

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE AHDB BEEF AND LAMB SECTOR COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 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), Paul Unwin (PU), Scott Donaldson (SD), Isla Roebuck (IR), Tamara Pickstock (TP) (attended from item 6), Mark Jelley (MJ), Ben Harman (BH), James MacCartney (JM)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Sam Charlton (SC), Angie Miley (minute taking), Graham Wilkinson (GW) (agenda items 1-6 only), James Taylor (JT) (item 7 only), Mike Gooding (MG) and Kim Matthews (KM) (item 8 only), Tony Holmes (TH) (item 9 only, joined virtually), Rachael Madeley-Davies (RMD) and Chris Gooderham (CG) (item 11 only), Roseanne Thomas (RT) (item 15 only).

<b>CHAIR WELCOME</b>
CB opened the sector council meeting with introductions. He welcomed all members and congratulated new sector council members on their appointments.
CB further noted that we should not attribute statements from the council to particular organisations or people.
<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>
N/A – Tamara arrived at 09:09 following traffic congestion.
<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
CB requested that all sector council members share any boards or groups that they are involved in. Ben Harman – Vice-Chair of NBA, CHECS (formally Cattle Health Certification Standards) board member, Medicine Hub board member, T-Dug board member (Traceability Design User Group) George Fell - Chair of Sheep Breeders Round Table and member of Sheep Genetics Advisory Forum. James MacCartney – NFU Midlands Livestock Board. Mark Jelley – NFU Midlands Livestock Board, Sector Chair (Cattle) for RUMA, Member of Medicine Hub and Innovate UK. Mark Jelley & Colin Bateman have accepted the offer to join the AHDB baselining project.
<b>MINUTES OF THE SECTOR COUNCIL MEETING HELD 25 SEPTEMBER 2024</b>
The minutes were taken as read.
<b>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE SECTOR COUNCIL MEETING HELD 25 SEPTEMBER 2024</b>
Matters arising paper was taken as read with the following notes.
<b>Action: SC to deliver 30 minute call on Teams to feedback on trip to Ranch Management Consultancy trip and update on Engagement (September Mtg).</b>
SC explained that Richard Hampton is leaving AHDB so an export update, including halal, will be delivered in January. GW noted that the qualities needed within the role are clear and the team are well equipped in the interim, but a suitable replacement is required. IR asked who will be leading the team?
<b>Action: SC to keep the sector council updated with recruitment for this role.</b>
GK asked to amend the action taken note on agenda item 8 and include the word 'British' prior to volume(s).

## **AHDB BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2024**

GW presented the October update of the 24/25 Essentials & Activities. He acknowledged that many of the activities were end-weighted with completion due in March 25. Check points will be included in the future. 31 of the 132 activities are completed. GW then focused on Essentials 5 (Winning with our People & Levy Payers), 6 (Efficient & Effective Operations) & 7 (Demonstrating Industry Leadership) of the business plan.

GW reported that 90% of staff have objectives on their PDR that are linked to our business plan. The remaining 10% are due to staff that are on maternity leave.

GW confirmed that a decision has been made to continue using Agresso for financial processes but a longer-term view is needed. Search functions have improved on our website so work with digital transformation is ongoing. The discovery phase of digital transformation will go to the main board in the new year and there are opportunities for synergies and improved efficiencies.

GW explained that we are demonstrating industry leadership through our baselining project which is being supported by Defra and QMS via funding. GW noted that a new RT chair will be recruited soon and AHDB will be taking the lead at the next meeting following NFU's contribution previously.

SC moved on to focus on Essential 2 (Add Value for Beef & Lamb, Improving consumer attitudes towards Beef & Lamb). The recent retail and consumer insight (RCI) team event was very successful and will be repeated.

SC noted that 'Optimising overseas opportunities' was supported by the recent SIAL international trade event which was attended by SC, CB & GW from the room. GW explained that it was his first time attending and the AHDB stand was consistently busy, well situated and positioned. He was very proud to represent AHDB at the event. TP confirmed that SIAL was a very positive show for her business and they are very grateful to AHDB for being invited. SC confirmed that she had received lots of positive feedback and GW asked how all levy payers can understand and experience that.

GF noted that he was very impressed by the commentary he saw from one of the levy payers that attended on behalf of AHDB. He thought the work on carcass balance and trading was particularly interesting.

BG noted a piece in Farmers Weekly and asked if that could be communicated to farmers. SC noted that this is not a missed opportunity and that it's a legacy piece. We are waiting on the final events report for next steps.

GF recently attended a 'Beef & Lamb Future Trades' event in conjunction with Bishopton Vets at Thirsk Auction Mart. Jonathan Eckley attended, and GF was impressed with the relationship developed with the vets and that it reached new levy payers.

SC noted that there was a missed target for Medicine Hub. MJ explained that antibiotic records given by most other species are recording 90% of usage. MJ noted there is a challenge with the ruminant reporting. Data is published annually for the previous full calendar year, so 2023 data is published in 2024. For 2023 the target number of sheep and beef farms reporting data is 4,000, with that target doubling to 8,000 in 2024 data collection. One of the challenges we have is that the reporting windows for VARSS (data extracted from MH in July) and the RUMA TTF report (data extracted in October) don't cover a full year of data collection, so data collected after the reporting window (e.g. at FA inspections in November) doesn't get published at present. This isn't an issue in other sectors, their data is already collated by these dates. MJ was confident that the ruminant targets would be met by the end of 2024.

**Action: Work with MJ and AHDB Medicine Hub team to progress this work.**

SC explained that Amy Hughes was due to attend the January SC meeting to report on engagement work and Roots to Resilience.

SC noted that the AgriLeader review was ongoing, and an update was being prepared.

## **ASSURANCE UPDATE**

James Taylor updated the council on the Farm Assurance Review (FAR) which has 14 principles grouped under 5 themes (purpose and value, governance, differentiation, audit process, future

reviews). JT noted that there are similarities with the NFU submission with concerns in areas such as governance, clarity on legislative baseline, mission creep, standard ratcheting and value capture.

JT explained that the standards studies with comparisons against other countries were completed. [Farm standards review – Beef & Lamb | AHDB](#)

- Lot 1: New Zealand and Australia
- Lot 2: Europe (Key EU Countries: England, Germany, Poland, Ireland, France, Netherlands)
- Lot 3: USA and Canada
- Lot 4: Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina

JT noted that there were categories in each report where other schemes demonstrated they were more effective than Red Tractor.

JT offered a critique of the report's conclusions:

RT is more prescriptive than other schemes – main reason it scores higher across most areas  
Exceptions across the four reports.

- Lot 1: LPA and NZFAP (biosecurity and disease control)
- Lot 2: Beter Leven (husbandry procedures and youngstock management), Quality Standard (livestock transport, food safety and traceability)
- Lot 3: GAP 5-Step Lamb (feed and water, husbandry procedures), Canada Verified Sheep (youngstock management, animal health and welfare), Animal Welfare Approved (youngstock management)
- Lot 4: Certified Humane (feed and water, animal health and welfare)

Scheme foci differ so nuance needed when making comparisons.

Analysis and conclusions are brief and similar across all reports:

- *"Focus of each scheme was slightly different, so this (variation) is not unexpected."*
- *"All of the schemes provide some degree of customer reassurance, but this varies according to the scheme and the specific category of study"*
- *"There are areas of potential improvement for every scheme in each category"*
- *"RT is more likely to influence users to address a wider range of on-farm practice."*

JT delivered information regarding the Sustainability Report and justifications:

Environmental aspects out of scope of Lot 1 – 4 studies

Internal assumption that additional requirements were placed on imports, but no evidence

Ireland included due to volume imported and SBLAS's strong environmental credentials (as claimed by Bord Bia)

Study objectives:

1. To understand how environmental sustainability requirements influence UK retailers' decision-making when considering importing red meat from NZ, Ireland and Australia
2. To consider whether assurance schemes (SBLAS, NZFAP+ and AASF) in each of the three countries deliver UK retailers' sustainability requirements, and if not, what additional requirements (above assurance) are placed on producers wishing to supply UK retailers
3. To consider what the implications of retailers' demands for environmental sustainability may be on the UK assurance landscape over the next 3-5 years.

