
Name:	Policy Board	Meeting Date:	8 July 2020
Location:	Remote	Time:	09:00 – 12.30
Room:	Remote	Chair:	Minette Batters
Circulation:	Policy Board	Secretary:	Alison Taylor
		Tel:	024 7685 8852
		Ref:	PB1080

Present: Minette Batters (Chair), Tom Bradshaw, Ali Capper, Andrew Clark, Matt Culley, John Davies, Richard Findlay, Terry Jones, Richard Lister, John Mercer, Michael Oakes, Stuart Roberts, Michael Sly, and Tom Wornham

By Invitation: Fran Barnes, Thomas Binns, Andrew Burgess, Chris Cardell, Simon Gadd, Andrea Graham, Nick Hamer, Martin Haworth, Phil Jarvis, Rocky Lorusso, Robin Manning, John Pawsey, Alison Taylor and Nick von Westenholz

In Attendance: Rachel Chambers, Chris Hartfield, Anthony Hopkins, Helen Hunt, Diane Mitchell and Claire Robinson

Apologies: Phil Hambling

Policy Board Minutes – 8 July 2020

1. 14 May minutes & actions [PB1066]

The Board found the minutes from 14 May 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 complete or ongoing 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 NFU standards petition has received over 1 million signatures in under 3 weeks, accompanied by more than 80,000 emails being sent to MPs. The petition will remain live, to be reviewed again in January.

The Agriculture Bill is continuing to progress through the House of Lords, with over 300 amendments being put down. The President conveyed the importance of being prepared for the Bill coming back to the House of Commons, where the petition will serve as a valuable lobbying tool when engaging with MPs. The NFU is maintaining its strong alliance with environmental NGOs and consumer representatives in this area.

The President expressed her thanks to all Board and Forum Chairs for their work throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and their interaction with Council.

3. Political update [Verbal] (*Rocky Lorusso*)

The Board heard that since the beginning of the lockdown, the NFU had held over 70 virtual private meetings with 60 MPs – double the level of engagement this time last year. Over 30 conference calls have been held with Parliamentarians on a range of issues, including the dairy sector and both the Trade and Agriculture Bills. Some conference calls have been joined by up to 25 politicians and members of the House of Lords, which would have been difficult to achieve in a physical meeting. There has been particularly strong engagement with the Labour Party, including regular calls with Daniel Zeichner MP (Shadow Minister, Efra), Luke Pollard MP (Shadow SoS, Efra) and other key people such as Emily Thornberry MP (Shadow SoS, International Trade).

The Board heard that the NFU has given evidence at 6 parliamentary committees between April and June and that the NFU plans to have a high profile presence at the upcoming virtual party conference season.

The Board heard that the President is planning for a meeting with Keir Starmer and has discussed the No 10 officials the success of the NFU standards petition.

4. Brexit update [PB1068] (*Nick von Westenholz*)

The Board heard that the Agriculture Bill entered the committee stage in the House of Lords on 7th July, with most of the NFU supported amendments due to be discussed. Due to the upcoming summer recess, voting on amendments and the return to the House of Commons will occur in the autumn, for which the NFU must be prepared. The Trade Bill is currently going through the House of Commons.

The Board heard that the NFU is currently working on the membership and terms of reference for the recently announced Trade and Agriculture Commission. The Commission will come under the auspices of the Department for International Trade and will run for 6 months, at the end of which an advisory report will be presented to Government. The NFU is pushing for the Commission to be accountable to Parliament, who in turn will hold Government to account during trade discussions. The Commission should be accountable, independent and comprehensive, setting out a policy roadmap for Government as well as plans for long-running scrutiny of trade deals after the conclusion of the Commission's 6 month span. The Board heard that the NFU must continue to lobby heavily on the individual Free Trade Agreements, separate to the work of the Commission, as the Government has pledged to have 80 % of trade covered by trade deals within 3 years. The Board heard that NFU engagement with both Defra and DIT is strong, with Nick von Westenholz recently appointed to the Government's Strategic Trade Advisory Group.

The Board heard that there are tabled amendments to the Trade Bill, supported by many lobbying organisations to improve Parliamentary scrutiny of trade deals, and introduce the requirement for a vote in the House of Commons in order to agree a trade deal. This will strengthen NFU lobbying work, although the Government has shown strong resistance to giving Parliament more control over trade policy.

The Board heard that several internal meetings have taken place to coordinate 'prepare for change' work, which will detail to members the potential changes that may take place in January around EU trade, border checks and additional costs. The NFU is working closely with Defra officials to understand developments in UK/EU negotiations.

The Board heard the Brexit and International Trade team alongside the commodity teams have begun to produce 'playbooks' for negotiations that are currently underway with the US, New Zealand, Australia and Japan. These will outline both offensive and defensive issues that may affect UK agriculture.

