

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE AHDB BEEF AND LAMB SECTOR COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 8.30 A.M.  
IN THE BOARD ROOM, AHDB, SISKIN PARKWAY EAST, COVENTRY  
(Teams Enabled)**

**PRESENT:**

Colin Bateman (CB) (Chair), George Fell (GF), Bryan Griffiths (BG), Gama Khan (GK), Steve Thompson (ST), Paul Unwin (PU), Scott Donaldson (SD), James Shouler (JS) (joined at item 9)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Sam Charlton (SC), Will Jackson (WJ), Gemma Stamford (GS) (observing), Sarah Woolford (SW) (observing), Katie Davies (minute taking), Graham Wilkinson (agenda items 1-8 only), Liam Byrne (LB), Kate Arthur (KA), Steven Evans (SE) (item 8 only), Tony Holmes (TH) (item 9 only), Kim Matthews (KM) (item 11 only), David Swales (DS) and Hannah Clarke (HC) (item 12 only), Richard Hampton (RH) (item 13 only)

**AGENDA ITEM – CHAIR WELCOME**

CB opened the sector council meeting by doing introductions. He welcomed GW, CEO, to his second B&L council meeting, Sarah Woolford, new C&O sector director who was observing the meeting and KD who was on loan to assist with minute taking for this meeting.

CB welcomed SC to her first B&L sector council meeting as the new sector director and congratulated her on her appointment into this role. CB noted that it was WJ's last B&L council meeting and thanked him for all his support over the last few years at these meetings.

CB further noted there were three sector council members who were also leaving after today's meeting: ST, JS and AMH. CB thanked them for all their support over the last few years.

BG queried the change of date for this sector council meeting at such short notice and asked if these council meetings normally occur before the main board and feed into that meeting. CB apologised for the late date change, but confirmed this was needed due to a clash with prior holiday and travel commitments for SC and WJ.

**AGENDA ITEM – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Isla Roebuck and Anne-Marie Hamilton.

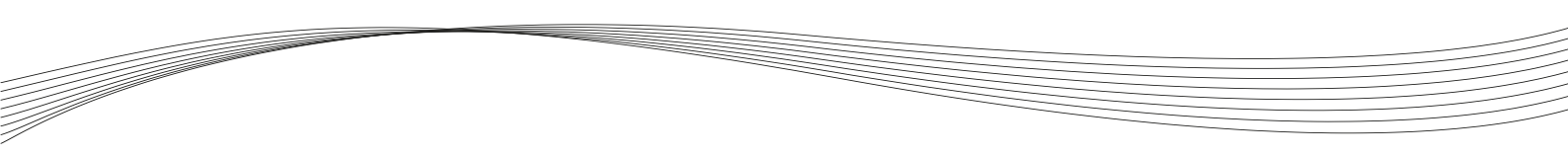
**AGENDA ITEM - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

CB noted that he had applied for his farm to be part of the environment baselining project. After a thorough optimisation process, CB confirmed his farm had been selected but he was yet to accept the offer to participate.

**AGENDA ITEM 4 – MINUTES OF THE SECTOR COUNCIL MEETING HELD 28 MAY 2024**

Amendment needed to the spelling of Graeme Jack's name.

CB asked to amend the minute around AH&W not being strategic, his question was whether it was a strategic use of levy payers' money.



**AGENDA ITEM – MATTERS ARISING FROM THE SECTOR COUNCIL MEETING HELD 28 MAY 2024**

Matters arising paper was taken as read. CB confirmed there was no Data Custodian update on the agenda for today, but a paper was included in the pack.

**AGENDA ITEM – SECTOR LEAD REPORT**

SC noted this was her first sector council meeting as the new B&L sector director although most of the council have met her previously and excited to be in the role.

SC has recently returned from a trip to the USA hosted by Ranch Management Consultancy which also included a week long training course. SC took away a lot of learnings from this trip and got some powerful perspectives which she will share with the sector council at a later date. GF asked if a short call could be arranged for sector council members and SC to get an update on this trip.

