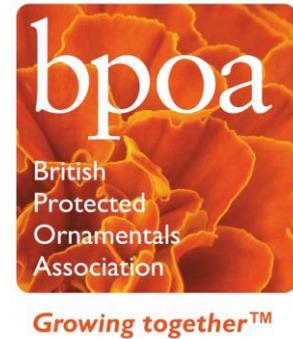


# BPOA Technical Committee Meeting Minutes

National Centre for Food Manufacturing, Holbeach

13 January 2016



**Present:** Howard Braime, Martin McPherson, Debbie Wilson (AHDB), Wayne Brough (AHDB), Harry Kitchener, Lyndon Mason, Caroline Shove, Amy Gray (NFU), Ewan MacMillan, Simon Davenport, Fay Richardson, Andrew Fuller, Russ Woodcock, Simon Pearson Graeme Edwards, Nigel Crosby, Mike Smith (Chair), Neil Bragg, Luke Lloyd and Jill England (ADAS, Secretary).

## 1. Apologies

Ian Mills, Colin Frampton and Ollie Opperman.

Ian Mills had confirmed that he would be standing down from the Committee at the AGM.

**Action:** *S. Davenport to forward a letter of thanks to Ian Mills for his work on the committee over the years (Colin Frampton and Sarah Fairhurst were also due to receive the good wishes of the committee for their service to it).*

## 2. Minutes of the last meeting

### BPOA Strategy

This was an agenda item for discussion later in the meeting.

### Control of aphids – efficacy of biocontrols

This was tabled for discussion later in the meeting.

**AGM and Technical Seminars 2015 and 2016** (proposal to offer discounted rates for multiple attendees from a single business)

S. Davenport had raised the matter with the Management Committee and the offer had been incorporated into the booking form for the seminar: 'Any company booking 4 places at the Seminar will get the 4<sup>th</sup> place free!' Although 70-80 people had attended the 2015 seminar, approximately 27 had attended the AGM. It was noted and agreed that attendance was important as it related to the governance of the Association.

### Defra valuations for the Bedding and Pot Plant sectors

A paper needed to be prepared for the Committee to discuss prior to the invitation being extended to Defra. This was discussed in more detail later in the meeting.

**Action:** *S. Davenport to compile a list of questions/concerns to put to Defra.*

**Action:** *J. England to amend the table of 'subject areas' to include Industry Statistics against S. Davenport.*

**Automation:** This was discussed later in the meeting. John van de Vegte had moved on from Vineland Research, and Dr Gideon Avigad had accepted an invitation to speak at the BPOA Technical Seminar.

**Labour statistics used in packing:** H. Braime reported that labour costs for lower value crops like pot mums and Begonia were 7p for growing and 10p for packing (142%); labour costs were higher where very technical packaging was used. This brought into focus the need to look at automating the packing process to reduce costs.

**BPOA strategy: production statistics.** A new section had been added to the BPOA strategy under: '5. Protected ornamentals industry data'. This was reviewed and amended.

**Action:** *J. England to circulate the updated document with the minutes*

#### **Technical Committee members**

Reports for delegated subject areas had been added to the meeting agenda. Committee members that had been proposed in their absence agreed to report in the allocated subject area. In addition, Simon Davenport would report on 'industry valuation'. Committee member nominations were discussed later in the meeting.

#### **AGM and Technical Seminar 2016 (19 – 20 January 2016)**

The meeting date clash with the AHDB lighting event planned for the 19<sup>th</sup> January had been resolved, and a draft agenda had been circulated.

Sarah Fairhurst had decided to stand down from the Committee, but would like to be included on the distribution list.

Graeme Edwards (Woodlark Nursery) and Jamie Satterthwaite (Pentland Plants) had been invited to join the Committee, and it was agreed to nominate them formally at the forthcoming AGM. As Ian Mills was standing down, Graeme Edwards agreed to represent the Poinsettia group on the Committee.

**Action:** *J. England amend the 'table of subject areas' to include G. Edwards, reporting on Poinsettias*

#### **Studentship applications?**

D. Wilson had received some responses with regards to the studentship applications, although more feedback would have been welcome. It was noted that there was a need for discussion rather than an exchange of emails.

