

**WFAC 20/10/03
FOR DISCUSSION**

**WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WFAC) DIRECTOR'S REPORT ON
ISSUES RAISED AT LAST BOARD MEETING**

Executive Summary

1. The attached report provides a brief summary of matters introduced by the Chief Executive at the last Board policy meeting which was held on 16 September 2020. The complete minutes from the Board meeting are available on the FSA's website at <http://www.food.gov.uk>. The paper also provides an update on issues of relevance to Wales and forms the basis of the update to the Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC).
2. The Director for FSA in Wales will supplement the information provided in this report with an oral update where necessary.
3. Members of the Committee are invited to:
 - **note** the Board discussions;
 - **invite** the Director to expand on any issues for further discussion.

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1. Ministerial Changes

1.1 In a change of ministerial responsibilities, the portfolio of the FSA will now fall within the remit of Eluned Morgan the newly appointed Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and the Welsh Language. We have already been in contact with the new Minister's private office team and will be seeking an early opportunity to engage with the Minister. <https://gov.wales/first-minister-strengthens-ministerial-health-team>

2. Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales (SSAFW)

2.1 A virtual meeting of SSAFW was held on 21 September. Agenda items included an update on the coordinated response to COVID-19 by local authorities, FSA and Welsh Government, an update from FSA and Welsh Government in relation to EU transition preparedness. The FSA also provided an update on the Food and Feed Safety Hygiene Framework, which is intended to come into operation at the end of the transition period. Risk Assessments, Risk Management, Health, ID Marks along with workforce planning were amongst the topics discussed.

3. COVID-19

3.1 As of writing this report, two thirds of people (2.35m) in 16 out of 22 local authorities and one town are now living with lockdown restrictions. We are continuing to liaise regularly with the local authorities and Welsh Government to remain up to date on the operational impact on food safety service provision. I also attend the Wales CMO's COVID-19 monitoring group to report any food safety issues and to gather intelligence for the FSA.

3.2 The joint FSA and Working Government Public Health bid for £2m as part of the COVID-19 Recovery fund was considered by the Welsh Government Cabinet last week. The bid was unsuccessful. Separately, local authorities in Wales have been successful in receiving £2.5m from Welsh Government that will be used to boost the COVID-19 response. The FSA is meeting with local authority representatives over the next few weeks and get more information on how it will be used and whether there is an impact on the reported pressures on the delivery of food services.

4. Multi- Agency working

4.1 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) have been part of the multi-agency response to the derailment of a freight train carrying diesel fuel. We have worked closely with local authorities, Natural Resources Wales, Public Health Wales and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) to understand if there are any implications for food safety due to the proximity of the site to the Loughor Estuary.

On a precautionary basis we advised local authorities to temporarily close the shellfish beds in the estuary. Sampling results of cockles and mussels in the area for residual oil contamination have reported levels within statutory limits, and as a result the beds have reopened. Local shellfish producers have been informed that harvesting can resume.

- 4.2 A programme of surveillance and monitoring over the winter period will continue to ensure the ongoing safety and quality of the shellfish harvested from the area. The monitoring results will be kept under regular review.

5. Pre-Election Period in Wales

- 5.1 Welsh Government has informed the FSA that the Senedd is likely to go into its Easter recess from Friday 26 March 2021 and will be dissolved without returning until after the May election. This is expected to be confirmed by Senedd shortly. Advice on the pre-election period will be circulated within the FSA in due course to ensure that the implications are factored into work planning.

6. FSA's Welsh Language Scheme

- 6.1 The FSA was recently included in the Welsh Language Commissioner's monitoring on the current state of Welsh language services across a randomly selected number of organisations. This is the first time for the FSA to be included in such an exercise, going forward the FSA will be included in each three-year monitoring cycle. Results proved very positive for the and a full, effective service was received in all aspects including responding to Welsh correspondence, fully answering Welsh language phone calls, publishing news stories, signage and leaflets etc bilingually. This is a testament not only to the work of the FSA's Welsh Language Unit, but also to the collective efforts and understanding of colleagues across the FSA. The report is published on the Commissioner's website (P81 references the FSA).

<http://www.comisiynyddygydraeg.cymru/English/Organisations/Compliance/assurancereports/Pages/The-Welsh-Language-Commissioner%e2%80%99s-Assurance-Reports.aspx>

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October 2020