JT noted the below conclusions to the sustainability report:

Diverse retailer demands – carbon audits / biodiversity surveys, indicator species targets. Sustainability considerations are not hugely influential on current importing decisions i.e. no additional standards over the baseline are imposed to access the UK market

SBLAS – no evidence of impact

Some awareness of NZFAP+, no awareness of AgCarE

Consensus that sustainability considerations will be more influential on sourcing decisions in the future, preference for it to be industry led

Debate as to how enhanced standards will be delivered if scheme critical mass is not reached

- Bolt on (NZFAP+)
- Part of main scheme (SBLAS)
- Standalone scheme?

JM asked how this helps our ability to export but JT said that element wasn't included. TP said RT does help to reassure purchasers for export but, IR noted that it wasn't specifically required. IR also noted that food service customers want environmental standards included but, farm assurance schemes need to consider the producer and processor as much as the customer.

GF noted that the industry needs to include and develop environmental standards before they are prescribed. BG explained that the next 2-3 months are critical with a new chair for RT.

JT concluded by including the following from the report:

*“Almost every retailer which was engaged with in this study indicated that they believe that there will be a future requirement of assurance of environmental improvement, underpinned by measurement and verification. However, this is not yet possible at a wide scale level and consequently does not form part of the sourcing specifications for beef or lamb. Once this option is possible, it is likely to be immediately taken up.”*

**Action: JT/SC to decide on publication options following the final report including environmental standards.**

#### **AHDB FARMING SYSTEMS TEAM (INC. GENETICS & ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE)**

Mike Gooding and Kim Matthews joined the meeting. MG explained that he is Farming Systems Director and has five teams reporting to him:

- Kim Matthews – Head of Animal Breeding & Product Quality (Beef & Lamb)
- Marco Winters – Head of Animal Genetics (Dairy)
- Mandy Nevel – Head of Animal Health & Welfare
- Jenna Watts – Head of Crop Health, IPM & Recommended List.
- Ana Reynolds – Head of Sustainable Farming & Research.

MG notes that all his teams need to constantly demonstrate that they are delivering the AHDB Business Plan. A recent example are the 11,000 views of the bluetongue webinars.

KM explained that the objective of the sheep genetics work was to improve the economic and environmental performance of sheep production in the UK via a coordinated approach to multi-breed and cross-breed performance recording and genetic evaluation. This needs to be underpinned by robust data collated from national datasets, commercial farms and breeders while using the latest approaches delivered by an active programme of Research and Development.

KM noted that Signet have three sheep evaluations: National Terminal Sire Evaluation, National Hill Sheep Breeding Evaluation and National Maternal Breeding Evaluation.

KM explained that a new framework would work with, not against breed societies. It would hold all pedigree and performance information collate a genomic dataset for the purposes of evaluation and provide rapid access to breeding values and indexes. To succeed it would need a funder, policy levers for behaviour change and collaboration.

KM outlined the next steps:

- Continue to explore funding options
- Maintain dialogue with Defra and elevate this to a more senior level

- Continue to build the platform and make incremental steps in the right direction as the levy budget allows
- Maintain progress on the longer-term relationship with SRUC
- Sector Council members to engage with Defra at a senior level to build strategic engagement

BG noted that communications need to help farmers understand that improving sheep genetics can have environmental benefits. GF agreed that breeders needed to be closer to this work so a good approach. MG mentioned that we needed solutions and options ahead of time to secure funding when it's available.

GK asked if AHDB would try to gain funding via philanthropy. KM responded that some may want to reduce methane so this could be interesting for the future.

