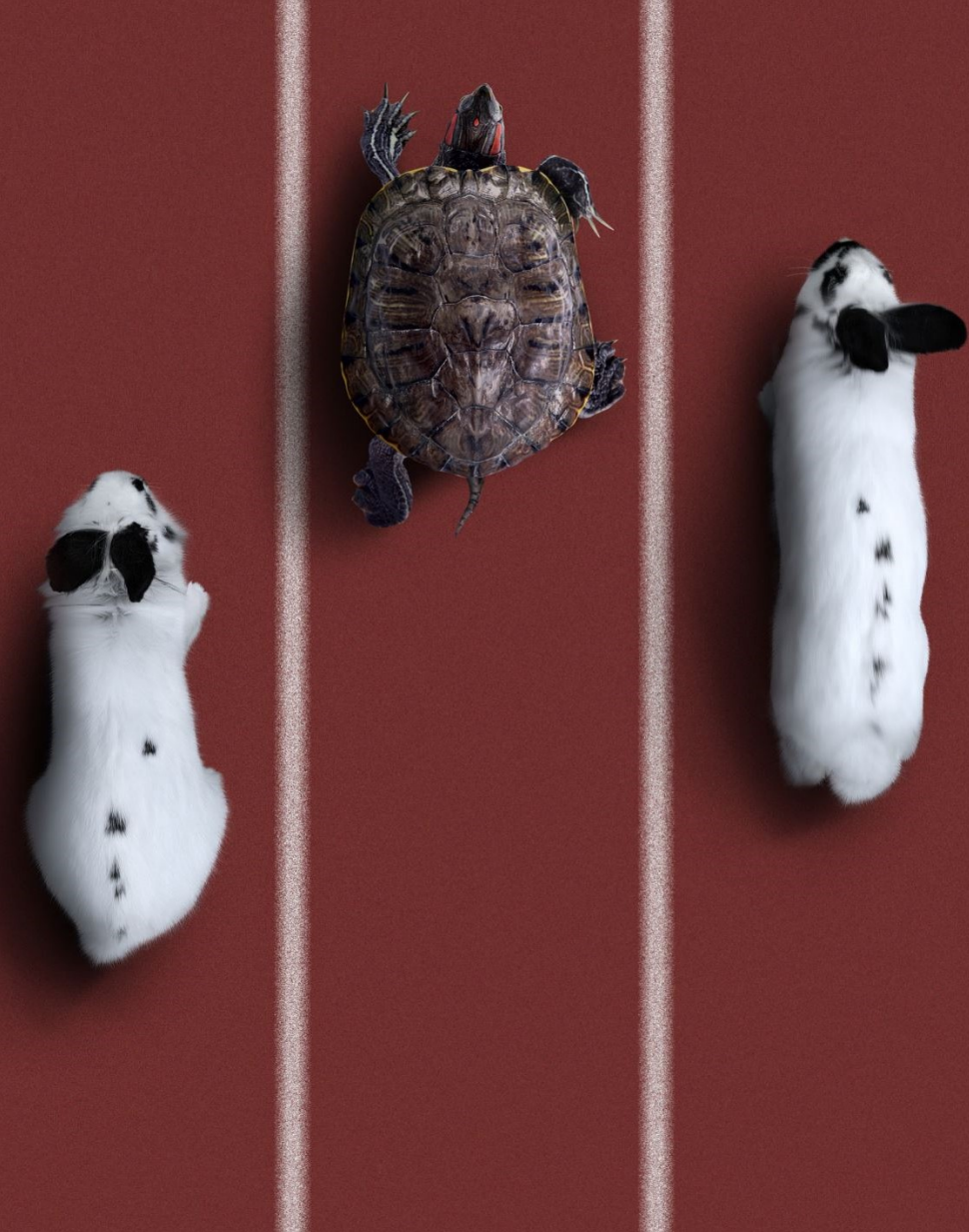
- Realistic and implementable control strategies depend on:
 - Strong communication, effective knowledge exchange and appropriate interfaces between researchers and industry stakeholders/experts
 - Ground-truthed epidemiological models and socio-economic approaches to assess disease control options
 - Data-rich, instructive exemplars (i.e. lessons learned from endemic disease) of how to improve exotic animal disease preparedness.
 - Novel combined approaches to integrate interdisciplinary expertise for transdisciplinary challenge-oriented solutions.





Opportunities

- Working closely with other governmental stakeholders, such as APHA and Defra, has allowed EPIC to engage with development of best practice in providing policy-relevant research.
- Exemplar: EPIC's part in establishing and coordinating the 5 Nations Veterinary Risk Assessment group (5NVRAG), which includes leaders from all relevant agencies and governments from the UK administrations and Republic of Ireland.
 - Effective forum for developing best practice in provision of veterinary risk assessments (VRAs) and coordinating approaches across administrations.



Lessons learned from the animal health sector (illustrated by EPIC-III and its role in the Scottish COVID Response Consortium) have highlighted the importance of long-term investment in disease outbreak preparedness activities and encouraging new methodological innovations.

Acknowledgments



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Agriculture and Food Systems

Go to:

www.epicscotland.org for more information about our work