The Board raised concerns over the impact of members of Government and industry organisations discussing standards on public platforms, using ill-informed and potentially damaging rhetoric. The varying levels of understanding between different strands of Government and industry bodies, of UK agricultural production systems and relevant regulation is an obstacle that the NFU must consider in lobbying work.

The Board asked questions about the potential impacts of a UK/US trade deal on geographical indications for UK products. The Board heard that this is expected to be a sticking point during negotiations, with the likely outcome being a compromise between the UK's registered geographical indications and the US's alternative use of trademark law.

5. Policy priorities for 2020/21 [PB1069] (Andrew Clark)

The paper submitted to the Board outlines proposed policy priorities for 2020/21, providing an anchor point by which to focus the long-term ambitions and workstreams over the coming year. Proposed priorities include; shaping the domestic agricultural policy transition, promoting the NFU's Net Zero ambition and defending and protecting F&G member businesses. Andrew Clark (AC) detailed the priorities and their remits.

The Board questioned how the NFU would measure the success of these policy priorities. AC described that growing the membership, income and influence of the NFU, as well as increasing productivity, resilience and confidence within the sector would indicate the focus of policy priorities had been successful.

The Board highlighted that policy priorities can best be achieved when sectors work together. Being united with other stakeholder organisations will further strengthen policy work.

ACTION: AC to revise the policy priorities document to incorporate the Boards feedback. A finalised version of the document to be presented to the Board in September.

6. NFU support for the FDSC SSLG project to create a Professional Body [PB1070] (Rachel Chambers)

The paper submitted to the Board outlines the FDSC's plans for its Senior Skills Leadership Group (SLG) to create a new professional body that will promote both formal and vocational training and continued professional development within the production agriculture and horticulture industry. The paper provides an update on work being carried out by the SLG, on which the NFU sits. The paper seeks the Boards endorsement of the work, ahead of the SLG's submission of a business case to government aiming to secure pump prime funding.

The Board expressed its support for the work of the SLG and comments were made about ensuring the project maintained the highest possible ambitions. The Board asked questions about how the project would improve the current skills landscape and what this would mean for future input of NFU resources. The Board heard that the new Professional Body will look to be an overriding body, amalgamating current training providers into a single, integrated entry point. The Board heard that as the SLG moves towards

creating a shadow body, the level of demand on the NFU in terms of input and decision making would reduce, although the NFU would likely be looking to sit on the Professional Body Board, to ensure continued influence.

ACTION: Rachel Chambers to relay the Board's endorsement of the project and the NFU's continued involvement to the SLG

7. Organic maintenance payments [PB1071] (*John Pawsey*)

The paper submitted to the Board details a proposal to amend the NFU's position to support organic maintenance payments, alongside its current support for organic conversion payments. Current NFU policy is that the market should provide enough reward for organic production, eliminating the need for maintenance payments. The Organic Forum feel that the market does not reliably provide sufficient reward for organic production and that maintenance payments have been a simple and effective way of rewarding organic farmers for recognised environmental gains from organic standards which are legally defined under EU and UK law. The Forum therefore recommends that the NFU supports organic maintenance as part of future agricultural support schemes.

The NFU Organic Forum do not necessarily want the NFU to actively push for organic maintenance payments, but rather support the payments if raised elsewhere, for example by the English Organic Forum.

The Board shared opinions on organic maintenance payments. The view was expressed that the market should pay for organic production, rather than environmental delivery, which will be the public goods delivery available to all farmers through an ELM scheme. If an ELM scheme were to include organic maintenance payments, there is a risk of organic farmers receiving 'double payments', unless alternative parts of the scheme were inaccessible to organic farmers. Instead, an ELM scheme should offer a range of options that all farmers can choose to deliver, thereby incentivising organic farming practises, in a way that is accessible to all. There were also concerns that an organic maintenance payment would lead to a rise in organic farmers, distorting the market and risking collapse.

It was highlighted that there is an absence in the latest ELM proposal of certain organic farming outputs such as increased in-field biodiversity. It was argued that an organic maintenance payment of £60 per hectare would not distort the market, although it was suggested that if organic maintenance payments were to be built into an ELM scheme, this figure should be reviewed periodically to ensure market stability.

It was agreed that the NFU should push for an ELM scheme that is open for all farmers and rewards environmental goods produced from any farming system. The NFU would support a broad, systems-based earned recognition approach, whereby any farming practise over and above a 'conventional' farming baseline could be rewarded.

ACTION: For the NFU's support for an earned recognition structure that covers all farming systems to be an important focus of NFU work on ELMs development

8. ELM consultation and update [PB1072] (*Claire Robinson*)

The paper submitted to the Board details the NFU's draft response to Defra's ELM Policy Discussion Document. The draft response is based on membership feedback during the original consultation period, previous discussions with the Board and consultation with the Environment Forum and ELM Task and Finish group. The main principle of the response is that this is a farm-based scheme that retains the CAP budget within farming.

