



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
(AFBI) Board held at AFBI HQ Newforge
on Tuesday 27 March 2012 at 10.00am**

Present – Board Members

Mr Sean Hogan, Chair
Prof David McDowell, D/Chair
Mr Michael Walker
Mr Seamus McCaffrey
Mr Alan McKeown
Mrs Hilda Stewart
Mr John Rankin
Mr James Noble
Mr Bob McCann
Mrs Hilary McCartan
Prof Stewart McNulty
Prof Grace Mulcahy
Mr Trevor Hinds

In Attendance - AFBI Executive

Prof Seamus Kennedy, CEO
Dr Michael Camlin, DCEO
Dr David Bryson, DCEO (Acting)
Dr Alistair Carson, DCEO (Acting)
Mr Joel Ferguson, Head of Corporate Services Division (Acting)
Mr Paul Brennan, Head of AFBI HR
Mrs Lynsey Alexander, AFBI Finance

Mr Stephen Cousins, AFBI Secretariat

Observers

Prof Bill McKelvey
Mr Ken Millar
Mrs Sarah Havlin
Mr David Lindsay
Prof Patrick Murphy

1. Welcome and Introduction

Action

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all present especially those who were attending as observers but would hopefully be (subject to formalities being completed) joining the AFBI Board from 1 April 2012.

The Chair also took the opportunity to acknowledge the contribution made by those members of the Board for whom this would be their last meeting having completed their term of office, namely the Deputy Chair Prof David McDowell and Board members, Mr Michael Walker, Mr John Rankin, Mr James Noble, Prof Stewart McNulty and Prof Grace Mulcahy.

2. Apologies

An apology was received on behalf of Dr Cecil McMurray who had been invited to attend as an observer but was unable to do so due to other commitments.

3. Conflict of Interests Declaration

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

4.	Draft Minutes of the Previous Board Meeting held on 28 February 2012	Action
	On a proposal from Mr John Rankin, seconded by Mrs Hilda Stewart, the Board approved the draft minutes from the previous Board meeting held on 28 February 2012 without amendment.	
5.	Matters Arising/Action Points from Previous AFBI Board Meeting held on 28 February 2012	
5.1	<u>Development of an AFBI Non-Solicitation and Protection of AFBI Intellectual Property Policy – Item 5.1</u>	
	The AFBI Non-Solicitation and Protection of AFBI Intellectual Property Policy is presently in draft and will be forwarded to the AFBI Senior Management Team before it is submitted to the AFBI Board for formal approval. The Executive are aiming to have the draft available for the AFBI Board meeting in April 2012.	Exec
5.2	<u>AFBI Overheads – Item 5.5</u>	
	The Executive confirmed that a paper on <i>AFBI Overheads</i> has been drafted. However, before presenting the draft to the AFBI Board for consideration the Executive would appreciate some input from the AFBI Board Finance Sub-Committee.	
	The Board approved of this approach and the Executive agreed to have the paper placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Finance Sub-committee meeting which is due to take place in late April 2012.	Exec
5.3	<u>Proposed Scheme of Delegation and Standing Orders for the AFBI Board – Item 5.6</u>	
	A draft paper is currently with the AFBI Senior Management Team for final comments and the Executive are aiming to have the draft available for the AFBI Board meeting in April 2012.	Exec
5.4	<u>Sharing of Financial Awards – Item 5.8</u>	
	This matter currently resides with the AFBI Executive and it is likely to be several months before the Executive is in a position to make any recommendations to the AFBI Board. The Secretary was asked to take note for future reference.	Sec
5.5	<u>AFBI Invoicing Processes – Item 5.10</u>	
	The Board agreed that this matter be referred to the next meeting of the AFBI Board Finance Sub-Committee for consideration and comment.	Finance Com