**Action: SC to find a date and time for a Teams call to share her lessons learnt and findings**

SC noted she would like to gather feedback from council members on what works well in these meetings, what could be better, how they felt their inductions were, what did they find useful and what could be better for inductions. There was a flipchart in the boardroom and post it notes for everyone to leave their feedback. For those council members online, they could leave their feedback in the Teams chat and this would be captured.

SC noted that it was WJ's 36<sup>th</sup> sector council meeting and his last. He had been a great support to SC and she thanked him. It was also ST's last council meeting after 7 years and SC thanked him for all his support over the years.

SC noted the recent BBC "Brian May TB" documentary and AHDB challenging the facts that came out of this documentary showed great collaborative work amongst our teams. The video done by our chief vet, Sarah Tomlinson, received the highest viewing figure of any video AHDB have published on our social media sites. SC confirmed that the BBC have acknowledged our complaint and are investigating.

**AGENDA ITEM – ASSURANCE REVIEW UPDATE**

WJ noted that he was giving the assurance update on behalf of James Taylor who was on annual leave. The council had all had sight of the submission that was going to the commissioners, and all had a chance to have input into the final submission. WJ noted there had been several meetings with James Withers (main commissioner) and James was gathering various pieces of evidence for the final submission.

ST noted this was a critical piece of work and Australian/New Zealand are ramping up their work in this area. ST further noted that he saw the AHDB projections they had done on forecasting up to 2030 which showed a shortage of animals. Understanding standards is key. CB noted this forecasting work was on today's agenda for discussion. WJ noted that Red Tractor are looking at international comparisons and AHDB are doing a review on environmental bolt ons.

SC asked if there were any timings for the final report. WJ was unsure but thought it was November time.

**Action: WJ was asked to find out the timings of the final report and let the council know.**

WJ noted that we can't make any decisions on buying, only influence. GK noted we were asked to do a piece on standards work by the industry but not on halal and felt this was an oversight which left a gap and should be discussed at a future sector council meeting. GF noted we have Red Tractor for assurance schemes but also trading standards.

GW noted that there is a desire for more evidence around halal from the industry and as an organisation, how can we provide this.

BG noted he felt the B&L section of the assurance submission was an excellent piece of work. He further noted that he agreed halal was a growth market driving trade and overlooked by Red Tractor and AHDB. We must be careful not to set standards too high that we drive UK producers out of supermarkets.

**Action: CB agreed that Halal would be added to the November sector council meeting so we could do a deep dive into this area.**

SC confirmed that she would now represent AHDB on the Red Tractor B&L board but that WJ would remain on the main AFS Red Tractor board.

#### **AGENDA ITEM – BUSINESS PLAN**

GW updated the council on his latest version of the business plan. This was presented at the board meeting on 24 September. GW noted that work is starting next week on the 2025/26 business plan and the council will be part of that process. Culture change has been a key part of GW's learnings from the first six months in role as CEO.

GW further noted that a number of the activities are weighted to Q4, landing in January – March 2025 for completion. GW has a slight nervousness around this and will adapt next year's business plan to not be so back end weighted. Three quarters of the activities are currently on track and we will start seeing blue on items as they get completed.

PU asked if it was possible to have a trend in the box with the industry indicators to show if there is an increase or decrease in these areas. GW will look at incorporating this into next year's plan.

**Action: WJ will pick up incorporating the trend into industry indicators during the Leadership session to develop next year's plan.**

CB noted that Richard Hampton will be joining November's sector council meeting to do a deep dive into exports and how the work we do in Europe compares to the rest of the world. GW noted that market access is important, but value of exports is more important than volume and we need to look at return on investment to ensure it's robust.

SC asked when looking at disease issues in the EU, are we reacting to any opportunities AHDB could have as an organisation. WJ confirmed we have agents across the EU and their main task is to look at what opportunities we have here and now. Richard Hampton is also looking at how we can make these opportunities cost effective.

