

<b>Name:</b>	Policy Board	<b>Meeting Date:</b>	14 January 2020
<b>Location:</b>	NFU HQ	<b>Time:</b>	09:00 – 13.00
<b>Room:</b>	Boardroom	<b>Chair:</b>	Minette Batters
<b>Circulation:</b>	Policy Board	<b>Secretary:</b>	Alison Taylor
		<b>Tel:</b>	024 7685 8852
		<b>Ref:</b>	PB1039

**Present:** Minette Batters (Chair), Tom Bradshaw, Ali Capper, Andrew Clark, John Davies, Richard Findlay, Terry Jones, Richard Lister, Stuart Roberts, Michael Sly, Guy Smith and Tom Wornham

**By Invitation:** Fran Barnes, Trevor Foss, Andrea Graham, Phil Hambling, Martin Haworth, Phil Jarvis, Rocky Lorusso, Alison Taylor and Nick von Westenholz

**In Attendance:** Mhari Barnes, Sam Durham, Ruth Edge, Paul Hammett, Hannah Harrison, Christine McDowell, Diane Mitchell, Nina Winter and Jo Woodhams

**Apologies:** John Mercer and Michael Oakes

## Policy Board Minutes – 14 January 2020

### 1. 4 December minutes & actions [PB1026]

The Board found the minutes from 4 December to be a true and accurate reflection of the meeting and the document was therefore approved. The Chair declared that all the actions from the last meeting were either ongoing or had been completed and read out the apologies for this meeting.

## FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION:

### 2. Opening remarks from the President [Verbal] (*Minette Batters*)

The Board heard that the President gave the keynote speech at the Oxford Farming Conference, in place of SoS Theresa Villiers. A letter has been written to Villiers regarding comments made in a later interview that the UK would be upholding EU standards on trade during Brexit negotiations. The letter requested that these comments be reflected in the imminent Agriculture Bill.

The Board heard that the President, Andrew Clark and Helen Ferrier met with Gideon Henderson, Defra Chief Scientist, during which he made encouraging comments on the role of renewable UK-sourced bioenergy to achieve Net Zero.

### 3. Political Update [Verbal] (*Rocky Lorusso*)

The Board heard that following the December General Election, the NFU held a successful reception, which was attended by more than 50 parliamentarians. Since the General Election, there has been little change to Government. The new Agriculture Bill is expected to be published soon, followed by the new Environment Bill and Immigration Bill.

The Board heard that a more drastic reshuffle of the cabinet is expected in February, after exiting from the EU. It is likely that this will result in a new SoS in Defra. The new Government will be expected to focus on establishing new trade deals over the next few months. The upcoming Budget (11 March) is expected to include large investment in infrastructure, especially in the North and the Midlands.

Looking ahead, the Board heard that in the next couple of years, there is likely to be a constituency boundary review. Rural constituencies will likely change with some constituencies merging, resulting in fewer MPs standing in the next General Election.

The Board heard that five candidates remain in the Labour leadership campaign, with Sir Keir Starmer, Rebecca Long-Bailey and Lisa Nandy thought most likely to make it onto the ballot paper.

The focus for the External Affairs team over the coming months will be to further engage with new MPs and new Ministers, with a focus on making our voice heard on the Agriculture Bill and Environment Bill.

### 4. Brexit Update [Verbal] (*Nick von Westenholz*)

The Board heard that the Withdrawal Agreement Bill is moving smoothly through Parliament and is expected to become law by the last week of January. This will allow the UK to exit the EU at 11:00 pm on 31<sup>st</sup> January.

The paper submitted to the Board (PB1038 NFU Lobbying Priorities for the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill) highlights some key views on the Withdrawal Agreement and expresses the importance of an appropriate timeframe for negotiations with the EU. As it stands, the UK risks a no-deal Brexit on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

The Board heard that a briefing for members is being prepared to explain the effects of the Withdrawal Agreement on farmers and their businesses. Although direct payments regulations are due to cease to apply on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020, there is a bill expected to come into law by the end of January to allow UK Government to continue direct payments for 2020.

Trade negotiations can be started as soon as 1<sup>st</sup> February, with the EU and the US being of most interest. The NFU must be prepared to deal with the technical details of negotiations, therefore technical trade training will be provided for senior members of staff over the next few weeks, which may be rolled out to other staff members thereafter.

The Board heard how the NFU is engaging across Parliament, with Nick von Westenholz due to attend a meeting of Defra's expert trade advisory groups on agribusiness.

With the publication of the new Agriculture Bill expected later this week (w/c 13 January), the NFU must be prepared to lobby strongly on any parts of the Bill that need improving. The aim is still to start the phase out of BPS in 2021, despite requests for a delay from the NFU. The External Affairs team are due to meet other major farming organisations over the coming weeks to discuss this.



The Board discussed issues which may arise due to a short transition period, including the implementation of a new Immigration Bill and opportunities to promote the sustainability of UK farming.

## **5. Policy Priority Review [PB1028] (*Andrew Clark*)**

The Board heard that Director of Policy, Andrew Clark (AC) intended to update NFU Policy Priorities in late spring 2020, to cover the 2020/21 period. The paper outlines a number of policy areas that the NFU would like to prioritise. The paper included several ongoing areas of work, as well as upcoming areas such as trade agreements, domestic agriculture policy, establishing a new relationship with COPA post-Brexit and presence at COP26 in November 2020. There was a suggestion about whether a number of policy priority areas, including infrastructure, water, environment and net zero could be brigaded under Climate Friendly Food.

