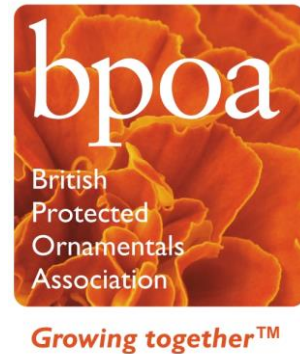


BPOA Technical Committee Meeting Minutes

NFU, Stoneleigh
18 June 2015



Present

Mike Smith, Ewan Macmillan, Caroline Shove, Harry Kitchener, Nigel Crosby, Lyndon Mason, Simon Davenport, Colin Frampton, Chris Need (Chair), Martin McPherson (STC) Howard Braime, Wayne Brough, Debbie Wilson (HDC), Amy Gray (NFU), Simon Pearson and Jill England (ADAS, Secretary).

1) Apologies

Russ Woodcock, Neil Bragg, Ian Mills, Fay Richardson and Ben Shaw.

2) Minutes of the last meeting

Reorganisation of the HDC

HDC had been rebranded as AHDB Horticulture. It was 'business as usual' in terms of delivery to customers; many of the changes were related to internal management and improved coordination of AHDB activities.

Impatiens downy mildew (ImpDM).

There had been no reports of ImpDM so far this year, but *Aquilegia* downy mildew was a problem. Although not a new disease, it was being identified more often in gardens, and work was ongoing to identify the source of infection.

Weighting of funding per sector

The discussion point was the balance of funding for the pot and bedding plant sectors. AHDB had improved levy collection, but levy payers were not obliged to provide a detailed breakdown of data within their business, and AHDB was not permitted to double check information with levy payers (levy payers can opt out of receiving communications from the AHDB). There was a move within the AHDB to obtain written permission to contact levy payers. Issues were: accurate completion of levy forms, and ensuring that the most appropriate person within a company complete the form.

BPOA Strategy

Quality of incoming plant material influencing and, on occasion, undermining production

An update on the changes that had taken place at FERA was presented later in the meeting.

Shelf life fundamental to product quality with specifications retailer driven

A proposal had been submitted following discussions related to improving shelf life through the use of wicks, anti-transpirants and water absorbent plugs.

Current disconnect between producers and requirements of final customer

Use of focus groups to help understand the requirements of the final customer were discussed later in the meeting.

Control of aphids (efficacy of biocontrols)

This was discussed later in the meeting.

3) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

The Committee approved the minutes of the 8th January 2015 meeting.

4) BPOA Strategy

Further discussion of the BPOA strategy was postponed until the October Technical Committee meeting.

Action: J. England to include BPOA strategy on the agenda for the next meeting

5) Fera update

Fera had been restructured into three groups following the takeover of a large proportion of the services by Capita and Newcastle University from 1 April 2015; Defra had retained 20% of the ownership of Fera in order to maintain capacity in the event of a major outbreak:

- **APHA.** The Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate had joined the animal health inspectorate to form the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). APHA was located at Sand Hutton and contact details remain unchanged.
- **Policy and Regulatory departments** were returned to core Defra.
- **Fera Science Ltd.** R&D and diagnostics work will continue under Fera Science Ltd., which is now an independent, commercial company. Work will continue in the same manner as before, but there is no longer a link between the Fera diagnostic work and the Inspectorate activities with reference to any samples submitted. Telephone numbers remain unchanged, but email addresses are now name@fera.co.uk.

6) Use of focus groups to close the gap between producers and customer requirements.

Although the use of focus groups to understand the requirements of the final customer was of interest, the results could be skewed by the questions asked and those who attend focus group sessions, with the outcome often unclear particularly relating to product pricing and value; even though attendees may state that they would pay a premium price for a product, ultimately they will often purchase the

lowest priced product when shopping. Focus groups can easily be dominated by one person. There were some new techniques being used, including use of mobile phone videos of shopping habits, gathering comments throughout the process and providing an immediate, genuine response, thereby eliminating group dynamics that may skew the data. Detailed analysis of sales data can also provide information of customer purchasing preferences. A group approach may be better for this area of work, with possible inclusion as a technical seminar topic (see below).