ST asked if GW was attending the SIAL conference in October. GW confirmed he was. ST noted that GW will see that some of the stands at SIAL dwarf the AHDB one. SC noted that we may have a smaller stand, but footfall is consistent throughout the conference and AHDB do punch above our weight against the bigger exhibitors. GF noted that a lot of the bigger stands are very corporate and commercial. AHDB's is much more aligned with farmers which is why it attracts the footfall.

WJ noted a lot of the bigger corporate stands are government funded. CB noted that we have asked Defra for funding.

PU asked why we use the phrase completed on the business plan activities rather than ongoing. SC noted this relates specifically to 2024/25 and if we weren't careful, all activities could end up as being ongoing. GW noted we also need to celebrate success when areas of work are completed.

CB noted that a paper on Animal Health & Welfare was included in the pack for information. Any questions on that paper can be directed to SC and she will get answers to these.

**Action: CB noted it has been a long time since a presentation on AH&W had been done at a sector council meeting so this would be added to either November's agenda or the first council meeting in 2025 for further discussion.**

A paper on the environment baselining project had been included in the pack. This has been an incredibly successful piece of work so far. All farmers who applied to be part of this project have now been notified if they have been successful or not. 20 farms aligned to AHDB (either sector chairs or sector council members) applied to be part of the project and CB noted the process was totally anonymous with all applicants going through a thorough optimisation process. A webinar will be held next week with successful farmers to discuss next steps. GW noted that Defra had funded £500k towards this project.

BG noted that reputation was a top priority that came out of the Shape the Future. In the eye of levy payers, they believe reputation of red meat is constantly being damaged due to messaging around environment and climate change. AHDB need to be visible in this area (especially with all the work

John Gilliland is doing) and this will win over levy payers. SC noted we will have the opportunity to show our work on environment through the baselining project.

SC noted that the B&L engagement work is currently amber and we need to nail this down more firmly. Recruitment for new head of engagement is underway.

**Action: Engagement will also be included in the 30 minute teams call to be arranged.**

GW noted the organisation's vision for the next five years has now been agreed at a session with both the main board and the leadership team. There are a few more next steps needing to happen, but GW will come to the November's sector council to share the vision with them. The vision shows laser focus on our levy payers and will make the new leadership team stronger.

**Action: Vision and strategy presentation to be added to November's agenda.**

**Action: A paper on evaluation will be included in November's sector council meeting pack. This will show how projects such as baselining and MI are evaluated.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM – MARKETING REVIEW**

Liam Byrne, Kate Arthur and Steve Evans joined the meeting.

LB and SE presented some slides on marketing and retail and modelling work recently undertaken. Key points were:

- Successful delivered Olympic led campaign to highlight role of red meat in an active diet. 67 million people reached with the story landing in seven of the national press.
- Love Lamb Week was well received following an effective partnership between QMS, LMC and HCC.
- Completed phase 1 of our retailer value assessments, as part of a project to reengage consumers with red meat. Successful presentations to leaders from big 7 retailers. Next step projects to be identified.
- Let's Eat Balanced campaign delivered an incremental £13.8M in retail sales, which equates to a £9.99 return for every £1 of levy money invested.
- The breakdown of this is a 15.75 x return for beef and a 3.8 x return for lamb, in line with spend.
- Keeping these buyers within the category would potentially deliver a further £28m of annual sales, based on typical buying habits over the next 12 months.
- Modelling work demonstrated that if the SC were to invest £700k extra in September 2025, this would give an estimated £9m additional return (totalling c£20M over the year) and an ROI for the burst of £10.61
- To give 3 bursts of the campaign with TV would require around £1.2m extra. This is calculated to give an extra £17m return (totalling c£30M over the year) and an ROI of £11.12

GK asked if the Kantar data is for the UK and if it was generic but filtered for British households. LB confirmed it was but if the council felt there was a different direction they want the marketing team to focus on, they should let LB know.