#### **Study tours**

Study tours were discussed later in the meeting.

#### **Bedding and Pot Plant Centre (BPPC) update**

The 'Improving cutting success' protocol had been agreed. The BPPC presentation had been circulated with the minutes.

### **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising

The Committee approved the minutes of the 15 October 2015 meeting.

#### 4. BPOA strategy

BPOA strategy was discussed under 'Delegated subject areas'.

#### 5. Delegated subject areas

##### ***Pests and Diseases - H. Braime***

- Agapanthus gall midge was no longer listed as a statutory pest, but still needed to be controlled as it adversely affects the appearance of crops. Comments were being invited on this via Plant Health Risk Register website:  
<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/phiw/riskRegister/plant-health/pest-risk-analysis-consultations.cfm>.
- A number of e-GRO (Egro) webinars were coming up that may be of interest: <http://e-gro.org/webinars.php>
- H. Braime reported that excellent results had been achieved using Botanigard WP to control Thrips on pot mums. Total control was achieved combining Botanigard WP treatments with nematode sprays, although it should be stressed that this was one season's results only. Botanigard drenches were also being tested (¼ rate) to see if they help to control Sciarid and Thrips larvae (results pending).
- Serenade ASO was being tested as a control for *Botrytis* on Rose cuttings, initially as a spray application but further tests would include a dip treatment. Whilst Switch had proved useful, it appeared to retard growth. Serenade ASO was popular with tomato and HNS growers.

**Action: J. England to request that Botanigard WP is considered as a treatment in the MOPS work programme.**

##### ***Shelf life – A. Fuller***

- AquaPads and WickSticks were being tested on a range of crops. WickSticks were expensive and more difficult to use. AquaPads were easier to use and were compatible with a range of pots. Future work may include anti-transpirants.
- Trials were underway in relation to the impact of growing media and wetting agents on the shelf-life of a range of winter crops. Have also been asked to anti-transpirants.
- Introduction of a new weighing system on the packing line was being considered to reduce waste.
- The industry was experiencing problems with primroses flowering early and losing quality during transport, leading to rejections. Avoiding water splash on foliage and petals during pre-despatch watering was reported to reduce these problems.

##### ***Automation – S. Pearson***

- S. Pearson reported on a recent US trip where he found that although a limited amount of new equipment was currently horticulture-focussed, some hi-tech companies were keen to enter the UK market. This was an exciting area of development in the US, with heavy investments being made. It would be useful to prioritise industry needs and then invite interested companies to enter discussions.

##### ***Growing media – N. Bragg***

- N. Bragg confirmed he was happy to update the Committee on issues relating to growing media. There were no current issues.

##### ***Nutrition – N. Bragg***

- Growers were likely to be strongly advised to include silicon in their growing media mixes. Some plants are natural accumulators of silicon, whilst others do not take it up. Work was being done to determine the effect of silicon on plants as it is not yet fully understood. However, it is known to provide natural protection against, for example, powdery mildew.

- The use of silicon had been investigated for cucumber production 20 years previously, but it had fallen by the wayside. Cucumbers and pears were natural accumulators of silicon. M. McPherson confirmed that there was evidence of powdery mildew control in cucumbers.
- There had been promotion of the use of silicon to enhance Poinsettia performance in shelf-life.

**Action: N. Bragg to put together a briefing paper on the effect of silicon on plants and identify any gaps.**

#### ***Growing media auditing scheme (P4 work) – N. Bragg***

- Defra had handed the P4 work (responsible sourcing of growing media materials) over to the HTA and Growing Media Association (GMA) to develop an auditing scheme around it; there were no Defra funds to allocate to the project. Steve Harper had been engaged to project manage the work.
- Growers would be able to access the scheme either as a ‘bolt-on’ module as part of BOPP or independently. The benefit would be to improve the credentials of growers who use certificated growing media.
- The UK scheme would be different to the EU scheme which was focussed on peat, whilst the UK scheme included other substrates (including bark, coir, green compost, minerals, and other wood-based materials).
- It was hoped that the scheme would be launched formally by the beginning of April.
- A concern was raised that growers would need to be HTA members to be able to access scheme information, but this would only be the case if a 3<sup>rd</sup> party audit was required.

