



**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Board Strategy Workshop
held at Manor Suite, AFBI Greenmount, CAFRE
on 7 February 2019 at 10.00am**

Present – Board Members

Mr Colin Coffey, Deputy Chair	Dr Michelle Costello-Smith	Ms Joan Houston
Mrs Roberta Brownlee	Ms Theresa Cullen	Mrs Maureen McKeague
Mr Ian Buchanan	Mrs Fiona Hanna	Mrs Sharon Smyth
Ms Kate Burns	Dr Richard Horton	Mr Richard Solomon

In Attendance - AFBI Executive

Dr Stanley McDowell, Chief Executive Officer
Dr Elizabeth Magowan, Director of Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division
Dr Alastair Douglas, Acting Director of Veterinary Sciences Division
Mrs Josephine Kelly, Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs Division

Mr James Adams, AFBI Secretariat

Visitor

Mr Martin McKendry, College Director, College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (Item 6)
Dr Eric Long, Head of Knowledge Advisory Service, College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (Item 6)

1. Chairman's Introduction and Update

ACTION

The Deputy Chair welcomed everyone to the Board workshop.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of the Board Chairman, Mr Colm McKenna and the AFBI Board Apprentice, Ms Nula Kilmartin.

3. Conflict of Interests/Register of Interests Declaration

Mr Solomon declared a potential conflict of interest and the Board agreed that he would remove himself from the meeting at the appropriate time. It was also agreed that, if further discussions gave rise to a potential conflict, Mr Solomon would again remove himself from the meeting.

4. Draft Minutes of the AFBI Board Workshop held on 24 October 2018

ACTION

The draft minutes from the AFBI Board workshop held on 24 October 2018 were approved as an accurate reflection of the business conducted at the meeting.

5. Action Sheet from AFBI Board Strategy Workshop held on 24 October 2018

The Board noted the progress against actions as per the action sheet and that a number had been completed at the December 2018 Board meeting.

5.1 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference

Ms Houston confirmed that the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee had considered their Terms of Reference (ToR) at its self-assessment meeting on 29 January 2019 and confirmed that matters in relation to Health and Safety reporting have now been incorporated.

Mr Solomon left the meeting

6. Discussion Session

6.1 Presentation by Mr Martin McKendry, College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)

The Board welcomed Mr McKendry and Dr Long to the meeting and thanked CAFRE for hosting the AFBI Board Workshop at their Greenmount Campus.

Mr McKendry outlined CAFRE's role within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and how it contributes to departmental objectives by delivering educational programmes, knowledge transfer as well as its technology transfer programme. CAFRE's aim is to be the knowledge centre for the agri-food sector and Mr McKendry acknowledged the important role of AFBI in generating knowledge through its scientific platforms.

Mr McKendry then gave an overview of the CAFRE structure including the main courses available, and recent enrolment trends, at its three campuses at Greenmount, Loughry and Enniskillen. In this regard CAFRE aims to broaden its curriculum to include higher education in agriculture, higher level apprenticeships and an Honours Degree in the area of Horticulture. The strong links with industry, such as through bursary's, was also highlighted and Mr McKendry stated that approximately 98% of CAFRE students gain employment or move on to further/higher education courses.

CAFRE's Knowledge Advisory Service (KAS) provides front-end knowledge transfer for DAERA. Environmental factors are currently central to the KAS with a number of proactive programmes examining the impact of economic growth on environmental performance and farm resilience. The KAS is policy driven and facilitated by a number of knowledge transfer schemes designed to enhance knowledge and drive innovation such as business development groups, farm innovation visits and a network of technology demonstration farms.

6.2 AFBI/CAFRE – Future Collaboration

Mr McKendry stated that there had been a number of good examples of CAFRE/AFBI collaboration in such areas as dairy and ammonia. CAFRE is also continuing to work with AFBI in relation to the Beef Facilities Business Case for AFBI Hillsborough.

Mr McKendry outlined a number of key DAERA policies relevant to AFBI and CAFRE. A DAERA Knowledge Framework document had been published in January 2019 which includes some excellent high level principles which could be used as a platform to build on the AFBI/CAFRE relationship.

Following a detailed question and answer session the Board thanked Mr McKendry and Dr Long for the excellent presentation which demonstrated the potential synergies between AFBI and CAFRE and that there is a clear need for both to work cohesively together in order to meet challenges and maximise benefits for the agri-food sector.