CB noted that with the lower numbers of lambs, we want to ensure that we maintain consumers buying British lamb. Advertising when there is a large amount of British lamb on the supermarket shelves vs imported lamb is key.

BG noted this is a really good news story and will the Let's Eat Balanced campaign success be communicated to levy payers. WJ confirmed that it would be, but we need to be mindful on how we go about this. There are currently lots of campaign groups writing to the government asking to stop AHDB doing this area of work because in their opinion, it goes against the government's own committee on climate change. GW noted that he recognised the sensitivities around this area of work and will look at how AHDB support the B&L sector council members who are on the ground relaying this information to other levy payers.

**Action: LB to look at messaging that goes out to producers to prove what AHDB do as an ALB is about demand and not shortage.**

ST noted that this senior team are all commending LB and his team on such a successful piece of work which is great. He further noted that most of the lamb on sale in supermarkets in January is New Zealand and this is when most of the consumer spend is on lamb. ST asked if this would change if we spread out the advertising throughout the year. SE confirmed that research shows British lamb is also still a large portion of what is on the supermarket shelves post Christmas so this is taken into account when looking at when to advertise.

GF asked if September's peak is around when Sunday roasts start coming back into favour following the summer season. SE noted that research does show that difference cuts of lamb fluctuate throughout the year.

Kate Arthur provided an update on her nutrition and health strategy, focusing on promoting the nutritional benefits of red meat and dairy. KA emphasised the importance of engaging with external stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, eg: doctors, dietitians and NGOs who are very vocal in the media and retailer nutrition teams, and the challenges of influencing their perspectives on red meat. Key activities included a BNF round table event and webinar, a farm visit at Harper Adams for Nutritionists in industry, and the Nutrition Society Symposium in Belfast. KA highlighted the new scientific report that is under development on red meat's role in a healthy, sustainable diet. The report covers consumption, nutritional contribution of red meat in the UK diet, latest evidence around health and chronic disease and environment. KA discussed the ongoing project to update nutritional data on beef and lamb in the UK food composition dataset with the Quadram Institute and Dept of Health. Results to be published next year.

CB thanks LB, SE and KA for all their work and an informative session.

#### **AGENDA ITEM – BUDGETS & FINANCE**

Report was taken as read. TH noted the full year forecast carried out in July has resulted in the deficit increasing. B&L reports a deficit more than budgeted mainly due to a reduction in levy income and being compounded by overspends in workstream and shared service centre costs, most of which is related to the forecasted public pay review increase.

Gross levy income is forecasted to finish below budget due to a 1% reduction in slaughter volumes for beef and 4% reduction for sheep. Levy redistribution and levy collection costs are forecasted to reduce as a direct result of the forecasted reduction in gross levy income.

PU noted that when thinking about budgets, what is the role of sector council and are we paying enough attention to budgets. PU further raised concerns that we might need to make cuts elsewhere if there is a significant public sector pay settlement. WJ noted that the leadership team are starting to develop the 2025/26 business plan next week and the budget planning will commence after that. SC noted there will be some difficult decisions to be made on what are the top priorities, but the business plan will be presented at November's council meeting for discussion.

CB noted that PU has asked for budget discipline and this council does need to hold the exec more accountable for the budgets. He further noted that he would like the council to work with him and SC to outline a vision of where they would like to see the sector in 5-10 years time and that he wants the council to be seen as more accountable.

GF noted we should look at increasing the levy every year and asked if we are likely to correct the deficit by end of the financial year. TH noted low volumes are affecting the income, but forecasting is also a factor. GK noted the funding needs to increase to deliver what the levy payers want.

CB noted that the C&O sector are looking at levy collection methods in different countries. Any changes in this area would need to be put into the AHDB statutory instrument. WJ confirmed that the first opportunity AHDB had to ask for a levy increase was April 2026, the council would be able to decide at that time what they thought the levy increase should be.