5.6	<u>Appointment of Non-DARD Business Manager – Item 11</u>	Action
	The Board expressed a desire to have an AFBI Non-DARD Business Manager appointed as soon as possible and the Executive agreed that it would treat the matter with a degree of urgency.	Exec
6.	Chair's Business	
	Other than waiting on an official Ministerial announcement in respect of the new appointments to the AFBI Board, the Chair reported that he had nothing further to report at present.	
7.	CEO's Report to the Board	
	Prof Seamus Kennedy presented his <i>CEO's Report to the Board</i> for noting and comment and in so doing highlighted a number of key items for the benefit of Board members	
7.1	<u>George Scott Robertson Memorial Lecture</u>	
	The CEO reminded Board members that this lecture would take place on the afternoon of Monday 16 April 2012 and would be presented by Prof Patrick Cunningham, Chief Scientific Advisor to the Irish Government.	
	As well as inviting Board members to attend, the CEO also asked members to publicise the event widely.	
7.2	<u>Equal Pay Deal</u>	
	The Executive provided the Board with an update on the Equal Pay Deal which had been one of the key issues raised by Trade Union Side during the annual meeting with management held on 8 March 2012.	
	Following discussion the Board reinforced its view that it still expects the obligations made to AFBI staff, including the full and fair settlement of the Equal Pay Deal, to be honoured and asked the Executive to keep Board members fully informed of further developments.	Exec
7.3	<u>DARD Work Programme 2012/13</u>	
	Work has commenced on costing the DARD Work Programme for 2012/13 and given that AFBI is once again facing a deficit in the incoming financial year, the Board accepted that having this costing information available would be critical for both AFBI and DARD during future negotiations.	
7.4	<u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Value for Money Audit</u>	
	AFBI has been working closely with DARD and a lot of evidence has been collected to counteract the initial findings of the NIAO report.	
	AFBI and DARD will now await the NIAO response and hopefully be afforded the opportunity to engage more fully before a revised report is produced.	

7.5 AFBI Science Conference

The first AFBI Science Conference was held on Friday 23 March 2012 and proved to be a success. The Executive thanked those Board members who had participated and for the positive feedback that had been received.

7.6 AFBI Estates Strategy

A working group has been established to consider and take forward proposals for the future of the AFBI Estate. As a number of key decisions will have to be made in the near future, the Executive informed the Board that it would present a paper at either the April or May Board meeting when it would seek the strategic input of Board members.

Exec**7.7** Representation in the United States of America

A job description has been agreed and interviews are due to be held during May 2012.

7.8 Retirement

The Board noted that this was Dr Bryson's final Board meeting pending his retirement on 5 April 2012. The Board and the Executive took the opportunity to thank Dr Bryson for the contribution that he has made to AFBI and wished him well in his retirement.

8. Organisational Review of AFBI

Mr Alan McKeown thanked Board members for the comments he had received following the extraordinary Board meeting held on 9 March 2012. In turn the Board asked that its appreciation for the work that was carried out by Mr Alan McKeown, in respect of this matter, be recorded.

Sec

Following consideration and examination of the latest report provided by KPMG, the Board expressed its satisfaction that all of the points raised by Board members during and after the extraordinary Board meeting had been addressed.

On a proposal from Mr Trevor Hinds, seconded by Mr Alan McKeown, the Board agreed the following action points –

1. The Board agreed, subject to comments from Trade Union Side (TUS), that it accepted the report from KPMG.
2. The Board were content for the Executive to send the report to TUS with the aim of having comments from TUS available in time for consideration during the next AFBI Board meeting in April 2012.
3. That at the same time as seeking comments from TUS, the Executive also prepare a draft timetable for implementation and that this is forwarded to Board members in advance of the next AFBI Board meeting.

