

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE NINETY THIRD MEETING OF THE
AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
HELD ON TUESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 9.00 A.M.
AT WEST ACRE LODGE, BOLTBY, THIRSK, YO7 2DX**

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), Roseanne Thomas (RT)(agenda items 5 & 6 only), Chris Gooderham (CG)(agenda item 7 only)

NS opened the meeting by formally welcoming DW to the board meeting, his first in person attendance. NS then thanked all the staff involved in arranging the board away day, which was a great success and enjoyed by everyone.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies received.

AGENDA ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No new declarations of interest were made.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 25 JULY 2023

The minutes of the board meeting held on 25 July 2023 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JULY 2023

NS noted that the agenda for this board meeting did not include all the usual standing items due to the discussions and presentations that the board wanted included. Several of the items requested to be on this agenda at July's board meeting had therefore been rolled forward to November's agenda.

MS thought the holding statement was fine. A holding statement on AHDB's name following the end to collection of a horticulture levy was agreed as recommended but with TC's disagreement noted.

Roseanne Thomas joined the meeting to discuss appendix 1 of Matters Arising , the communications market penetration report.

Action: The board noted good progress was being made and asked for regular updates going forward.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – DRAGONFISH CULTURE CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION PROPOSAL

Niall and Kami from Dragonfish joined the board meeting to present and update on phase 1 of the culture change programme, as well as an overview of the plan for phase 2. JS noted that it would be good for all staff to be made aware that the board are also all involved in the culture change programme.

Action: The board asked Dragonfish to provide a detailed timeline with clear deliverables for phase 2 of the project. They also asked for a proposal of what Phase 3 would look like, if we were to continue engaging with them on this project.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – LEVY INCREASE

6.1 LEVY PAYER ENGAGEMENT REPORT, QA RESEARCH

Richard Bryan from Qa Research joined the board meeting to present the research recently undertaken with levy payers. A few key themes were apparent. Quantitative scores had moved little,

but qualitative feedback was notably more positive than in recent years. Also, a small core of levy payers were not digitally confident and still liked to speak to someone in person.

6.2 ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

WJ and RT gave a high-level overview of the levy increase engagement programme with key dates. Campaigns will begin on 4 October 2023, with communications linking back to successes we've achieved on our sector plans. The comms will be multi-channel and there is a KE Engagement away day this week to cover sector specific levy increase conversations. It was noted that we need to also have generic all sector conversations.

DW noted he had briefed Ministers at the start of our discussions but felt they would welcome an interim update. NS stated he had been keeping Minister Spencer updated with our progress and plans but agreed it would be good to do this more formally.

WJ commented that a further meeting was needed with the Sector Chairs around arrangements for the November event.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – ENVIRONMENT/SUSTAINABILITY PROPOSAL

Chris Gooderham joined the board meeting and gave a brief verbal update on recruitment and progress since the board were last updated. NS noted that the work we are doing on the ground is finally being noticed and AHDB are being listened to. CG stated we need more consistency with baselining on farms.

Action: The board asked for a proposal from the Executive to be circulated within the next two weeks, which outlines what they would like to do on recruitment and how much this is likely to cost.

AGENDA ITEM 8 – OPERATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICES

8.1 CEO & SERVICES REPORT

CEO report taken as read.

8.2 MEASURABLES AND KPI DASHBOARD

KPI dashboard taken as read. The board noted these were work in progress.

8.3 LI LTD TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS

LI update report taken as read. The board were asked to agree to a proposal on who should sit on the LI Board until the transition over is completed. SP also noted that the LI Board had agreed to extend their Chair tenure and wanted confirmation the AHDB board were not objecting to this.

Decision: It was agreed that KB would sit on the LI Board until such a time as it would be needed to come back to the AHDB board with a proposed change requiring approval.

Action: KB asked to request a letter from Vicky Moore at LI to clearly state they agreed to extend John Cross' tenure as Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – DEFRA UPDATE

DW gave a verbal update on Defra. He noted they intend to commence recruitment for AHDB's new Chair on 1 October 2023. TR and DW updated the board on a recent call AHDB had with Defra to look at how we can get a much closer working relationship.

AGENDA ITEM 10 – FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE

10.1 FINANCE UPDATE

Finance report taken as read. TH noted that the reforecasting exercise is now complete and has highlighted where any underspend it. TR thanked TH and his team for all their hard work on the reforecasting exercise.

AGENDA ITEM 11 – PEOPLE

11.1 REMUNERATION AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE (RemNom)

RemNom report taken as read.

11.2 HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE

H&S report and dashboard taken as read. SP asked if we had anyone currently off work due to stress. JK confirmed we did have one staff member who was now back full time after a phased return.

AGENDA ITEM 12 – BOARD AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS

12.1 REPORT FROM AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)

ARAC Chair Report and draft minutes taken as read. SP noted the board were being asked for decisions on whether we want to go ahead with a Target Operating Model (TOM) audit, and if so, when was the right time to do this. The board were also asked if they had any other specific areas they thought we could direct the auditors towards. The Committee were recommending the reappointment of RSM UK as internal audit providers for one year.

Decision: The board confirmed the reappointment of RSM UK as recommended. They also agreed to keep the TOM audit but to delay start until the new CEO is in place.

12.2 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

FOI paper taken as read. IA noted that since the report was produced, we have received a few more requests relating to IT sales. The previous request around pig data was received from an investigative journalist and the press team are dealing with this.

12.3 FEEDBACK LOG

The feedback log was taken as read.

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

AGENDA ITEM 13 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

LE requested that any new Sector Council members have a more in-depth induction into the organisation, rather than just their sector. IA is working on the agenda for the new council members induction day, and this will cover more generic AHDB organisation information so they receive the wider context of AHDB.

SB asked about the recent organisation charts that are on our intranet and whether these will be made available to all sector council members. TIS are currently looking at a fix for sector council members as they don't use AHDB email addresses, therefore don't have access to our intranet.

TC gave a short update on DGP. The first business case has now been drafted and TC said the C&O sector council would appreciate a view from the board around associated risks. SP offered to join the C&O meeting when the business case would be discussed. SP also felt this should then go to an ARAC meeting to review the risk on behalf of the board.

CB provided feedback on the recent council member recruitment. He felt August is the worst month to do interviews with farmers being so busy and suggested we complete interviews at quieter times, specific to each sector, but with a good lead in time for ratification. CB and TC requested the excellent support IA provided, particularly on the governance side, for this recruitment.

13.1 WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

WJ briefly updated the board on the website development proposals. This is work in progress and WJ was not asking the board for approval. CB asked if we are considering all options around the website upgrade which WJ confirmed. SP stated that technology is generally considered as having a 5-year shelf life. LE noted that phone optimisation should be considered as this is how most farmers will access it.

AGENDA ITEM 14 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next meeting is Tuesday 21 November 2023 at AHDB offices in Coventry. All 2024 board dates will be circulated to the board following this meeting.