7) Control of aphids – efficacy of biocontrols

Although the problem of the breakdown of efficacy of predators against aphids had been less prevalent than in 2014, specific pests, e.g. black aphid on *Campanula* were proving difficult to control with biological controls. H. Braime was awaiting feedback from other growers. Pepper growers were experiencing similar problems, with *Aphidoletes* only effective during the first year. A proposal submitted by Top Pope (Harper Adams) to investigate this area had been agreed by the PE panel, and this may be extended to include ornamentals. The work would be relevant as many ornamentals growers also produced fruiting pot tomatoes, peppers and aubergines. The soft fruit panel had also commissioned similar work on strawberries.

Action: H. Braime to bring together information and liaise with D. Wilson.

8 AGM and Technical Seminars 2015 and 2016

The 2015 seminar was reviewed: C. Need had done a good job as Chair for the whole event. N. Bragg's presentation on growing media was well received. Overall, the seminar had the right feel and the subject area coverage was good. There had been a good turnout for the day. Larger companies were now sending 4-5 people along, with more of the technical managers included.

Action: S. Davenport to categorise attendees by company, role and trends with a view to introducing a reducing rate where more than one delegate attends from a company.

Suggested topics for the 2016 seminar (20th January, Oxford Belfry Hotel).

New product development

- Product development / marketing
- Use of focus groups (ref. notes above), with a speaker from Metrolina, Dunnhumby or Lowes
- Trialling new products (e.g. small trials in a separate trials house vs trials within the production area)
- Bedding and Pot Plant Centre trial work

Potential for a morning session with breakout topics e.g. launching a new product.

Technical session

- Biological control of aphids etc.
- MOPS update
- Shelf life and storage conditions in supermarkets and sheds, e.g. watering plants in store, techniques to improve shelf-life, product placement

- Plant nutrition – crop monitoring, sampling, analysis interpretation (N. Bragg)

US study tours

- American study tour report; promotion of the next trip. Focus on three themes - those systems different to UK operations, but that could work successfully in the UK.

Although biomass heating was suggested, this subject area would be included in the IPPS tour linked to GroSouth in the autumn.

Growing media

- Use of coir in pot and bedding.
- RHS growing media fellowship (Paul Alexander)
- HTA growing media monitoring (David Denny)

Growing media had been covered in 2015, including production in coir.

Disinfection of irrigation water

- Ozone, sand filters, UV (Tim Pettit)
- Water recycling

8) Defra valuations for the Bedding and Pot Plant sectors

J. England had met with the Defra Stats team, which was now being led by Jim Holding. Arrangements were being made for them to visit the Cut Flower Centre to provide insight into the sector, this following visits to Coletta and Tyson and Fruit Focus facilitated by ADAS in 2014. The Committee was keen to contribute to the data collection, with mid-September suggested as a suitable time to start to collect data. Some category changes for the data collection may be appropriate to reflect changes within the sector.

Action: J. England to invite the Defra Stats team to the October committee meeting.

9) Proposals on the redesign of the CC trolley

S. Davenport updated the Committee on the redesign of Container Centralen trollies. Two steel prototype designs (3-4 KG) were under consideration. There were a number of options to fund the operation, including increasing the pool fee for the shelf for a period of time, potentially 3 years, recycling a third of the shelves annually. Originally considering introducing in stages across Europe. A staged roll out of the new design was planned to begin in 2018. Although there would be an initial increase in the pool fee, ultimately costs would decrease due to a reduction in repairs. There had been discussions with the HTA technical committee and further meetings were planned in Holland to discuss further ramifications.

The Committee supported the suggestion of an amnesty for the return of old shelves to bring them back into the scheme, prior to introduction of the new shelves. S. Davenport to submit a statement on behalf of the Committee supporting that the quota control system is tightened up, with improved security for shelves, and that an amnesty is put in place. The increased shelf weight would cause difficulties, with

attendant health and safety issues. The implementation period should be as long as possible.