#### ***Spray application – R. Woodcock***

- Stablan 750 (chlormequat), a replacement for Cycocel had caused scorch similar to the yellow halo seen when using some other formulations. It had also caused more marks on Poinsettia. Not all growers reported the same experience.
- Consideration was being given to using a wetter to avoid these problems; Wetcit had been recommended. Wetcit was also reported to have pesticidal action and was currently undergoing tests which may lead to it being approved under a new label.

#### ***GrowSave***

- C. Frampton was stepping down from the Committee, but had indicated that he would be willing to oversee the progress of GrowSave work for the time being.
- H. Braime also offered that Double H (Neil Stephenson) could assist if required as he was involved in GrowSave. Jon Swain (FEC) was leading the programme at FEC, Stoneleigh and could be invited to speak to the committee at the June meeting; J. Swain (FEC) should also be invited to the Committee meetings to provide updates.

**Action: J. England to invite Jon Swain to attend the June Committee meeting.**

**Action: S. Davenport to write to C. Frampton to thank him for his contribution to the Committee over many years.**

#### ***News and views – C. Shove***

- Zinnias were being grown on the space station – in part to increase astronaut wellbeing
- Painting poinsettias - are UK growers missing a trick? Some of the committee had produced painted poinsettias in the past, whilst others were applying glitter and had trialled a poinsettia painting kit produced by Ball Colegrave, but none of these were to everybody’s taste and had not necessarily translated into sales. Sempervivums were also being painted.

#### ***BPOA strategy – N. Crosby.***

The introduction of the new National Living Wage (NLW) would impact heavily on the industry and grower thinking. (HortWeek was reporting that the majority of businesses don’t make enough money

to cover the wage rises.) The question was raised: what is being done about it? The Committee discussed the issues involved, and A. Gray detailed the actions being taken by the NFU to persuade Government to take action to mitigate the impact on horticulture in the short term.

- As an industry, horticulture was very different to other industries used to construct the model used by the Government in its calculations, and these changes would have a huge impact on the food chain; prices would need to increase to account for the higher wage bill. The UK was the only EU state introducing a NLW, and this would disadvantage UK growers compared with their EU counterparts. The lead in time for the introduction of the NLW was too short and this was causing difficulties.
- However, higher wages would also result in more disposable income that could translate to increased horticultural purchases, providing the potential for more sales at higher prices
- The NFU was working on the NLW across the sectors. A report had been commissioned which was available on-line: <http://www.nfuonline.com/about-us/our-offices/south-east/latest-news/national-living-wage-impact-on-horticulture/>. Some MPs, particularly those with rural constituencies, were supportive of the report. The NFU had been advised that the NLW would be introduced, so they were now highlighting specific differences for the hort/ag industries.
- The NFU would be holding a parliamentary event to present the industry concerns and case studies to MPs.
- A good approach may be for the industry to acknowledge the benefits to the National Living Wage whilst highlighting the need for help during the transition; this would avoid the promotion of horticulture as a poor paying industry. The industry needs to identify and pursue the opportunities.

#### ***Plant growth control/manipulation (PGR) - E. MacMillan***

- Ewan reported that he was starting a new on-nursery project – ‘back to basics’ for young growers. This would include controlling growth by means other than PGRs, particularly where gaining access to spray the crop at right time (to avoid workers etc.) was an issue (e.g. the use of water to control growth). Water acidification was under consideration (any thoughts from growers welcome), increasing throughput and pinching.

#### ***Cut flower centre (CFC) – L. Mason***

- The 2016 work programme had been agreed, with work starting in the spring, including the proposed deep pool hydroponics work with column stocks, and production of seed raised bouquet fillers.
- Herbicide work to identify a replacement for Ronstar 2G would be continued within the CFC budget, in consultation with John Atwood (ADAS).