IR suggested a one page statement might be supportive while GF asked for involvement from the whole supply chain including NSA, NBA, BMPA and AIMS as this needs the power of the industry.

**Action: KM to share a simple summary paper to enable Council members and executive team, and other industry bodies, to communicate the same overall message on sheep genetics to potential government (and other) funders.**

## **FIRST STAGE BUSINESS & FINANCE PLANNING 2025**

Tony Holmes joined the meeting virtually and the finance report for period ending 30.09.24 was taken as read. TH explained that AHDB was in the process of finalising the budget and the deficit will be smaller along with the pay review. The full year forecast predicts an overspend for the B&L Sector mainly due to a reduction in net levy income compared to budget and being compounded by overspends in workstream and shared service centre costs.

TH explained that the statutory instrument requires us to protect reserves with a specific limit set. Further discussion was held by the council on the level of reserves required (if necessary) above the statutory limit.

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.

**Action: SC to provide an indicative workstream budget at January SC mtg.**

SC then considered the aims of the sector and outlined them:

- Drive demand for British B&L
- Protect and promote our reputation for British B&L
- Deliver independent data and evidence for B&L Sector
- Add value to levy payer businesses.

CB explained that the intention is that requests for funding go to SC and can be declined before they get to sector council level if they don't fit with the sector aims. This is an internal process.

## **A STRATEGIC VISION FOR BEEF & LAMB**

CB explained that there hasn't been a sector vision before but everything needs to move towards the future and the industry in 5-10 years should be considered.

SC noted that the herd and flock numbers might decline but efficiencies increase.

CB further explained that agreeing a vision for the sector council would support decision making with future proposals.

A poll of the room revealed that all members were in favour of CB's proposal with only one member against as they didn't feel the group needed more than they already have.

**Action: Arrange a day for all sector council members to develop a strategic vision for the sector. SC to confirm.**

**Action: SC to provide an organogram to heads of level so sector council can see who leads various work/teams.**



## ENVIRONMENT – B&L ROADMAP & BASELINING PROGRESS REPORT

Rachael Madeley-Davies and Chris Gooderham joined the meeting and presented a roadmap and baselining update. CG explained that there was a draft version but publication was delayed due to discussion around the remit of the project. CG explained that they are revisiting the terms of reference.

CG reminded the sector council of the purpose of the roadmap:

To provide the evidence of how the English and Welsh beef and lamb supply chain is supporting the global goal to tackle climate change as well as zero hunger, the UK Government's commitment to Net Zero by 2050; as well as managing and enhancing natural resources.

CG further explained the objectives of the roadmap:

- Show evidence of where the sector is now
- Measure and report progress against industry targets
- Identify mitigation tactics that are evidenced and true
- Call out evidence gaps and stumbling blocks that could prevent us meeting the targets so the industry can decide how to tackle them

RMD explained that the roadmap needs to cover the UK and then globally represents industry, not just AHDB. The delivery plan will involve a technical group and a governance and ownership group with desired outputs and outcomes below:

Outputs:

- Agree the milestones to reach industry targets covering GHG emissions, sequestration, biodiversity, air and water quality and soil health from farm to pre-pack.
- Results from the AHDB baselining pilot provide evidence of where the industry is now.
- Stumbling blocks identified through the AHDB Climate adaptation work related to the impact of mitigations
- Defra/SRUC work on MACCs used to identify priorities from a farming perspective

Outcomes:

- Industry collaboration to deliver towards the milestones
- Strong evidence to support industry reputation
- Unified version of the truth for reporting progress for the sector

RMD explained that the timeline for the roadmap is 12 months starting in December 2024 and ending at the same time in 2025. During that time there will be 3 versions with updated evidence of progress against targets using the baselining pilot.

IR asked if there had been any progress since last December and CG explained that nothing had been published yet but the plan is for a draft to be published in December 2024. The technical group will be chaired by Andrew Loftus and the Governance and Ownership group will be chaired by CB.

