

Minutes of AFSB Meeting 33: Friday 7 July 2017

Time	14.00 – 16.00	
Venue	Boardroom, InvestNI, Bedford Square	
Present	Tony O'Neill (Chair)	
	Trevor Lockhart Brian Dolaghan Owen Brennan	Francis Martin Ian Marshall John Thompson Eugene Rooney
Apologies	David Small Norman Fulton	Declan Billington David Dobbin Jim Dobson
Observers/Officials	Colette McMaster, DAERA Elaine McCrory, DAERA Trevor Connolly, DfE Fiona McCausland, DfE	
Support Team	Ryan Hill, DfE	

1. Welcome

The Chair thanked all for attending and noted the apologies from those who were not present. The Chair also thanked Members for accepting the further extension of the AFSB tenure to end August 2017, and advised that the final AFSB meeting (date to be confirmed) would involve the DAERA and DfE Permanent Secretaries.

The draft Minutes of the previous meeting in April 2017 were accepted. The Chair noted that, in response to Action Point 4, formal comments had been circulated to the Board from DAERA's Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group indicating that DAERA does not currently have legal powers to introduce movement restrictions for herds where BVD PI animals have been retained. Any updates on remaining actions would be covered during the meeting.

2. Chair's Update

The Chair provided an overview of activities which had taken place since the last meeting of the Board, including:

- A number of events and meetings in relation to Brexit, including a meeting with NIO Minister Lord Dunlop
- A series of meetings with stakeholders to discuss the levy proposals in relation to the Genetics and Agri-Food Marketing projects. He indicated

that further engagement was to take place with representatives of the Arable and Horticulture industry. The Chair tabled a paper summarising those discussions, and providing an update on the level of support across the industry for the proposal.

3. Presentation on DAERA Science Transformation Programme

The Chair invited Alistair Carson and Pauline Rooney from DAERA to present an update on the DAERA Science Transformation Programme. It was noted that the Programme was seeking to develop a joined up approach between Agri-food, science/innovation and education and was aligned with the draft Industrial Strategy which recognises Agri-food as one of the key sectors for NI. The objective of the Programme is “world class science to enable DAERA to deliver on its strategic objectives”. The timeframe for the Programme was comprised of 2 years strategic development and full implementation over 5 years (ie 7 years in total). An element of the Science Transformation Programme, a review of AFBI, commenced in June 2017, with an anticipated end date of March 2018. The review will follow the Cabinet Office’s Tailored Review approach. In the first instance it will examine the role of AFBI before considering its capacity for delivering more effectively and efficiently as well as ensuring the governance arrangements in place meet recognised principles of good corporate governance. The Review will be implemented in three phases. The first consists of requests for written evidence principally from AFBI and the DAERA sponsor unit. The second phase will consist of a call for evidence from stakeholders and the general public. The third will involve in-depth interviews with a proportionate number of AFBI and DAERA staff and key stakeholders.

Trevor Lockhart asked if the recommendations from the AFBI review would dictate the way forward for the body. Pauline Rooney advised that the review would set out a series of high level recommendations which could provide a direction of travel. The Chair indicated that the Board would be keen to see more detail on the key elements, timescales etc for the review, as well as information on the sector’s representation in the Programme structures.

In response to a query on the composition of the Science Transformation Board, Alistair Carson advised that, once established, it would include a broad representation of the sector, including senior representation from DAERA, including AFBI.

Action 1: DAERA to provide further detail to the Board on key elements, timescales etc on the Science Transformation Programme and the AFBI review

4. Update on the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Marketing Body

Eugene Rooney presented an update on the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Marketing Body. A draft business case and a cover note summarising the current position on the draft had already been circulated to members prior to the meeting. He advised that the

draft business case currently under development needed to demonstrate for the value for money of public sector funding for the Body. The Strategic Investment Board had been tasked with producing the business case and had been gathering evidence and identifying options in discussion with key stakeholders. It was noted that the business case was still a work in progress and had not been signed off, and there were areas where it could be strengthened further.

The Chair noted that the Board had established a sub-group to work on this. He welcomed that the document had been circulated for review and advised that, given the comprehensive nature of the draft business case and the level of detail contained within it and the appendices, the sub-group would need time to consider and respond. The Chair wanted to place on record that, as currently presented, the industry representatives would not accept the recommended way forward in the document.

Referring to the paper tabled at the meeting on discussions with industry representatives on the proposed new levy mechanism, the Chair noted that there had been a largely positive response from that engagement process. The proposed levy structure was broadly along the lines of that used by the existing AHDB in the UK and would provide industry funding for both the Agri-food Marketing Body and the Genetics programme. There was some discussion on the figures presented in the levy paper and the Chair undertook to review these and revise as necessary.

In respect of the areas in the draft business case requiring further development, Trevor Connolly requested that any further information from AFSB members be in a format that could be directly input into the draft business case i.e. either as amended text in the body of the business case or inserted as a formal appendix.

Action 2: Board members to respond to DfE on the draft Business Case as soon as possible.

Action 3: Chair to review the proposed figures in the levy paper and revise as necessary

5. Update on Livestock Genetics project

The Chair invited Martin McKendry from DAERA to provide an update on the Livestock Genetics project, including progress to date on the establishment of a data hub to collate on-farm data.

Martin advised that a strategic approach was proposed for a NI Livestock Improvement Programme. He indicated that work was ongoing to finalise a Strategic Outline Case for government support to the Programme for submission to DoF over the summer.

The Board noted that there were a number of proposed phases to the Programme and it would be important that Phase 1 included the establishment of the industry-led

organisation to drive forward the work and development of the IT system/ data hub. Martin McKendry noted that some of these activities could be taken forward in parallel. He also noted that the implementation of the programme post-August would present challenges and it would be important to secure industry commitment, including an effective Board comprising representatives from across industry to support the implementation.

6. Any other Business

The Chair advised that a final progress report on the achievements of the AFSB would be published by end September and Members would be asked to feed into that report.

The Chair requested an update on the Food Processing Grant (FPG) scheme. DAERA advised that the draft business case for the scheme was at an advanced stage and offered a further meeting with the AFSB to discuss the scheme design.

Action 4: DAERA to schedule a meeting with AFSB to discuss the FPG.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be scheduled for end August 2017 and the DAERA and DfE Permanent Secretaries are being invited to attend.