The Board agreed that the response should make clear, that the scheme should be targeted at the active farmer, particularly as other stakeholder organisations may be pushing strongly for environmental good recognition, at the cost of supporting increased productivity in food production. The Board agreed that the response should also highlight the NFU's desire for a broad, systems-based earned recognition approach. Phrasing and messaging should align with that included in the NFU's White Paper on ELMs. The response must also make clear that it is imperative Defra have a robust delivery platform in place before the full ELM scheme is launched in 2024 and that it is fully tested by the national pilot.

Concerns were raised over how accessible tier 3 would be to tenant farmers and how redundant BPS money would be spent by Government during the transition period to the new ELM scheme. It was suggested that the NFU should be pushing for BPS to be extended if the delivery of ELMs is delayed. It was also suggested that the NFU should ensure Defra are releasing clear messages to UK farmers about what will be delivered through the different ELMs tiers and how this relates to current BPS payments.

ACTION: Claire Robinson to incorporate the Board's feedback in the NFU response to the Defra ELMs consultation

9. NFU strategy for Integrated Pest Management and the Pathway strategy [Verbal] (Matt Culley)

Matt Culley (MC) addressed the Board, stressing the importance of making sure IPM was fit for the future. MC discussed how IPM has become a way of showing how the challenges of food production are changing and asked the Board; are IPM and the animal health pathway interlinked in any way, can IPM become a cross sector document that earns recognition within ELMs; can or should the NFU take ownership of this?

The Board agreed that IPM should be recognised in an ELM scheme and that plant health and the animal health pathway should be linked in a broad sense, with some possible cross sector links.

It was suggested that IPM and the animal health pathway should both sit within Tier 1 of ELMs, providing a potential income stream for the livestock sector. The Board agreed that NFU messaging on the two items should be consistent and that the NFU should have continued involvement in the development of the animal health pathway, to ensure it works for members. The Board also agreed that it was important for the NFU to take ownership of data and evidence surrounding the development of both IPM and the animal health pathway.

The Board heard that the NFU were currently developing a proposal for an ELMs Test and Trial for IPM, focussing on how land management plans within ELMs delivers IPM and how IPM uptake can be incentivised. This proposal is also being discussed with AHDB and ADAS.

10. A new Modern Slavery App [PB1078] (Rachel Chambers)

The paper submitted to the Board outlines a new mobile phone app that aims to help tackle labour exploitation and modern slavery in the food picking, packing and processing sector. The app initiative was instigated by the Clewer Initiative and developed in partnership with the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, the National Crime Agency, the Modern Slavery Helpline, Church Commissioners for England and the Fresca Group. The app is aimed at both business managers and workers, providing information on employment rights in a number of key languages as well as guidance on how to prevent labour exploitation and avoid being exploited by criminal gangs.



The Board heard that support for the app would be a low input means of being more proactive in the area of modern slavery prevention. Support however, should be contingent on a number of necessary legal and policy changes to the app.

The Board agreed to support the app, contingent on necessary changes.

ACTION: Rachel Chambers and Lucy Ralph to relay NFU support for the app back to the developer group, detailing the NFU's necessary and desirable legal and policy changes.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY:

11. **European Commission's Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies [PB1073] (*Robin Manning*)**
12. **Covid-19 policy lessons [PB1074] (*Andrew Clark, Tori Morgan, Tom Dracup and Katie Jarvis*)**
13. **BPS update [PB1075] (*Richard Wordsworth*)**
14. **Agri-environment update [PB1076] (*Alisha Anstee*)**
15. **Legal update [PB1077] (*Nina Winter*)**
16. **Low Pay Commission Review – NFU response [PB1079] (*Rachel Chambers*)**

AOB:

NFU position on GM and plant breeding

The President noted that the NFU's policy position on plant breeding technologies has been long-held.

ACTION: In light of current political activity on the issue, the President requested a review of the NFU's policy position, to be presented in a paper to the Board in September.

Red Tractor

The Board discussed recent activity with Red Tractor, including meetings with Red Tractor representatives and of Technical Advisory Committees. The Board discussed possible implications of proposed new Red Tractor standards and how these would fit with schemes such as ELMs and the animal health pathway. The Board highlighted some divisions in opinions between producers, processors and retailers in some sectors.

ACTION: It was agreed that Office Holders and Sector Board Chairs would meet ahead of the September Policy Board meeting to discuss issues regarding Red Tractor. A paper will be presented to the Board in September.

Derbyshire cull company – NFU decision

The Board discussed the NFU's decision regarding legal action and the Derbyshire cull company