The Board heard that AC will discuss the paper with the Forums and Boards over the coming weeks, bringing the revised list back to the Board for adoption by the May Board meeting.

The Board supported the paper's proposals.

ACTION: AC to consult the Forums and Boards on proposed evolution of NFU policy priorities.

## **6. Consultation on Strengthening Police Powers to Tackle Unauthorised Encampments [PB1029] (*Sam Durham*)**

The paper discusses a Home Office consultation on measures to criminalise the act of trespassing when setting up an unauthorised encampment in England and Wales. The consultation also covers amending sections of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 as an alternative approach to the issue. The paper proposes that the NFU is supportive of both proposals and could even go as far as suggesting that both options should be taken forwards.

The NFU responded to a similar consultation in 2018 by suggesting that police already had enough powers to effectively deal with illegal encampments, although these needed to be supported by sufficient authorised sites provided by local authorities. The Board was asked to consider the new NFU approach to the current consultation.

The Board fully supported the new approach. The Board highlighted the importance of ensuring any response to the consultation is not discriminatory and of being aware of any unintended consequences of new measures to members farming on council land.

## **7. Fairness in the Supply Chain [PB1030] (*Christine McDowell and Ruth Edge*)**

The paper discusses the 'fairness in the supply chain' clause within the new Agriculture Bill and the need for an NFU position on this section to be established. The paper put forward four proposals as the first stage of determining what the NFU feels this section of regulation should achieve, in terms of meeting the needs of members whilst avoiding unintended or negative consequences. The proposals address the relationship between farmers and a first purchaser and will be discussed with individual commodity boards over the coming weeks.

The Board discussed the implications of the proposals and agreed with all four proposals.

The Board agreed that a 12-month timeframe should be given for the SoS to take action in this area.

The Board agreed that within the 'fairness in the supply chain' section of the Agriculture Bill, any general principles that apply across all sectors should be non-specific. Detailed principles should be tailored to individual sectors. The Board therefore agreed that a first purchaser should be defined differently for each sector.

The Board agreed that an appropriate enforcement body should be non-governmental, although not funded through a levy system.

**ACTION:** Supply chain team to take the four proposals, along with Policy Board's responses to commodity boards, to discuss the needs of individual sectors regarding fairness in the supply chain.

## **8. NFU's Integrated Water Management Strategy [PB1031] (*Paul Hammett and Mhari Barnes*)**

The paper outlined plans for an NFU Integrated Water Management Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to deliver an increased level of resilience for the agricultural sector against water related hazards (floods and droughts) and their associated risks for food production. Increased resilience will allow farmers and growers to continue to produce high quality, affordable food and safeguard their business, whilst protecting and improving the environment.

With the prospect of extreme weather events becoming more commonplace and severe, it is timely to create an NFU water management strategy now, on which to base NFU proposals to Government on the development of any national strategy.

Key questions were put to the Board and discussed, regarding contents of the strategy. The Board agreed that the NFU should be ambitious in our strategy and use the opportunity to talk positively about access to water and the fundamental importance of water for food. The Board agreed that calculating statistics about water usage across individual sectors could support ambitious investment and infrastructure proposals to Government, as well as engage the public in the benefits of locally grown produce.

The Board agreed that working alongside industry allies and encouraging members to value water differently will strengthen proposals put forward in an NFU Integrated Water Management Strategy.

**ACTION:** Mhari Barnes and Paul Hammett to integrate Policy Board's comments into further development of the Integrated Water Management Strategy.

## **9. Environment Bill – Proposed Priority Amendments [PB1032] (*Diane Mitchell, Hannah Harrison and Jo Woodhams*)**

The paper outlines a number of proposed priority amendments to the Environment Bill, which is expected to be reintroduced to Parliament in the coming weeks. The aim is to focus NFU lobbying efforts in discussions with MPs as the bill moves through Parliament. The Environment and Legal teams have worked together to analyse how the draft bill would impact upon members and identified concerns with which to push forward.

The Board discussed the proposed priority amendments, identifying areas where support or pushback may be experienced from various NGOs and stakeholders, such as water abstraction and conservation. The Board agreed with the proposed priority amendments, which are well embedded in NFU policy priorities.

**ACTION:** The Board agreed that some amendments should be discussed further with relevant sector boards whilst managing expectations of what may be achievable.

### **10. New Judicial Review [PB1033] (*Nina Winter*)**

The Board discussed the various aspects of the new judicial review.

### **FOR INFORMATION ONLY:**

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- 11. BPS update [PB1034] (*Richard Wordsworth*)**
- 12. Agri-environment Update [PB1035] (*Alisha Anstee*)**
- 13. Legal Update [PB1036] (*Nina Winter*)**
- 14. Red Diesel Quality Issues [PB1037] (*Alison Taylor and Tom Price*)**
- 15. NFU Lobbying Priorities for the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill (*Nick von Westenholz*)**

No comments were made on these papers.

### **AOB:**

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A London based mass lobby will take place on the 25<sup>th</sup> March. The NFU is working with stakeholders to organise a positive event focusing on standards. The aim is for as many members to attend as possible.