

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE NINETY THIRD MEETING OF THE  
AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
HELD ON TUESDAY 25 JULY 2023 AT 8.30 A.M.  
IN THE BOARD ROOM, AHDB, SISKIN PARKWAY EAST, COVENTRY**

**PRESENT:**

Nicholas Saphir (NS) [Chair], Colin Bateman (CB), Stephen Briggs (SB), Lyndon Edwards (LE), Catherine MacKenzie (CM), Sarah Pumfrett (SP), Mike Sheldon (MS), Janet Swadling (JS), Tom Clark (TC), Tim Rycroft (TR) [*ex officio*].

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Fred Sworder (FS) [*Board Apprentice*], David Wilford (DW) [*Defra*], Ian Ascroft (IA), Ken Boyns (KB), Katie Davies (KD), Tony Holmes (TH), Will Jackson (WJ), Jackie Kay (JK).

<b>AGENDA ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>
No apologies received.
<b>AGENDA ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
No new declarations of interest were made.
<b>AGENDA ITEM 3 – MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 6 JUNE 2023</b>
The minutes of the board meeting held on 6 June 2023 were accepted as a true and accurate record.
<b>3.1 BOARD VOTE TO APPROVE 2022/23 ARA ON 21 JUNE 2023</b>
The board undertook a vote via OnBoard on 21 June 2023 to formally approve the 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts, with delegated authority for approval of minor amendments delegated to NS and SP. The board formally endorsed this decision by majority.
<b>AGENDA ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 6 JUNE 2023</b>
All items had either been actioned, were on the agenda for discussion or rolling forward to a future board meeting.
<b>AGENDA ITEM 5 – OPERATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICES</b>
<b>5.1 CEO REPORT</b>
CEO report taken as read.
<b>5.2 UPDATE ON PROGRESS AND PERFORMANCE</b>
KB/WJ presented a new pilot board performance dashboard, building on the established reporting for Sector Councils.
SB noted he thought it would be extremely useful for some of these to be communicated out to levy payers. MS noted the dashboards prompted questions/challenges/discussion when reading them so very useful. It was also noted that all data must be audited in due course (12-18 months) to ensure it is all measurable and correct.
<b>Action: The board requested to have sight of the dashboards monthly, once they have been automated and additional Executive time isn't required to populate these. The Executive are to take into account the board's comments and come back to the board with a process for this.</b>
<b>5.3 HORTICULTURE AND POTATOES UPDATE</b>
Update report taken as read. TR wanted to thank Guy Attenborough for all his hard work leading the negotiations on the Sutton Bridge sale. TR also thanked TH and his team for their work on significantly reducing the outstanding levy debt.

## 5.4 LI LTD UPDATE

Update report taken as read. KB noted the paperwork should come through in the next few days to formalise AHDB's involvement in LI going forward. KB also noted we would need to appoint one director to sit on the LI Ltd board.

**Action: KB and SP asked to produce a proposal for which director should sit on the LI Ltd board for approval.**

## 5.5 COMMUNICATIONS TEAM AND STRATEGY UPDATE

Roseanne Thomas joined the meeting and presented slides on the recent changes to her communications team and their vision and strategy. RT was asked if she found her recent recruitment difficult which she confirmed she did.

SB asked how the recent communications are landing with levy payers and are they being successful.

**Action: RT requested to come back to the board in September with a report on the penetration of communications with levy payers.**

WJ briefly discussed the Annual event in November. A placeholder will be sent out to the board to hold the event in their diaries, and further details of this will be confirmed in due course.

### 5.5.1 AHDB NAME CHANGE

WJ provided a brief presentation. Planning continues 'in the background' to enable the board, with a new CEO and Chair in place to move forward swiftly from next Spring if it so chooses. It was noted that AHDB will continue to hold and invest horticulture levy receipts throughout this financial year.

**Action: WJ was asked by the board to prepare a one-line statement members can use if they are asked why we are still using "horticulture" in our name.**

## 5.6 ENVIRONMENT UPDATE

Chris Gooderham joined the meeting. He presented update slides on environment since the board met with John Gilliland in June. MS noted that resource efficiency must be one of the top priorities for any work moving forward, and this has been highlighted numerous times previously.

Food Data Transparency Partnership meeting was attended by Angela Christison and John Gilliland recently and they found this to be a very useful meeting. They both pushed the fact that agriculture is different to other sectors because of its role in sequestration as well as emissions.

TR gave the board an update on the recent meeting he and NS had with Tessa Jones and David Kennedy from Defra. This was to discuss a closer working relationship between Defra and AHDB in the light of the various letters written by NS to various SoS in 2022 and 2023 (previously circulated). A follow up call to discuss this further is being arranged between TR and Tessa Jones.