Mr Solomon returned to the meeting

7. **AFBI Board Business**

7.1 AFBI Annual Report and Accounts 2017/18 – Update

Mrs Kelly updated the Board in relation to the AFBI Annual Report and Accounts 2017/18 since the Board meeting held on 12 December 2019.

At the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 29 January 2019, AFBI were informed that the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) wished to append a report to the AFBI Accounts 2017/18. Mrs Kelly tabled a copy of the draft report, recently received from the Northern Ireland Audit Office, and advised that the Executive will be providing management responses within two weeks.

Following a detailed discussion, it was agreed that the Executive would meet with a number of members of the Board prior to the finalisation of the response to the report. Ongoing procedures in relation to the issues raised in the report will be considered by the Organisational Development and Human Resources Committee.

**Board/
Exec**

7.2 AFBI Corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2018/19 at 31 December 2018

Mrs Kelly presented the report on AFBI's Corporate KPIs 2018/19 as at 31 December 2019. In discussing the report the board made a number of comments which the Executive agreed to consider.

7.3 Draft AFBI Business Plan 2019/20

Mr Montgomery presented the draft AFBI Business Plan 2019/20 which had been developed in line with year 2 of the AFBI Corporate Plan 2018-2022. In setting the KPIs for 2019/20, consideration of the key themes from the DAERA Tailored Review of AFBI and the need to ensure continued alignment with DAERA Strategic Outcomes had been undertaken.

In discussing the KPIs 2019/20 it was noted that the development of the AFBI Science Strategy to 2030 will need to take cognisance of the development of the DAERA Strategy.

A number of milestones will be monitored for the KPIs which will enhance their in-year monitoring. The Board noted that it was important that the Executive's assurance that the KPIs can be achieved and that they will be monitored on a quarterly basis before presentation to the Board.

A number of comments were provided by the Board on the draft AFBI Business Plan 2019/20 and any further comments, via correspondence, were welcomed. The revised business plan will be presented to the March meeting of the AFBI Board.

**Board/
Exec**

7.4 UK exit from the EU – Update

In terms of planning for the UK exit from the EU, Mr Montgomery informed the Board that AFBI remains in close contact with the Department and had contributed to a number of NI Executive requests for information.

The potential impact on AFBI after the UK exit from the EU had been considered by senior staff and collated returns indicate potential disruption of purchase supply chains as a key concern. To mitigate against this AFBI is examining the capacity to increase end of year stock levels.

8. Dates of AFBI Board and Strategy Workshop Meetings

8.1 Proposed Dates for AFBI Board Meetings 2019/20

The proposed dates for the AFBI Board Meetings for 2019/20 were noted. Initial invites will be issued electronically and Board members will notify the Secretariat of any potential diary clashes.

**Sec/
Board**

8.2 Date of next AFBI Board Meeting

The date of the next AFBI Board Meeting will take place on Thursday 14 March 2019 at AFBI Newforge.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 AFBI QUB Alliance

The Board sought an update on the progress of the AFBI QUB Alliance and the following points were noted:-

- A number of meetings have been held between senior AFBI and QUB staff;
- Recruitment of a project manager is ongoing. AFBI will have two representatives on the recruitment panel;
- Draft Terms of Reference for Science and Governance Committees have been developed and are subject to further consideration;
- A joint event is planned for this year's Balmoral Show;

- A George Scott Robertson lecture was discussed and a nomination had been proposed.

In noting the updates the Board asked that the item be placed on the Agenda for the March 2019 Board meeting.

Sec

9.2 AFBI Science Outlook Conference

The Executive confirmed that the AFBI Science Outlook Conference had been set for Wednesday 3 April 2019.

9.3 DAERA/AFBI Joint Board Meeting – 19 February 2019

The Deputy Chair informed Board members that the Chairman wishes to arrange a pre-meeting for attendees of the DAERA/AFBI Joint Board meeting on the 19 February 2019. Attendees confirmed a preference for Wednesday 13 February. The Secretary will revert to the Chair and make the necessary arrangements.

Sec

Tour of CAFRE Farm Facilities

At the conclusion of the meeting Board members were provided with a tour of the CAFRE farm facilities.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____