

**SUMMARY OF AHDB POTATO BOARD
HELD ON 23RD JANUARY 2020
WOODSIDE HOTEL, GLASSHOUSE LANE, KENILWORTH**

PRESENT: Sophie Churchill (Chair), Jim Cargill, Alison Levett, Phil Huggon, Dan Metherringham, Jonathan Papworth, Andrew Skea, Will Shakeshaft, Mark Taylor, Michael Welham, Chris Wilson

APOLOGIES: Dan Metherringham

IN ATTENDANCE: Rob Clayton, Sue Cleaver (SCI) (minutes), Anna Farrell, Rebecca Geraghty, Jane King

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, AND DECLARATIONS OF BUSINESS INTERESTS

The Chair opened the meeting at 8:30am and welcomed those in attendance. Apologies were received from DM. WS would be joining the meeting at 10am.

There were no new declarations of interest. The Board were reminded that Mark Taylor was also the Chair of the Fresh Potato Suppliers Association, which had been declared at previous meetings.

The Chair thanked AHDB staff and the business contingency group for dealing so swiftly with the electrical fire at HQ.

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 12TH NOVEMBER 2019

The minutes from the meeting held on 12TH November 2019 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

The Board agreed that the March Open Board meeting in York would be a good opportunity to meet Patrick Hughes, Head of Potato Export Development.

MATTERS ARISING

The Potato Treater Group was planning a combined event in March with Scotland's Aphid Management Group (constituting staff from SRUC, SASA, JHI and Scottish Agronomy). The Treater Group remit was to provide an industry perspective on Knowledge Transfer priorities.

Showcasing best practice examples: Prince Edward Island in Canada has a high density of potato crops, and was tackling issues such as overuse of pesticide, soil degradation, and water quality. A group from PEI visited last year and the KE team were planning an exchange visit to learn from their best practice. Another proposal was to locate the next Strategic Dairy Farm in an environmentally stressed area to follow their journey and demonstrate what can be achieved.

CHAIR'S UPDATE and CEO EXTENDED DISCUSSION

The Chair welcomed JK to the meeting. JK thanked the Potato Board for their willingness to hold an Open Board and wanted to encourage the other sector boards to follow suit.

AL chaired agenda item due to potential conflict of interest during Chair recruitment discussion.

JK updated the Board regarding Request for Views results, and the Board discussed some of the implications including a potential change in board governance structure and a five year ballot. Defra would be publishing the results in full with a written Foreword in the near future.

JK outlined the timescale and framework for recruitment of the AHDB Chair and sector board Chairs. There had been delay due to changing ministers, Brexit and the Defra Request for Views results. SC was prepared to act as an interim Chair for a further few months on the condition that a recruitment process was initiated as soon as possible and she would be seeking reassurance on this before committing to an extension.

It was MT's last meeting and JK thanked him for being the epitome of a wonderful Board member; challenging, supportive, encouraging and an honest voice.

It was noted that continued uncertainty around AHDB had a negative effect. The formation of a new agricultural policy presented an opportunity to engage with farmers, who still needed to be more competitive, more productive and more efficient. The role of AHDB was also to challenge farmers out of their comfort zone. The Board discussed different levy collection methods and their implications.

OPEN BOARD MEETING: PLANS AND IDEAS

The March Open Board would take place at York Racecourse. The Board discussed layout of the room and practicalities of the day, and gave approval for the EventBrite link to go live. The open agenda would include a sign off of budget, update on strategy, the parameters of the review of levy collection, developments in the export function and local KE. At the end there would be an opportunity to feed back and talk about issues raised in the agenda.

OPERATIONAL REPORT

RC updated the Board on operational matters. The floods and difficult harvest had affected grower engagement at all levels. The Board discussed the roll-out of Farmbench and the use of strategic partnerships to engage a bigger audience. The Board recognised that the difficult October – December season had affected engagement KPIs, and encouraged the Knowledge Exchange teams and Farm Economics teams to continue pushing forward. It was noted that there should be continued vigilance to ensure against event duplication.

[Post meeting note: the target of 200 levy payers engaged has in fact been met].

International comparisons would not be continued in the next strategy. The Board requested that Patrick Hughes report on the export work that is taking place at the next meeting.

The Board felt that the "red, amber, green" system on the reports was still inaccurate and the consequences of the colour coding were not clear. It was thought that Farmbench should be set to red. From April 2020 the Operational Report would be using a new system based on the REED model (Result, Effectiveness, Engagement, Delivery). The Board wanted to see clearly know what action is taking when a project is not on track.

FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND LEVY

The amount of levy collected would be lower than initially planned for. The Board noted the work that had taken place to re-examine outgoings and drive down costs where possible to stay in budget. The high overhead of staffing was discussed, and the inflexibility in this area was noted.

LEVY DISCUSSION PAPER

RC introduced the discussion surrounding a review of the levy collection mechanism. The Board explored the pros and cons of the various levy collection methods used in different sectors and by other countries. The next stage was to discuss the options with industry, and then build financial models following this discussion. The approximate timeline for completion of the project would be 12 months. Collection of levy was written into legislation; any changes to the limits written into the statutory instrument would require parliamentary consultation and approval. The Board proposed that this would be a good topic to include at the Open Board meeting.

GOVERNANCE OF STORAGE RESEARCH

JP and WS had taken over from MT on the Project steering group. JP was the new Chair of the Storage Advisory Group at Sutton Bridge. RC updated the Board regarding timelines and progress. The Board discussed the implications to staff, the importance of maintaining storage research, the procurement and research tender process, and how the transition year will look both financially and for staff. They were keen that the project lead was a high calibre appointment and emphasised the need to stay on target for all deadlines.

MARKETING CAMPAIGN UPDATE

AF gave an update on the marketing campaign work. The Board were in agreement to request development of a carefully targeted advertising campaign. A smaller regional focussed campaign was agreed to show proof of concept, primarily using social media and selective influencers. Kantar data would be used to decide which audience to target. The Board discussed timings for campaign launch, and their preference was to aim for a July launch to avoid political issues in September/October.

UPDATE ON STRATEGY

RC gave a recap on the strategy decisions so far. The consultation timetable had been pushed back into the summer due to the delayed appointment of the new AHDB Chair. The Board would discuss/approve the strategy proposals and budget at the 19th March Board, and the budget would then be put to the main Board for approval on the 24th March.

WS and AS volunteered to sit on the budget working group.

AOB

The Chair closed the Potato Board meeting at 1:30pm.