#### ***Light/spectral filters – L. Lloyd***

- Hill Brothers were carrying out some tests using LEDs and can update the committee on developments.
- The AHDB event ‘Manipulating light for horticulture’ would take place on 19<sup>th</sup> January, venue: Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire

#### ***Industry statistics – S. Davenport***

- S. Davenport presented data on Pansy production (plugs and seeds) which was the result of a survey of young plant suppliers. There had been reasonable participation, but more replies were needed; a press article was suggested to prompt more responses from suppliers.
- For the vegetable sector, seed suppliers provide data to an actuary to collate.
- It was suggested that imports needed to be included to describe the full potential of the sector.
- Previous work on Primroses had included plug and seed suppliers (adjusted to account for poor seed germination).

- AHDB collected data on the number of units produced, but were not confident of the accuracy of the data.
- It was suggested that Dutch auction information could be used for pot plants.

**Action: S. Davenport to repeat the exercise for Primroses.**

**Action: S. Davenport to put together a press article to promote the work already carried out and prompt suppliers to provide further data.**

## 6. BPOA Management meeting feedback

S. Davenport provided feedback from the recent Management Committee meeting:

- The BPOA had been invited to attend the RHS Vision launch. S. Davenport had attended on behalf of the BPOA.
- The BPOA website would be reviewed as part of the NFU website update (the BPOA website currently only appears on the NFU platform). If committee members would like to provide short 300 word articles with an image, they could be used to populate the website with interesting, catchy items.
- The Treasurer's report had been presented. The accounts balanced, but there was no surplus. A small amount of bad debt would be written off.
- Sirekit Mol was stepping down from the Home Grown user's group and her colleague, Andy Abbey (Beekenkamp), had been nominated for the management committee. The Newey Group had renewed their association membership and Kersten Catella would be nominated for membership of the Committee.
- There would be 7-8 meetings of the Management Committee this year, combined with various trade events and Skype meetings to reduce mileage for Committee members. The quorum is 8 people and numbers had on occasion dropped to 4, therefore volunteers were needed to sit on this committee.

**Action: M. Smith to ask for volunteers to the Management Committee at the Technical Seminar.**

## 7. AGM 2016 (19 January)

**a. Technical Committee Chair.** Mike Smith agreed to stand as Chair for 2016 and would give the report to the AGM. Lyndon Mason agreed to stand as deputy Chair (2016) and then Chair (2017).

**b. Technical Committee member nominations.** Ian Mills, Colin Frampton, Chris Need and Sarah Fairhurst would be standing down. Sarah Fairhurst had requested to continue to be included on the distribution list, but would not be able to attend meetings. Graeme Edwards (Woodlark Nursery) and Jamie Satterthwaite (Pentland Plants) had agreed to join the Committee and would be nominated at the AGM. It was also agreed that Pablo Canales-Prati (Hortifeeds) would be invited to join.

**Action: E. MacMillan to invite Pablo Canales-Prati to join the Technical Committee**

## 8. Technical seminar 2016 (20 January)

J. England updated the Committee on the technical seminar agenda, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

## 9. Study tours

**a. Young grower visits (BPPC).** Double H Nurseries, Hill Brothers, and Roundstone Nurseries had agreed to host a study tour visit and replies were awaited from Pinetops and Cobbins nurseries. It had also been suggested that the Farplants packing facility is included in the tour. Content should include any new equipment or procedures in use, why the change has been made, new equipment selection and the difference it has made to their business. The tours should be over two days in September 2016 and were aimed at younger growers.

**Action: H. Kitchener to include Farplants in this study tour.**

## **b. Diffuse lighting (BPPC).**

Mardenkro (Holland) had agreed to host a visit. A list of nurseries of interest for visits was awaited. This study tour would be timed for the summer 2016 or winter 2016/2017, dependent on the nurseries to be included.

**Action: H. Kitchener to progress the organisation of this study tour and provide an update at the June Technical Committee meeting.**

## **c. US study tours**

A presentation was due to be made at the technical seminar. Western US nurseries had been approached, and eight had agreed to host a visit. Chris Beytes had provided a further list of nurseries to approach. The emphasis would be on nurseries that supply independent garden centres, including herbaceous growers as well as 'big box' retailers, research establishments and there would be retail stops at garden centres. This study tour would take place in late February, early March 2017.