Subsequent to the meeting, S. Davenport reports that the new shelf will be lighter than the existing wood/metal version; he has also written and spoken to Container Centralen.

Action: S. Davenport to prepare a statement on behalf of the Committee

10) Future lighting work for ornamentals

It was suggested that a considerable amount of work had been carried out on the use of LED – and plasma - lighting in edible crop production globally, but less attention had been paid to the ornamental sector other than in Scandinavia and the US. However, there is great variation in plant responses to light, with more work required on different plant species. It was also proposed that work should be carried out in controlled environment cabinets to investigate not only responses to light quality, but also the interaction with other environmental factors such as heat, and the impact of light quality on pest and disease control and shelf life.

However, work was being carried on ornamentals under the AHDB fellowship at STC, under which a report would shortly be published. A range of work on ornamentals had also been completed elsewhere. AHDB was planning a light focussed event later in the year.

Growers were being cautious about introducing LED lighting as plant responses were not fully understood and the market was moving so fast that equipment was in danger of rapidly becoming outdated. There were questions around the use of plasma and other light sources, and information being produced by S. Pearson's report should help with some of the judgements to be made.

Two relevant ISHS conferences were coming up:

- Greensys 2015 - International Symposium on New Technologies and Management for Greenhouses. July 2015, Evora (Portugal).
- ISHS VIII International Symposium on Light in Horticulture, East Lansing, MI (US), May 2016

11) Study tours:

a) Review of the US study tour

The study tour had been a success, with positive feedback from attendees, particularly with regard to staff development and networking within the group and with US growers and researchers.

The Committee thanked M. Smith for the time spent in pulling together and organising the tour.

b) Potential for a UK study tour in 2017

A future tour could include nurseries with a wider range of business size and products, and include visits to retailers as the industry was now focussed on product and how it's marketed. The North West US / Canada was muted as a potential area, where there were generally more perennial growers. Although scheduling the tour for slightly later in the year may enable a wider range of products to be viewed, it would need to be timed for when growers are less busy. The tour would still be under the BPOA and AHDB banner. M. Smith agreed to organise a study tour for 2017.

c) Poinsettia study tour

A draft programme for a Poinsettia study tour was being pulled together, provisionally for week 47. There were suggestions to include visits to nurseries and research stations currently involved in pertinent Poinsettia / pot plant projects; other topics could also be included in the tour, such as cold stores (reference to the Cold Store study tour to Denmark earlier this year). Evening presentations would add a different dimension to the day.

d) Bedding and pot plant centre study tour.

H. Kitchener was developing a study tour looking at diffused lighting, for which further information would become available in the autumn.

12) Pesticide update

J. England presented the pesticide update that had been circulated earlier. Although the approval for Savona was being revoked, a similar fatty acid based product would be coming through from the SCEPTRE project. Inssimo (acibenzolar-S-methyl) was a relaunch of Bion, which had proven to be effective against rust on *Bellis*, but not *Antirrhinum*.

13) MOPS update

J. England presented the MOPS update that had been circulated previously. The protected ornamentals programme for 2015 included work on powdery mildew on Aster, and rust on *Bellis*. Leaf and bud nematode work would include validation of a rapid molecular diagnostic technique for their detection and identification, and development of a LAMP (loop-mediated isothermal amplification) technique to identify leaf samples containing *A. fragariae* and *A. ritzemabosi* by the ADAS biotechnology group based at the University of Nottingham. Disinfection on nurseries would include investigation of a range of disinfectants, soil resetting and use of Foamstream against *Fusarium*. Phytotoxicity testing would be carried out for the most promising treatments from 2014 (five fungicides and five insecticides) on Geranium, *Begonia*, Pansy and *Petunia*.

14) BPOA / AHDB panel meeting schedule

The current BPOA Technical Committee and AHDB PO panel meeting schedule had recently caused difficulties for contractors as it allowed a limited time period to develop proposals and steer them through the approval process in time for work to commence for the current season. This caused particular problems where proposals are dependent on the previous season's results.

