

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE CEREALS & OILSEEDS (C&O) SECTOR COUNCIL
MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 8.30AM
AHDB BOARD ROOM**

PRESENT:

Tom Clarke (Chair) (TC), David Bell (DB) (Vice-Chair), Allan Bowie (AB), Matthew Curry (MC), Polly Davies (PD), Julius Deane (JD), Russell McKenzie (RM), Sarah Nightingale (SN), Richard Orr (RO), Cecilia Pryce (CP), James Standen (JS), Patrick Stevenson (PS), David Walston (DW)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ken Boyns (KB) (Item 15) David Eudall (DE) (Item 8 and 15), Mike Gooding (MG) (Item 13) Tony Holmes (TH), Will Jackson (WJ) (Item 12) Ollie Johnson (OJ) (Item 14), Ana Reynolds (AR) (Item 13 via TEAMS), Roseanne Thomas (RT) (Item 12), Sarah James (SJ) (minutes), Jenna Watts (JW) (Item 13), Sarah Woolford (SW)

GUESTS:

Item 6 – Jamie Burrows (JB), Jonathan Lane (JL), George Mason (GM), Robert Sheasby (RS), Alistair Gale (AG) (via TEAMS), and Stephen Briggs (SB)(via TEAMS)

AGENDA ITEM 1 – CHAIR’S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave thanks to Alison Thomes for her support and work with the Council since he was Chair. A welcome to MC following the ratification of his appointment to the Sector Council by levy payers.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Graham Wilkinson.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

CP declared a membership interest through the business Openfield and MC through the business North East Grains of business memberships of AIC

No other new declarations of interest were made.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20 September 2024

With regard action under 8.3 ‘Understand the application under the Wales authority’. This should also include reference to Northern Ireland.

Subject to this amendment, the minutes of the meetings held on 20 September were approved as an accurate record to be signed by the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION POINTS FROM THE COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2024

The matters arising and action points were taken as read with most having either been completed or on future meeting agendas for discussion.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – DIGITAL GRAIN PASSPORT (DGP)

The Chair advised the Council that members of Leadership Group of DGP were joining the meeting. TC outlined the latest progress in discussions since the last vote by Council on the three main outstanding areas for agreement – which had resulted in three compromise positions being put forward on Scotland and how we proceed with devolved authorities, issues surrounding future uses and communication of the DGP in terms of Scope 3 sustainability data, and governance of the entire system. The Council noted that NFUS had given their blessing for the DGP to proceed as an England and Wales project in the first instance. On communication around Scope 3 Data, CP registered her concern regarding talking about future uses for the DGP that were not certain. Following discussion,

the Council agreed that it was important to engage with Levy Payers (LP) and be honest and warn (as not known) on future potential or likely uses of DGP as platform for sharing Scope 3 data. The Council agreed if there is a compromise to be had, and there will be evolutionary developments and future uses of the DGP that will not be included in the written business case at this stage, but that AHDB will use the flexibility within the proposed compromise to communicate separately on this issue as required, as may other members of the Leadership Group. PD specifically mentioned risk to budget and particularly the issue of picking up overspend. Negotiations will deal with this but likely to be a AHDB cost rather than Defra.

The Chair welcomed members of the DGP Leadership Group (SB & AG via Teams, RS, JL, GM, JB in person) into the meeting and thanked them for giving up their time to speak to the Council, and for the contribution they have made to getting to this point. During proceedings RS read out a statement from Julian South of MAGB (who could not attend personally) in support of the DGP and asking Sector Council to fund the project. The Sector Council discussed the compromises tabled, and the guests from DGP Leadership Group responded to questions, and made observations accordingly. After the guests had left, the Council voted unanimously to proceed with the DGP as discussed with resolution of the three issues - Scotland, communications about future uses as per the compromises tabled, and the provision of a veto for every member of the Ownership Group, and a dispute resolution mechanism within Ownership Group. It was noted by Council, that ultimately levy payers or a future Sector Council may decide not to continue supporting the DGP. To prepare for such a situation a 24month exit plan should be prepared so that, should this decision be taken, AHDB's withdrawal from the project would not jeopardise the smooth running of what may become a vital part of the supply chain. Finer details on the wording of governance to be delegated and agreed at Leadership Group.

Action: Amendment to slide Digital Grain Passport – Seeking Approval – Section 7.2.1 ‘to seek mediation through a legally trained person’ add and/or a trade expert (SW)

Action: In relation to voting, it was agreed the wording would be taken to the Leadership Group to discuss at the next meeting on 22 November 2024 (TC, SW)

AGENDA ITEM 7 –CEREALS AND OILSEEDS SECTOR – FINANCIAL REPORT

TH shared 31 October figures that were only finalised the previous day and supersedes the figures in the pack and represents the latest position. Council welcomed being presented with the most up to date information, but expressed difficulty in being presented with the new numbers and the confusion it caused. Discussion on core communications expenditure and how reported within workstreams. PS advised council there is a probable 30% increase in costs for Recommended Lists and needs to be considered on the upcoming 5 year review of the programme. Key highlights – reduced expenditure against budget / projected reserves are higher than previously forecast.

Note: SW requested that financial information not be shared with the council unless TH, SW and council have had sight of the information prior to the meeting at least 48 hours prior. (TH)

Action: Figures to 31 October to be shared with Council (TH)

Action: Recommended List Programme to be reviewed at the January 2025 meeting. (JW/SW)

Action: to provide the council with the Comms spend per project for this budget year (TH)

AGENDA ITEM 8 – SCENARIO ANALYSIS

DE explained to the council that AHDB have been looking at scenario analysis taking into assumptions of SFI impact, forecasting on production and looking at usage of crop and consumption. Projections showed that SFI was a continuous, but not significant drag on projected levy revenue. More significant was that on a medium forecast harvest, at current expenditure levels, the sector was forecast to slip below minimum reserve levels in future years.

SW introduced the principal areas of spend by workstream for the council to discuss with particular focus on the first four by value, RL, IPM, MI and Comms/Events.

Action: revisit the Statutory Instrument in relation to reserves (TC, SW)

Action: revisit at next Sector Council Meeting, January 2025, executive to produce more precise figures for the next 3 years (DE/SW)



AGENDA ITEM 9 – BUSINESS PLAN

The Council had productive discussions on the four key areas (essentials) explained by SW and the timeline for the next steps of Business Planning process for 2025/26

PD raised Gender Pay Gap and reference within the Business Plan and TH confirmed that across the business there was no difference in pay if a man or woman was doing the same role and TC reassured the Council that the topic is within the remit of the AHDB Remuneration and Nominations Committee and are obligated to report.

Action: RSM Evaluation on Gender Pay Gap at AHDB – work with risk and audit committee. (SW)

Action: Establish the number of farmers on Farmbench. (SW)

Action: Amend typo on the PowerPoint slide RK&E to R&KE (SJ)

AGENDA ITEM 10 – 5% ADMIN LEVY

TC gave an overview to the council on the current situation and that SW is actively involved in meetings. Future decision to be made by the council at the next Council meeting January 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 11 – EVALUATION UPDATE

Council having discussed the list have decided to bring forward RL for an internal review 2025/26 and external review of Reputation for 2025/26 with the removal of Sector Engagement for 2025/26.

Action: Budget allocation for 2025/26 evaluation and update sector council on tender process. (SW/GA)

AGENDA ITEM 12 – COMMUNICATIONS

WJ and RT took the Council through the priorities of the Communications Task and Finish Group and the 5-point priority plan and status of each priority.

The Council were informed of the AHDB commissioned quantitative research set up to understand how levy payers interact with various comms channels and how approaches could be shaped to achieve more impact. The council were advised of the key takeaways for marginal gain and key takeaways for multi channels, events and social media.

The Council were advised of a change within the Communications team structure to ensure clear ways of working across the communications function and alignment to sector ambitions. To achieve this a Sector comms lead for C&O has been re-aligned and will report to the Sector Director.

