

## **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY TASK FORCE – MINUTES & ACTONS**

**15.00 09 November 2020**

**TEAMS online meeting**

### **Present:**

Tim Mordan (TM), Tom Bradshaw (TB), Andy Cureton (AC), Susan Twining (ST), Jack Ward (JW), Phil Stocker (PS), Phil Bicknell (PB), Susannah Bolton (SB), Nick Whelan (NW), Peter Dawson (PD), Alex Waugh (AW), Liz Quigley (LQ), Sarah Palmer (SP), Liz Bowles (LB), Dave Ross (DR), Jill Hewitt (JH), Andrea Graham (AG), Judith Batchelor (JB), Jack Watts (JW), Tess Howe (TH), Calum Murray (CM), Andrew Francis (AF), Louise Courts (LC), John Hustler (JH), Jane Smernicki (JS), Jeremy Moody (JM), Lynette Steel (LS), Andrew Powley (AP), Robert Sheasby (RS), Wesley Aston (WA)

Kate Saunders (KS) - Minute taker

### **1. Co-Chairs introductions**

TB Welcomed and thanked Jane Smernicki, Communications Manager from Agri-Epi Centre who has volunteered to head up the Communications.

### **2. Defra Update**

**TM updated the group on the key Defra headlines:**

- The Agriculture Bill should have Royal assent on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020
- Last week there was a commitment to give the Trade & Agriculture Commission more legal status. The Department of International Trade will put it on a statutory footing subjected to 3 yearly reviews. There will then be amendments to the trade bill once it is in the House of Lords report stage. There will be some tabled amendments requiring government to report to Parliament on the impact trade agreements have on food, welfare and environmental standards etc.
- An Agricultural transition document will be produced later this month. It will get publicity towards the end of the month setting details out around environmental land management and the productivity grant scheme (farming investment fund). It will also include what can be done to help land owners and farms attracting new entrants. The APTF group may be approached at the next meeting for ideas on how this could be taken forward.

### **3. Research & Innovation – Slides attached for reference**

DR provided an update on the Innovation Task & Finish group.

The presentation included an update on the participants of the group and the progress so far.

- The core participants that will be sitting on the group could still benefit at least one more farmer.
- JB informed DR she is happy to help with the innovation eco system connectivity's area
- LC informed that there is good linkage to the R&D package channel and will be keen to continue to work with DR to ensure connectivity between the various advisor groups, recommendations and outcomes
- PS commented that the commercial landscape is mapped out in one direction yet there is a great deal of innovation going on the at the small added value end and down the efficiency road. It would be good to see the commercial landscape broader in terms of what his sector will look like.
- Comment was made that the group need to remember that UKRI are one organisation and joint working gives good leverage with excellent benefits.
- It is important to know from a commercial perspective how the roadmap maps onto public funding and at what stages are the available opportunities being use. DR to feed into the Innovation Task & Finish

- group.
- SB raised the point of how critical it is to ensure there is cross over through the groups. Everyone needs a clear sense of purpose collectively to generate shared focus and define targets and missions.

**ACTION: TB/TM to pick up the idea of getting the Chairs together to meet and discuss and share views**

**ACTION: TB/TM/DR to meet off line to discuss the Return Of Investment for the Tax Payer and value for money going forward and how it can be measure**

#### **4. APTF Communications – slides attached for reference**

JS (Communications Manager from Agri epicentre) presented on the Communication work that needs to take place.

JS gave a brief overview of work done and the recommended approach.

- There will be links to enable all APTF members to put material on the websites and a standard format for reports and logos will be worked on.
- JH commented that agricultural contractors must be included in the stakeholder group
- The group agreed for JS to continue with the Comms plan

#### **5. KPIs**

- PB gave a brief update on KPIs. He reminded the group of the 3-tier approach (business, production and environment) with the focus being on arable and beef & lamb with a broad matrix.
- As with the innovation group volunteers have been asked to input into the breadth of indicators to be captured and narrowed down. This is currently at the narrowing down stage and categorising what is important.
- There is now a KPI express tool for Dairy on the AHDB website. Livestock has now been added to this tool and it is designed to help pilot the concept of indicators and get feedback from farmers on how practical it is to use. Weblink: <https://kpiexpress.ahdb.org.uk/Home/Index>
- A pragmatic approach will be used to enable to indicators to be reviewed and refined where necessary.
- The area of incentives is still being explored and the plan is to focus on more detail for the next meeting when the indicators will be more refined. PB commented that more volunteers to look at these indicators would be extremely helpful.

#### **6. Evidence for Farming Initiative**

SB gave a brief update on the Evidence for Farming initiative.

The 2 areas where farmer engagement needs to be built are:

1. Starting to map and understand the user journey and building it into the APTF communications. Work has already taken place on the questions farmers are asking. These are being captured and is an ongoing piece of work.
2. Market testing has been taking place ensuring the use of language resonates with farmers. Farmer feedback has been looked at and the way they would like to see the evidence information presented.

Another piece of work on capturing the data around performance on farm is necessary. This work will involve how the KPIs are utilised and how we work in partnership with other organisations such as ADAS. Carbon audits are being carried out on the monitor farms.

## 7. Skills

TH reported to the group on the Skills work which is in the process of awaiting for the funding announcement but planning is continuing at pace.

- The work is currently looking at developing milestones for the first year of the programme and looking at the Skills missing on the development Board. These skills have been identified as financial and IT skills so looking at recruiting. A small working group will be formed to look at financial management and the membership aspect.
- The group are moving forward with branding and have had a very generous offer from Sainsburys to develop a bright brand for the Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture. TH thanked JB for Sainsburys support.

TB reiterated the details for the 3 more Directors that are needed and are currently actively searching to recruit:

- IT
- Finance
- Experience in membership organisations membership

## 8. Rural Infrastructure

ST updated the group on the Rural Infrastructure group. There has been 3 meetings since it was formed at the end of September.

The group have agreed there will be 4 main outputs which should be completed and available over the next 3 months. There is a core group established.

The 4 recommendations from the Agricultural Productivity working group related to the following enablers:

- **Getting the rural connectivity on mobile and broadband** – agreed targets around the shared rural network to be in place by 2025 with priorities being to aim for some fast track investment into rural connectivity. Looking at policy backgrounds, setting out the key asks for government and industry to fast track the investment.
- **Upgrading the rural Electricity network** – already commitments in place from Government to develop the grid but need to ensure the funding does not all go into urban development.
- **Facilitating active management in farming business structure** – this involves looking at tax incentives for letting land and looking at the evidence that would be needed to take to Defra.
- **Encouraging business focus investment** - looking at other tax incentives to drive productivity growth. Also, looking at different business structures and land partnerships, the different models and structures document is to be reviewed and updated. This will inspire change and development in the way that land is occupied.

**ACTION: ST to liaise with Sarah Evered at Defra to ensure think about how to fold other departments in Defra into the work of the Rural Infrastructure group at a suitable time.**

## 9. AOB

WA gave an update on Northern Ireland – A government research meeting took place in October the members on board to progress with the work. There is a plan to move it on early next year with a view to get things up and running with fundamental change for 2022.

WA offered to use Northern Ireland as a pilot area/test bed for future initiatives.

**Meeting closed 16.33**

**Next meeting: 12 January 2021**