Exec**Exec**

4. That the Executive consider how best to disseminate the report to AFBI staff.	Action Exec
9. Governance Issues	
9.1 <u>AFBI Risk Management</u>	
The Executive made the Board aware of a possible risk emerging that is linked to the end of year accounts. The Executive advised the Board that it was monitoring the situation and would provide a more detailed update at the next AFBI Board meeting.	Exec
9.2 <u>Whistleblowing and Fraud</u>	
There were no reports of any new cases of whistleblowing or fraud.	
9.3 <u>Health and Safety</u>	
There were no reports of any health and safety issues.	
10. AFBI HR	
10.1 <u>Starters and Leavers Report</u>	
The Board were content to note the details contained in the <i>Starters and Leavers Report</i> showing the position at the end of February 2012.	
11. AFBI Finance	
11.1 <u>Monthly Budget Monitoring Report</u>	
The <i>Monthly Budget Monitoring Report</i> was presented for noting and approval. Following consideration the Board were content to note and approve. However, as an aid to future discussion the Board accepted that there was a need for the Executive to provide an expanded supporting narrative.	Exec
Following further discussion the Board accepted a suggestion that the matter be referred to the AFBI Board Finance Sub-Committee for consideration and agreement on the depth of narrative required.	Finance Com
11.2 <u>Cash Flow Report</u>	
The Board were content to note the details contained in the Cash Flow Report showing the position at the 29 February 2012.	
12. Presentation of Minutes from Previous Audit Committee Meetings	
In presenting the minutes from the extraordinary Audit Committee meeting held on 19 January 2012 and the draft minutes from the Audit Committee meeting held on 31 January 2012, the Chair of the Audit Committee Mr Bob McCann reminded the Board that a verbal report on both meetings had	

already been given during the previous AFBI Board meeting and the minutes presented were for noting.

Action

During the subsequent discussion one of the items highlighted was the apparent lateness of papers presented to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) during the review of the 2010/11 AFBI Accounts.

The Executive informed the Board that at the commencement of the 2010/11 audit, the Executive had requested a timetable from the NIAO but none had been received. It had recently agreed with the NIAO that a timetable would be available for the 2012/13 review. A date for the submission of the draft accounts has already been agreed with the NIAO.

In response the Chair stated that it was important that a good working relationship is maintained with the NIAO and if any issues exist that they are resolved as quickly as possible.

13. Draft Minutes and Report from AFBI Strategy Committee Meeting held on 28 February 2012

The Board were content to note the draft minutes from the previous AFBI Strategy Committee meeting held on 28 February 2012.

The Chair of the AFBI Strategy Committee (Mr Michael Walker) informed the Board that, given that this would be his final Board meeting, he had prepared a *Hand-over Report* which he would be presenting to the Strategy Committee for consideration and comment before formally submitting it to the Board.

The Chair of the Strategy Committee also took the opportunity to thank both his colleagues Prof Stewart McNulty (who would also be stepping down from the Committee) and Mr Alan McKeown for the work that they had carried out while serving on the Strategy Committee and this was duly echoed by the Board and the Executive.

14. Reports from AFBI Divisions

The *Reports from AFBI Divisions* were duly noted and a number of key items and dates were highlighted for the benefit of Board members in particular the lecture being presented by Prof Peter Doherty (University of Melbourne) the only living veterinary surgeon Nobel Laureate. This lecture will take place on 27 June 2012 at AFBI (HQ) Newforge and Board members were encouraged to attend.

Board

15. Any Other Business

15.1 Rolling Database of Issues Raised at AFBI Board Meetings

The Board were content to note the updates made to the Rolling Database of Issues Raised at AFBI Board Meetings.

16. Date of Next Meeting

The next AFBI Board meeting is due to be held on the Research Vessel (RV) Corystes on Tuesday 24 April 2012. As this will be the first AFBI Board meeting held onboard the RV Corystes further details regarding access etc will be provided closer to the date.

Sec**PRESENTATION**

Prof Shakar Sharma, Head of Plant Health & Environmental Protection Branch gave a presentation on the bio-refining of ryegrass which was a two-year project supported by funding from the DARD Chancellor's Innovation Fund.

During the presentation Prof Sharma outlined the background, project objectives, scientific processes as well as highlighting the close collaboration between staff in Applied Plant Science and Biometrics Division and Agri-Food and Environmental Science Division.

To date a number of project deliverables have been achieved –

- 1. Additional research income has been generated using facilities, protocols and products.*
- 2. Joint IP exploitation with Queen's University Belfast.*
- 3. A number of refereed papers.*
- 4. Development of an EU Framework Programme 7 project.*

In conclusion Prof Sharma outlined the future aims and commercial potential.

The Board were very encouraged by the work carried out by Prof Sharma and his team and wished them every success with their future aims.

Signed:

(Chairperson)

Date: