

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE CEREALS & OILSEEDS SECTOR COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2023 AT 08.30 A.M.
AHDB BOARD ROOM & MS TEAMS**

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE FOR RELEVANT ITEM:

Jenn Birrell (JB), Ken Boyns (KB), David Eudall (DE), Paul Flanagan (PF), Mike Gooding (MG), Tony Holmes (TH) (MS Teams), Will Jackson (WJ) , Ana Reynolds (AR), Alison Thomas (AT) (minutes), Izak van Heerden (IvH) , Jack Watts (JWa) , Jenna Watts (JW)

CHAIR’S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He began by thanking everyone for their support in recent weeks during the Funding Your Future campaign, and in particular David Bell, Polly Davies and Richard Orr, for their support in securing letters of support from the unions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively. He also paid tribute to WJ and his team for the successful staging of the live event on 9 November.
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
There were no apologies for absence.
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No new declarations of interest were made.
MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2023
The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting to be signed by the Chair.
MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION POINTS FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2023
Most actions had either been completed or were on future meeting agendas for discussion.
Two outstanding actions were highlighted: the development of a suitable process for providing evidence to policymakers (which was marked as red on the main board’s dashboard), and the creation of a C&O levy collection flowchart. Progress on both had been delayed owing to workload and lack of resource whilst other more pressing work, including that associated with the levy increase, had been prioritised.
LEVY RATE INCREASE
KB summarised activity and discussions which had taken place with key industry stakeholders which had resulted in the receipt of nine letters. Almost all responses were positive, albeit some stakeholders were seeking assurances that AHDB would improve delivery in some areas.
It was agreed that all responses should be formally acknowledged and that where support had been pledged subject to conditions, realistic timescales for delivery against those should be identified to help manage expectations. It was also proposed that annual meetings should be scheduled with stakeholders in the autumn to strengthen and maintain relationships and provide feedback on progress.
Action: Stakeholder responses to be formally acknowledged and realistic timescales for delivery against their requests/conditions identified



Following discussion the council agreed that it wished to recommend to the AHDB Board and ministers an increase in the levy rate of c.26% eg from 46p/t to 58p/t for cereals growers with similar increases for all categories of the levy, ideally with effect from April 2024.

The council also requested that the AHDB Board negotiate with Defra to simplify the process for adjusting the levy rate to enable it to be increased or decreased more easily in future.

ANNUAL PLAN AND BUDGET 2024/25

The Chair thanked council members for their contributions over dinner the previous evening when an informal, preliminary discussion about preparation for an annual plan and the budget in 2024/25 had taken place.

Building on that discussion, KB gave a presentation during which he drew the council's attention to actions arising from the Funding Your Future campaign and stakeholders' feedback, proposals for major areas of spend in 2024/25 and implications for the sector if the levy increase was not approved by Ministers. The following key points were noted:

- The focus for all teams in 2024/25 must be on improving comms and engagement.
- The ability to demonstrate return on investment and value for money to levy payers would be key.
- The website must be significantly improved as soon as possible. The council was informed that that implementing improvements needed to be considered as part of the wider data and engagement strategy currently being developed and yet to be reviewed by the AHDB board.
- The council requested that the £1m identified for one-off research and development be ring-fenced and that spending of this money be carefully monitored and reported on to the council by the research sub-committee.
- *Supporting our Industry to Deliver Sustainable Change* – the importance of this work was acknowledged, and it was agreed that a proposal setting out the potential costs involved in collecting baselining data and providing additional staff resource to support this activity would be prepared. This would be shared with the council at its February meeting which John Gilliland would also be invited to attend.
- *Educating the Consumers of the Future* - noting a likely request for increased funding to support this work, the council requested that it be given the option to either contribute no budget or at least a lesser contribution than other sectors which derived greater benefit.

Action: £1m identified for one-off research and development to be ring-fenced and spending carefully monitored and reported on to the council by the research sub-committee.

Action: Proposal on collecting baseline data and additional staff resource required to support activity to be presented to the council in February and John Gilliland be invited to attend.

RED TRACTOR & ASSURANCE

DE provided an update on activity which had taken place since the council's discussions at its meeting in October and clarified the evidence gathering and educational work which AHDB was undertaking on behalf of beef and lamb and regarding crop assurance explaining how this differed from the governance and independent strategic reviews which had been called for in the wake of the Greener Farms Commitment.

JWa gave a short presentation on the combinable crop assurance review setting out its scope and objectives and outlining the consortium expertise required to deliver the work which would be complete in May/June 2024 at the earliest.

The council strongly supported the approach to the crop assurance review recognising that, if communicated effectively, the information gathered during the process would increase understanding and be an invaluable source of evidence for years to come.

The importance of comms around the review was recognised and it was confirmed that a detailed plan would be developed in due course.

The council sought confirmation that AHDB would have input to the wider independent strategic review and that it would seek to ensure that the evidence provided through its own crop assurance evidence gathering would be considered as part of this process. KB advised that AHDB was already involved in discussions.



RESEARCH & KE

MG drew attention to the draft Terms of Reference for the Research & KE Sub-committee which would be responsible for overseeing the set-up and delivery of the programme designed to encourage and capture research ideas in the C&O sector. He emphasised that the sub-committee would ensure the fair and transparent assessment of all ideas put forward for their scientific rigour and value for the levy payer and would make recommendations on a quarterly basis to the sector council which would ultimately decide whether ideas were approved or rejected.

The council sought assurance the AHDB brand would receive appropriate recognition by those awarded funding. It was confirmed by MG that this would be a condition of any funding granted.

It had already been agreed that JS would Chair and DB would serve on the sub-committee. Two more sector council members were required. The Chair requested that members contact JS directly if they wished to join. The sub-committee would also include two levy paying non-council members and senior members of staff. Its first meeting was likely to take place in the new year.

The council formally approved the terms of reference for the sub-committee as presented.

RB209 STRATEGIC REVIEW

DB outlined the aims of the strategic review highlighting the importance of using it to ensure the scope, role and purpose of RB209 was clearly defined, and that technical content was pitched appropriately to meet levy payers' needs. The need for adequate representation of grassland and cropping sectors was also emphasised. To-date steering group representatives from the Beef & Lamb and Dairy sector councils had not been identified but it was anticipated that this would be resolved following sector council meetings this week. The review would also provide an opportunity to consider and strengthen governance.

The sector council confirmed its agreement with the proposals and the terms of reference for the review committee as presented.

CONTAMINANTS MONITORING

JW drew attention to her paper which provided more detail to support the request for funding to conduct additional contaminants monitoring testing for samples collected from harvest 2023, as requested by the council in September.

In considering the three possible options presented in the paper, the council voted in favour of industry partners who had requested the additional testing funding it, and that AHDB should not contribute towards the cost. PD abstained from the vote.

JW highlighted a risk that funding might not be forthcoming from industry partners for two of the tests, Fosetyl-AI in malting barley and field mycotoxins in organic oats, though it was suggested by CP that the FSA might be willing to support and fund this testing.

A proposal to conduct a strategic review of activity to determine how contaminants monitoring work should develop was outlined and the council asked to consider a one-year extension of the current AHDB contaminants monitoring project to July 2025 to allow time for this to be conducted. The council approved this in principle, subject to a final decision on the project's future being made in February 2024 when the strategic approach would be presented for consideration.

Action: Strategic proposal for future of contaminants monitoring to be presented to the council in February

CEREALS 2024

Plans for AHDB's presence at Cereals 2024 including a better location, more dynamic attractions, organised and trained staffing and accurate visitor recording were outlined by MG. Council approval of the budget was sought.

The council requested that CPD points be included for practical demonstrations and also suggested that more could be done on the stand to highlight AHDB's support for the industry through its provision of PhD funding.

Although there was a suggestion that AHDB should withdraw its presence from the event altogether, this motion was not carried with most members voting in favour of a presence in 2024 on the



understanding that accurate visitor data would be available post-event to help inform its decision about AHDB's presence in 2025 and its value to levy payers.

PD requested that a "Women in Arable" event be considered as part of the proposals for AHDB's presence at the event.

The council also requested more detail about the stand and sight of a visual concept. It was agreed that this would be shared by MG once tender responses had been received and before any final decisions were made on the content and messaging.

Action: Further detail of Cereals stand including visual concept to be shared with council before any final decisions were made on the content and messaging.

DB commented on AHDB's presence at other events, including the recent Croptec event, and emphasised the importance of activity being owned by the KE team with support and input from the Events and Comms teams.

DIGITAL GRAIN PASSPORT (DGP)

DE provided an update on DGP, reminding the council that the industry led consultation was now underway following the publication of the business case by the DGP Leadership Group on 20 November. The Group would be meeting on 15 December to consider responses but to-date no material issues had been raised but might be later in the process.

The procurement process for securing a data partner was underway to obtain accurate final development costs but the council was assured that no contracts would be awarded until a decision on the DGP had been made.

The Chair reported that he had attended the Leadership Group's meeting on Friday 1 December

The Chair also confirmed that the AHDB ARAC would be considering the business case and that its Chair, Sarah Pumfrett, would be presenting to the sector council on the risks associated with the DGP.

AGRILEADER

IvH provided an overview of the AgriLeader Programme, its objectives and current activities including delivery of the annual AgriLeader Forum event, sponsorship of the Nuffield Conference and its scholars, and the Circle of influencers initiative designed to widen AHDB's reach.

The Council debated the merits of the activities being undertaken. There was recognition of the importance of the AgriLeader programme and its use of multiple channels and different media platforms to interact with as wide an audience as possible, a desire to see AHDB receive a greater return on its investment in the Nuffield conference and scholarship programme and to see KPIs and measurables strengthened and refined to help inform decision-making about future delivery of activity.

The Council was broadly supportive of the work described and the proposed direction of travel which would result in closer working relationships and synergy between the activity of the AgriLeader and KE teams.

DASHBOARDS – MEASURABLES & KPIs

In reviewing the dashboard, the council noted that four workstreams, Reputation, Exports, Environment and Engagement did not yet have defined KPIs and measurables. KB provided explanations for the delay in determining these and gave an assurance that these would be complete by the February council meeting.

Action: Reputation, Exports, Environment and Engagement KPIs and measurables to be completed by February sector council meeting

The Chair emphasised the importance of the council considering the KPIs and measurables alongside papers which were presented at meetings to help determine the value and relevance of proposed work and its benefit to levy payers and inform its decision making. It was suggested that the dashboard be developed further to include a one-line summary of each workstream's performance against budget (as shown in the Financial Report).

Action: Dashboard to be developed further to include a one-line summary of each workstream's performance against budget (as shown in the Financial Report).



CEREALS & OILSEEDS FINANCIAL REPORT

The financial report was taken as read with no queries raised.

COUNCIL MEMBER & LEVY PAYER FEEDBACK

No additional feedback that had not already been shared during the meeting was reported.

2024 MEETING DATES

Due to the NFU Conference taking place on Tuesday 20 February, it was proposed that the next council meeting be held on the afternoon of Monday 19 February. This was agreed. Other formal meeting dates were agreed as:

Tuesday 4 June 2024
Wednesday 11 September 2024
Wednesday 20 November 2024

It was likely that additional interim meetings would be required during the year and agreed that these should be diarised.

Action: Additional interim Council meetings to be diarised**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Council members who had attended the recent GMO Conference in York congratulated DE and his team on a successful event.

A question was raised regarding the lack of maltster representation on the council. It was confirmed that the possibility of co-opting a member for a year was being explored with the Maltsters Association of Great Britain. The council would be kept informed.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 19 February 2024