## **10. MOPS update**

J. England presented the MOPS update that had been circulated previously. An extension had been granted to take the work into a third year, and the focus was now on developing the work programme. The Committee requested that Botanigard is included as a treatment, given the positive results reported earlier in the meeting. M. McPherson explained that *Ampleomyces* (AQ10) may require an adaptation period before it is able to provide adequate disease control. Good efficacy had been recorded against each of the products tested against rust on *Bellis*. Although insufficiently effective against *Fusarium* in infected capillary matting as a single treatment, there was potential for Foamstream to be used in a sequential programme. Approvals would be sought for trial products with most potential.

**Action: J. England to request that Botanigard is considered for inclusion in the product list for 2016.**

## **11. Bedding and Pot Plant Centre (BPPC) update**

J. England presented the Bedding and Pot Plant Centre update. The 2016 work programme was in place, and the focus now was on developing ideas for a work programme to be proposed to take the work into 2017. Ideas were requested for potential trials, and if any problems had been experienced on the nursery that require a solution that could be investigated at the BPPC. Spring and summer open day dates were: 12 April, 21 April and 21 June 2016.

**Action: Committee members to contact J. England with ideas for trials that could be included in the BPPC work programme**

## **12. Pesticide update**

J. England presented the pesticide update:

- New approvals: Clayton Gear (MAPP 17169) and Gocha, (MAPP 17320).
- Withdrawals: CCC 750, (16948), with a final use date 31/12/16; and Oberon, (11819), with a final use date 30/04/17.

## **13. AHDB communications and crop protection updates**

W. Brough presented the AHDB communications and crop protection updates that had been circulated prior to the meeting. W. Brough mentioned Met52 OD application spray form and also asked if there was an interest in the growth regulator Terpal (EAMU application under discussion).

## **14. AHDB funded research update**

### **a. Proposals and updates**

D. Wilson presented the AHDB research update circulated earlier.

#### **b. BPPC. Strategies to improve Hellebore shelf life**

J. England presented this proposal. The proposal was under revision to include a second 'harsh' control, where the growing media would be allowed to dry out prior to watering in shelf life, as this would better reflect conditions in a retail scenario. This would require the work to be sited at different premises due to the number of plants required, and a quotation had been requested from S. Pearson for the work to be carried out using the Lincoln University facilities. It was suggested that plant numbers would allow the Hellebores to be placed in a randomised block design at Baginton Nurseries. WickSticks were more difficult to use than AquaPads, and expensive, but it was agreed that both treatments should be included in this work. The Committee was supportive of this proposal.

#### **c. The role of environmental factors in the incidence of PaMS**

J. England presented this proposal. There was concern that the glasshouse work (objective b) would not produce the desired outcome as the supplementary lighting proposed may be too harsh for the plants, and may not increase the light level sufficiently. It was suggested that this work could be carried out in an area with naturally high light levels (e.g. N. Carolina, US), with other environmental conditions imposed on the plants to provide a shock during transitions between conditions e.g. to high light/temperature. Liaison with Brian Whipker or Will Healy was suggested in this regard. The monitoring work was put on hold in the meantime.

**Action: J. England to initiate discussions with Brian Whipker/Will Healy.**

#### **d. HDC application form for deep pool hydroponics project 2016.**

L. Mason presented this proposal. The Committee was supportive of this work.

#### **15. Date, venue and Chair of the next meeting**

9 June 2016, NFU Stoneleigh. Chair: Mike Smith. Potential to visit the BPPC after lunch.

#### **16. AOB**

- The AHDB Herbaceous Perennial Technical Discussion Group Winter Meeting was planned for 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2016.
- A. Gray would contact grower members with regard to short 300 word articles for the BPOA website (see comment above).
- F. Richardson requested a workshop on basic environmental computer training to be included in the GrowSave programme.

#### **17. Closed session**

- Draft actions from pepper aphid review project PE 027. A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting and committee members were asked to provide email feedback to D. Wilson.

**Action: Growers to contact D. Wilson with feedback on further actions proposed within this paper.**

**Meeting closed.**

**The poinsettia shelf life assessment meeting followed lunch.**