JS noted he would not be at November's sector council meeting, but we do need to have better discipline on budgets rather than reacting once a problem occurs. JS further noted that things at AHDB are working so much better, we need to be much more commercial in how we deal with levy increases so we don't end up having to choose between pieces of work. He noted he thought Wales have a year on year levy increase. WJ confirmed that Wales had a different levy increase arrangement, they have an index linked increase that takes effect year on year (with annual

Ministerial sign-off). Whatever AHDB do will require ministerial approval as we are bound by legislation being an ALB.

#### **AGENDA ITEM – COMMUNICATIONS**

The comms task & finish group update paper was taken as read. WJ noted that the group had developed a five-point plan around communications and how this would be delivered:

- Communications Strategy
- Audience Insight
- Sector Communications
- Benchmarking and Measurements
- Communications Delivery

WJ noted the audience insight work involved over 800 interviews across all four sectors. There had been a good spread across the sectors and the results of this work was going to be presented to the T&F group next week. WJ confirmed that Ben Briggs who did the insight work had spoken to sector council members.

Communications within each sector is a key focus for current discussions. Strategic comms will become much more laser focussed with a dedicated strategic comms staff member reporting directly into each sector director. This will allow them to focus solely on their sectors.

BG noted that AHDB could learn something from the commercial media communications and that we need to put more comms out that resonate better with levy payers. BG noted that there was a recent Japanese inward mission that took place and there was no communication that went out from us about that. WJ confirmed that comms do look at what the key items are to communicate on a regular basis but the recent research carried out will help identify what these topics should be.

JS noted that with the recent work carried out, how are we going to identify the 60% of levy payers who don't see any of our comms and find ways to communicate to them. WJ noted this is not just about comms but about engagement too and the research will tell us which audiences are the hardest to reach.

ST asked who is AHDB's target audience, do we have TVs within auction markets and at processors playing our comms on loop, are there posters on walls. Do we need to look at other channels rather than just social media for comms. SC confirmed she is looking at getting our comms into auction markets and will work with both the comms and engagement teams to do this. SD noted that he agrees with ST's thinking and that the relationship between AHDB and LAA has not always been in a good place.

#### **AGENDA ITEM – BEEF AND SHEEP GENETICS UPDATE**

Kim Matthews joined the meeting and presented some update slides on the genetics work to date. Key elements of the genetic improvement programme are phenotypes, pedigree records and access to a genetic evaluation engine. Significant economic benefits are available through implementation of an integrated national phenotype and genotype collection programme. Overall, increasing selection intensity and adoption had the largest impact on outcomes

KM confirmed the role of the genetics advisory forum was to advise the exec and sector councils on sustained rate of improvement to improve financial and environmental outcomes. The fragmented nature of the industry is the key issue, and we need to increase the profile as a hub for genomic data. KM further noted we need to develop generic solutions aligned with challenges to climate change. CB noted that genetics is part of the future direction that AHDB should be going in and finding a new way of using levy payers' money will be a catalyst.

GF asked if KM and SC could work together to come up with a proposal to bring back to the council on what would be a gold standard of expanding genomics. The feedback he was getting was positive and farmers are onboard but he appreciates this is a large piece of work and a large amount of funding so is there a way to see where we can get extra funding from and facilitate that.

**Action: KM and SC to work on a proposal of expanding genomics and bring back to a sector council meeting.**

CB noted that the work being done allows genetics to speed up and become more accurate and even someone who has never gone with a pedigree ram is able to use it. CB further noted this is a key piece of work and not something AHDB has done to this level before. WJ noted that we need to get the credit for this piece of work and will work on some comms around this.

BG noted that commercial income comes from breeding sheep. All variables that affect profit, whether he buys a ram with figures is irrelevant. BG asked how we get buy in from farmers in a variable position. SD noted that prolificacy, high growth, yield, low methane are key. KM confirmed genetics can solve a lot of these issues.