Both AHDB panel and BPOA Committee meetings were scheduled to maximise the opportunity for delegates to attend. The AHDB panel was combined with the bulbs and outdoor flowers, so meeting dates were also set with consideration to these sectors. Three meetings were scheduled each year and proposals needed to be submitted 6 weeks prior to meeting dates. Whilst routine proposals should be timed to fit with this schedule, other routes were available for urgent emerging issues, to deal with emergencies. For a rolling programme of trials, a longer programme of work approved in discussion with a steering group could be considered, but a different mechanism to request the work may be required.

15) HDC communications and crop protection update

Crop protection: A new approval had been awarded for Cuprokyt for bacterial control, but did not include use under protection.

A factsheet 'Selection and use of 'splash-resistant single use' protective gloves for workers handling treated plants and contaminated surfaces' was due to be published shortly.

A number of substances are eligible as Basic Substances for plant protection, therefore a dossier may be submitted to the Commission and if an authorisation is granted the substances can be used for plant protection across the EU. AHDB does not currently have the resources to put a dossier together, but if there is interest from growers the cost to contract the work out could be calculated. A list of eligible substances was circulated with the meeting papers.

Communications: A full update had been circulated prior to the meeting. A combined Bedding and Pot Plant Centre, GrowSave and BOPP event had been put together for the 23 June, for which 50 people had registered. The next Herbaceous Perennial group meeting would take place at New Forest Plants, and bedding plant growers were welcome to attend.

16) AHDB Horticulture funded research update

The MOPS project was in its final year, and the AHDB needed to understand the needs of the ornamentals sector. Funding for future crop protection work was planned under the proposed umbrella project, IMPRESS (Integrated Management of Pests in Resilient and Sustainable Systems). Gap analysis for crop protection products had been carried out by John Adlam, and forward planning would consider the risks involved.

Approval had been granted for several projects without going through the BPOA Committee, including the following:

GROWBOT: A grower-reprogrammable robot for ornamental plant production tasks

The GROWBOT studentship proposal had been approved and would be joint funded by the HNS and PO panels. The project group would be working with Kernock Park

Plants, but there was the opportunity for grower involvement, and anybody interested should contact D. Wilson. The call for the next round of studentships had opened.

The role of environmental factors in the incidence of Pansy mottle syndrome (PaMS) (extension to PO 016)

The PaMS monitoring work had been extended for a further year. A work package had been added to identify any association of *Viola* white distortion associated virus (VWDaV) with PaMS symptoms, which will involve sampling of symptomatic and asymptomatic plants. Seed transmission of the virus was discussed, with the potential to collect grower retained seed from affected batches, and explore tracking back through suppliers to obtain seed samples for potential testing.

Genetic and Environmental Interactions in Poinsettia Production

This trial would include Poinsettia varieties from Beekenkamp, Dummen, Selecta and Syngenta, selected by the industry representatives, produced on three sites using a common substrate for all sites. The work would also include investigation of post-harvest management devices such as wicks.

CP 124 MOPS (managing ornamental plants sustainably)

A summary of the outcomes of the 2014 work had been circulated, identifying promising products. There had been good positive feedback to the project, and two spin-off ideas had been approved, the first looking at tank mixes of biopesticides compared with a standard or coded conventional insecticides to help with thrips control. Extra funding had also been requested to extend the plant range for phytotoxicity trials to include *Cyclamen* and Poinsettia to represent pot plants.

Pipeline project tenders were discussed within the closed session.

The BPOA Industry Needs document had been updated with recent project developments.

17) Date of the next meeting

October 15th. Venue: STC. Chair: Howard Braime.

18) AOB.

Chris Need was standing down from the Committee as he was leaving Roundstone Nurseries.

The Committee expressed their thanks to Chris for his chairmanship of the Committee and for his work on the Committee over many years, and wished him well for the future.

19) Closed session

20) Bedding and Pot Plant Centre tour.

The Committee toured the trials at the Bedding and Pot Plant Centre, based at Baginton Nurseries during the afternoon.