The council members were taken through a series of options in relation to the production and distribution of Arable Focus to LP's and accepted the clear recommendation from the Sector Director (SW) on the removal of direct posting.

Action: Finalise modes of communication for Arable Focus, external communication to members on cancellation of mailing date of 12-month review and measurements/analytics inclusive of new cost structure (SW)

AGENDA ITEM 13 – RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

AR gave a thorough update to the sector council on the one-off research commissioning and particularly the current financial position on the various projects to 2027/28 and the remaining potential funding for future projects could work in practice subject to council prioritisation.

The Council approved desk study on nutrient release from cover crops with AR arranging the tender with R& KE to make the decision

The Council were updated further on the Contaminants monitoring (main project) and advised of the proposed change to current activity, with additional analyte testing, to be incorporated into the main project. The council gave their approval to JW to start a competitive tender process with a caveat on duration of 24 + 12 + 12 months rather than the proposed 36 months plus up to two 12-month extensions.

Succession planning was discussed in relation to the pending retirement of Dhan Bhandari in the New Year where Christina Grant has been working with Dhan for the past twelve months. The Chair



conveyed his and the council members sincere thanks for a lifetime of service by Dhan Bhandari to LP's.
The Council approved to commission additional testing of unprocessed raw commodities, collected by the main contaminants monitoring project
The Council supported the start of a competitive tender process for the monitoring and understanding fungicide resistance development in cereal pathogens.
<i>Action: To investigate funding opportunities from elsewhere inclusive of partnerships/collaboration) to bring to the next Sector Council meeting and showcase new channels of communicating work. (JW)</i>
<i>Action: Laboratory gap analysis to be sent via AIC to JW (SN/CP)</i>
The Council approved the request to start a competitive tender process on the Fungicide Performance (wheat, barley, OSR) project. Council approved 24 months plus one plus one.
The Council approved an increase in budget in relation to the Assessment of Fusarium mycotoxins in UK RL oat varieties.
The AHDB team will remain in contact with the Food Fortress team and opportunities to share data and risk assessment will be explored and the Council approved Queens University being made aware of the tender process for the next phase of the AHDB grain contaminants monitoring project.
AGENDA ITEM 14 – RL EVENTS AND RB209 WITHIN WALES
Seeking approval of a budget for the event series and the "Lost the Plot" tagline for the events. Following lengthy discussion, Council agreed for OJ to make it all work on a budget of 60K, with the only stipulation of no driving between sites and further consideration given to the tag line but the general concept was agreed. Option to reduce from 4 to 3 sites to stay within budget.
OJ was thanked for the information in relation to RB209 in relation to Wales and NI. In Wales, RB209 not legal requirement to follow. Must do a NMP of which RB209 is mentioned as a source of information to help but so is PLANET and other recognised nutrition systems. In NI RB209 is a legal requirement to follow. You must treat its upper limits as maximums unless you have agronomic justification. It specifically mentions RB209 as the system to follow to be compliant and PLANET etc is not mentioned.
<i>Action: Production of a report in relation to RB209 and the devolved nations (OJ)</i>
AGENDA ITEM 15 – RED TRACTOR ASSURANCE
TC gave a summary on the commission of the report to which AHDB have commented and invited stakeholders to make further comment.
<i>Action: To look out the original remit and identify Council requirements from the minutes and emails (SW)</i>
<i>Action: Review timeline and actions with regard communication of the report. (TC, SW, DE)</i>
AGENDA ITEM 16 – ENVIRONMENT UPDATE
This item was postponed until the January 2025 Sector Council Meeting and an apology was issued to KB for any inconvenience caused.
AGENDA ITEM 17 – DATA CUSTODIAN
This item was postponed until the January 2025 Sector Council Meeting and an apology was issued to KB for any inconvenience caused.
AGENDA ITEM 18 – FUTURE MEETING DATE
8:30AM, Friday 17 January 20205 – Sector Council Meeting (in person)
AGENDA ITEM 19 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS
PD requested a future discussion in Agri-leader and its value for money for LP
There being no further business the meeting closed at 14:50hrs.