CB noted the council need to give KM and his team some funding to go and do some discovery work. KM was unsure of how much funding would be required for this work; it would be mainly down to staff time but he could work up an estimate. CB asked if the council agreed to get KM to provide a paper at November's council meeting with estimated costings.

**Decision: The council agreed to allow KM and his team to work on a discover paper on costings and options for where we would get funding from.**

**Action: KM to come back to November's sector council meeting for a more in-depth conversation on genetics.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM – 2030 FORECAST UPDATE**

David Swales and Hannah Clarke joined the meeting. They presented draft forecasts for beef and lamb supplies to 2030, which the team are planning to publish later in the year. This work has also been presented to processors at the BMPA beef and lamb committee and is due to be shared with AIMS and farming organisations. The information presented could be quite sensitive, so how we communicate and frame the data is key.

Some concerns were noted around the Defra figures (census) but HC confirmed this was the best available data we can access. HC further noted they were unable to use slaughter figures as an alternative due to lambs still being on the ground. CB noted that some of the figures presented were best estimates.

CB asked how easy it would be to model figures against levy income to get best and worst case income scenarios and could we apply the levy rate to head of sheep.

**Action: HC to look into whether it's possible to model best and worst case income scenarios. She will send this over to SC who will share it with the council.**

SD noted that in regard to breeding flock, intelligence on the ground is saying Ewe flocks and on the ground flocks are dropping every day. HC confirmed the figures she presented are taken from historical data.

SC noted that how we communicate this data out to levy payers is crucial as it's quite a negative conversation. CB noted we need to be careful who we communicate it to. Not everything we do needs to be published. We need to ensure this is communicated as confidential and draft when presenting to the farming organisations and AIMS.

#### **AGENDA ITEM – EUDR UPDATE**

Richard Hampton joined the meeting. He presented some slides on EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR).

EUDR affects seven commodities – cocoa, coffee, soy, palm oil, wood, rubber, and cattle –as well as select products derived from these goods. This includes live cattle, fresh & frozen beef, edible beef offal, bovine meat preparations, as well as hides, skins and leather. From 30th December 2024, any of these cattle products exported to the EU (or produced in/exported from the EU) may not be reared on deforested land, and evidence will be needed to prove compliance. In addition, feed used for livestock falling under EUDR also needs to be deforestation free.

The potential impact of EUDR implementation ranges from the 'worst case' scenario, loss of the entire EU Beef and beef products export market to the EU, to the lesser but significant impact of increased cost to the industry of feeding EUDR compliant soy to beef and dairy animals. Currently, all other livestock sectors are out of scope of EUDR. However, their inclusion at a later date is likely.

CB asked RH to share his briefing document with the council. RH will provide more information as soon as he has any.

**AGENDA ITEM – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

CB noted his thanks to AMH who was stepping down from the council for all her support.

CB noted his thanks to JS for all his service to the council. JS noted it's been a journey, that he'd learnt a lot about the industry and had never realised the amount of work AHDB do. JS further noted we all need to spread the word about AHDB as it's a passionate organisation and the independent evidence we provide is huge within the industry.

CB noted his thanks to ST who was stepping down from the council for all his work and support over the years. ST noted that AHDB is in a much better place than when he first joined the council. AHDB are a great bunch of people, and he's really enjoyed his time as a council member.

CB noted his thanks to WJ who was moving to his new role within the leadership team. CB noted that WJ had kept everything going when we were over stretched and under resourced and the support that WJ gave to both CB and everyone on the council was really appreciated. CB noted that WJ had done a lot of work on assurance and being doing a lot for farmers which had gone under the radar. WJ thanked everyone in the room and on the call. The council was in a much better place than it was six years ago. WJ further noted it's been a roller coaster with ups and downs but they've achieved a lot of good things for the industry. SC taking over from WJ will do a great job and take the sector council to another level.

CB noted there were several dates for EDI training sessions which any member of the council could join, either in person or online.

**AGENDA ITEM – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Date of next meeting is Wednesday 13 November 2024 at AHDB offices in Coventry.