## AGENDA ITEM 6 – DEFRA UPDATE

DW opened by clarifying his role at the board meetings only as an observer. He followed by giving a short verbal update on Defra:

- David Kennedy is leaving on 24 August 2023 and an interim replacement will be appointed until a permanent replacement is recruited.
- AHDB's revised Statutory Instrument is currently going through the House of Lords and is expected to be laid in Parliament on 4 September 2023.
- NAO and Defra have agreed that AHDB will cease to offer PMI for all new employees with effect from April 2024.
- AHDB recruitment packs are currently with the Secretary of State and hoping to get some form of clearance of these by next week. In the light of inflation, Defra is looking to uplift the remuneration for new (and hopefully existing) board members next year.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7 – FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

### **7.1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND FINANCE UPDATE**

Finance report taken as read. TH apologised for the paper being uploaded late, this was due to all the work on the ARA. The team are halfway through doing their reforecasting and they will then challenge all budget holders on any underspend.

**Action: TH to report back to the board at the September meeting on any underspend found following the reforecasting exercise. This will also be an item at all Sector Council meetings in September.**

### **7.2 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

TH confirmed the ARA had been laid in Parliament on 18 July 2023. SP on behalf of the board, wanted to formally thank TH, Colin Turner and all the finance team for their work getting the ARA laid. The teams' hard work was also mentioned at the LI Ltd board meeting on 24 July 2023.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8 – PEOPLE**

### **8.1 HR UPDATE**

HR report taken as read. JK highlighted that staff morale and wellbeing is much more positive since moving to the new office. A few snagging issues remain with the office, these are all being dealt with. MS completed EDI training and found this very uplifting. He would highly recommend to other board members.

**Action: JK was asked to have the training budget correctly recorded on the dashboard page in her report.**

The board had a successful session with Dragonfish and the internal work is moving forward at pace now. They have provided an in-depth report following the survey with their findings to the Executive.

**Action: JK to circulate the Dragonfish report following the meeting.**

Pork Sector Council member interviews have been completed and three offers have made. Other sector interviews are to be held at a later date.

**Action: JK to widen her advertising on these roles in future and reach out to different sectors of the press in the hope of attracting more applicants.**

### **8.2 HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE**

H&S report and dashboard taken as read.

### **8.3 REMUNERATION AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE (RemNom)**

There has been no RemNom meeting since our last board meeting, so a brief verbal update was given by CM.

RemNom would like to know more about the Dragonfish work and JK was asked to have them present at the next Committee meeting in September.

**Action: Dragonfish to be added as an agenda item for the September RemNom meeting.**

The Terms of Reference are currently being redrafted for consideration by the RemNom Committee. After this, they will be more widely circulated.

### **8.4 RECRUITMENT UPDATE – ENVIRONMENT TEAM**

KB gave a short verbal update on the recruitment to the environment team and his current thinking. He noted recruiting candidates with sustainability experience is proving very difficult.

**Action: KB asked to produce a proposal for finding John Gilliland's replacement for the board meeting in September.**

## **AGENDA ITEM 9 – BOARD AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

### **9.1 REPORT FROM AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)**

ARAC Chair's report and draft minutes taken as read. SP noted that when we move over onto the new risk management software, we need to ensure we maintain correct records and data. The board need assurance that risks which were outstanding using the old reporting method but are now complete or closed have a paper trail.

### **9.2 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT**

The board raised concerns that there is not anyone currently within the business currently with formal risk management qualifications. DW suggested they have someone at Defra who could help us with this in the short term. SP said she would follow up with DW after this meeting.

**Action: IA asked to prepare a closure report and circulate this to the board prior to September's meeting to cover off any discrepancies in the risk management reporting.**

### **9.3 AHDB FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT**

IA will circulate the framework document as soon as he receives it, hopefully this will be before September's board meeting. DW confirmed there was nothing in the document to be concerned about, there has just been a delay in getting this through the sign-off process due to holidays.

### **9.4 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS**

FOI paper taken as read. IA noted that since the report was produced, we have received five more requests relating to IT sales, the pay review carried out recently and pig farming.

### **9.5 FEEDBACK LOG**

The feedback log was taken as read. CB noted he's had extremely positive feedback from people recently, including when he attended the recent Export Conference. TC raised concerns that the feedback log is not capturing all the feedback the board get directly.

**Action: The board were asked to send any direct feedback they receive to IA to add to central records.**

## **AGENDA ITEM 10 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **10.1 AGRI-TECH CENTRE DEVELOPMENTS**

IA highlighted the key points in the report. The deed must be signed by two board members for AHDB to relinquish our membership of these organisations. This would have no financial implications for us, but the board were asked if they were happy to proceed and nominate two signatories to sign the deed.

**Decision: The board had no objections and NS and JS confirmed they would be signatories.**

LE informed the board he had the KE team coming to his farm mid-August. He requested help from the Executive and their teams before this event.

**Action: WJ/LE will follow up on this after the meeting separately.**

## **AGENDA ITEM 11 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Date of next meeting is Tuesday 19 September 2023, following a board away day event on Monday 18 September 2023. Details of both days to be confirmed in the coming weeks.