



**Minutes of the Open Meeting
of the
Agri-Food and Bio-Sciences Institute (AFBI) Board
held at
AFBI Newforge (Headquarters), Belfast
on Wednesday 25 February 2009 at 10.45 am**

Present – Board Members

Mr Sean Hogan, Chairperson
Prof David McDowell, Deputy
Chairperson
Mr James Noble
Mr Kieran Campbell
Dr Michael Hollywood
Mr Nicholas Mack
Prof Stewart McNulty
Dr Christine Kennedy
Mr John Rankin
Mr John McKinley
Prof Grace Mulcahy
Mr Michael Walker

In Attendance – AFBI Executive

Dr George McIlroy, Chief Executive Officer
Dr Seamus Kennedy, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Dr Michael Camlin, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Dr Arthur Gilmour, Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Acting)
Dr Robin Boyd, Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Acting)
Dr David Bryson, Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Acting)
Prof Brian Adair, Head of Virology Branch
Dr David Graham, Head of Bacteriology Branch
Dr Walter Crozier, Head of Fisheries & Aquatic Ecosystems Branch
Dr Catherine Watson, Head of Agri-Environment Branch
Dr David Kilpatrick, Head of Biometrics & Information Systems Branch
Mr Joel Ferguson, AFBI Business Manager
Mr Venkat Deshpande, AFBI Head of Finance
Dr Eileen Stewart, Project Manager, Business Continuity Management
Mr Stephen Cousins, AFBI Secretariat

Visitors

Prof Jack Pearce
Donna Blaney - NI Environment Agency
Joanne Lenzi - NI-CO
Sinead Doyle - NI Veterinary Today
Lynsay Alcorn - AgriSearch
James Brown - AgriSearch Dairy Advisory
Stephen Cross - Delivery & Innovation Division, Department of Finance & Personnel
Pauline Wilson - Delivery & Innovation Division, Department of Finance & Personnel
John Henning - Head of Agriculture, Northern Bank
Bernadette McGahon - InterTradeIreland
Joe Lawson - Moy Park
Harry Sinclair - Ulster Farmers Union
James Campbell - Irish Farmers Journal
Averil Gaw - AFBI Sponsor Branch

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chair opened the meeting with a word of welcome and referred to the good cross section of representatives from the agri-food industry.

The Chair took the opportunity to reflect on AFBI's aims and objectives, the work that AFBI undertakes in support of local government and industry and the commitment of the Board in maintaining an environment in which staff performance and innovation are rewarded.

During the course of his opening address, the Chair mentioned some of the main aims and advances that AFBI had made during the year -

1. The promotion of AFBI at both home and abroad remains a critical element of AFBI's strategic business development and while 85% of the work programme is currently undertaken on behalf of DARD, the customer base has been extended to both the public and private sectors resulting in additional funding of approximately £8m.
2. The scientific skills and expertise, together with specialist facilities and the flexibility to deliver scientific services to both government and the commercial market have been ably demonstrated recently with the analytical and development work undertaken on behalf of DARD during the dioxin emergency.
3. The promotion of the Cattle Health Scheme through presentations to farmers, breed societies, veterinary practitioners etc is continuing with approximately forty herds officially signed up. In some cases herds have gone through their second cycle of testing and have now achieved accredited status. Income figures for the current financial year to date show that this Scheme has generated approximately £51k.

In conclusion the Chair acknowledged the tremendous support that AFBI had received from the DARD Minister, Mrs Michelle Gildernew MP MLA, the Northern Ireland Executive, other local Government Departments, MEPs, Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly and all AFBI stakeholders.

2. Presentations

Following the Chair's opening address the meeting proceeded with three presentations given by members of the AFBI Executive.

The Chair advised that the topics had been chosen because of their relevance to current issues and the importance the Board attached to informing stakeholders of the direction the organisation was taking.

The three presentations were –

- 1. AFBI Emergency Response Capability**
- 2. AFBI Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2007/08**
- 3. AFBI Innovations and Commercialisation Programme**

3. Question and Answer Session

Following the conclusion of the presentations the Deputy Chair invited any questions from the floor and a number of visitors took the opportunity to raise queries on issues such as –

- the current economic downturn;
- the turn around time for samples being submitted to the Central Science Laboratory;
- the extent to which the Executive and Board keeps a “*weather eye*” open in terms of what AFBI may have to respond to in future;
- AFBI’s financial position.

In relation to all of the queries raised the Board or the Executive were able to respond and provide the visitors with a satisfactory answer or explanation.

With no further business the Chair thanked everyone for attending. The Chair hoped that the visitors had found the meeting to be productive and that they had a better understanding of AFBI and the issues currently being faced by the organisation.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____