GF asked who the audience was for this work and CG replied that it underpins our reputation and supports our export markets so it's a reassurance document.

**Action: CG to provide a written update on B&L Roadmap in December including a copy of the latest roadmap document.**

CG shared a slide to provide a baselining update:

Recruitment

- Selection process completed, all farm agreements back
- Currently collecting shape files (to determine what we will measure)

Tenders

- LiDAR scanning starting later this month with BlueSky
- Below ground tender (i.e. the soils work) closed on 20th September – we have selected our preferred supplier

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carbon calculator and carbon audit/action plan tenders finish this week and next</li> </ul>
<p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominantly funded by AHDB and QMS</li> <li>Defra funding confirmed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Action: SC to distribute and share solutions for farm level environmental data report. All members to read.</b></p>
<p><b>APPOINTMENT OF SECTOR DEPUTY-CHAIR</b></p>
<p>12.1 CB explained that this was an informal arrangement designed to support the sector chair during absences and gain experience.</p>
<p><b>Action: Contact CB directly if you are interested in this role. A discussion will follow if more than one person is interested.</b></p>
<p><b>MENTEE ROLE</b></p>
<p>13.1 CB explained that this sector will pilot this scheme to allow a new member of the council the opportunity to contribute to conversations, gain experience from the council &amp; their role.</p>
<p><b>Action: SC to invite sector council mentee to future meetings.</b></p>
<p>CB noted that in addition to the mentee role, GF will now chair the Sheep Genetics Advisory Forum and BH will chair the Beef Genetics Advisory Forum moving forward.</p>
<p><b>DATA CUSTODIAN</b></p>
<p>PU raised some concerns over costs for this project and SC confirmed that the budget would need main board approval. CB confirmed that following main board approval all individual sectors would need to approve and would be based on budget. For it to proceed all sectors would need to approve.</p>
<p>BH suggested the data requirements would be great and SC asked the council to wait for the business proposal.</p>
<p><b>COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE</b></p>
<p>Roseanne Thomas joined the meeting to give an overview of our communications services, an update on the task and finish group and how it would allow them to use insight to change our work to allow greater impact. There will be a regular update at sector council meetings moving forward. RT also explained that AHDB were meeting with the BBC to discuss the Brian May programme on 19.11.24.</p>
<p>RT explained the group priorities are communication strategy, audience insight, sector communications, benchmarking and measurement and the communication delivery. All priorities are rated as green on the BRAG chart and on track. Structural changes have been implemented so that Gemma Stanford as senior communication lead now reports to SC.</p> <p>RT explained that there were 3 methods of research and AHDB wanted to find out how levy payers interacted with us and which channels they preferred:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative research involving 854 interviews across sectors and 6 channels.</li> <li>Qualitative research with 4 AHDB staff, 3 sector council members and 50 farmers interviewed.</li> <li>The Hillsgreen Marketing to Farmers report included 1050 farmer interviews.</li> </ul> <p>RT noted that the report looked at the timing of emails, wording of emails and a multi-channel approach. RT explained that younger audiences for beef and lamb liked cross-sector communications. Work is needed on post event engagement</p>
<p>RT explained that our communications need to align to the needs of the sector. SC explained that she is working with GS to create a plan of activity.</p>
<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p>
<p>SC reminded sector council members that expenses need to be submitted within a three month window or would not be approved. In addition, all expenses for 2024-25 financial year need to be submitted by 30 April 2025 to be approved.</p>
<p>CB noted that he was attending Sheep Breeders Round Table with GF on 15-17 November 2024.</p>

SC mentioned the LAA data proposal would be discussed at a forthcoming meeting that she's attending.

SC made the council aware that there is budget available for training and to email over any suggestions by Monday 16 December.

IR requested an organogram to show AHDB staff to heads of level so the sector council can understand who covers various projects.

Meeting closed at 13:08

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Date of next meeting is Wednesday 15 January 2025 at AHDB offices in Coventry.

