

**Minutes of the open meeting of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee held on  
14 June 2018 at FSA Wales Offices, Southgate House, Cardiff**

**Present:**

**Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:**

Dr R Hussey  
Mr R Alexander  
Dr H Jones  
Mr D Peace  
Dr N Barry  
Mr A Gardner  
Mr J Wilson

**Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:**

Alice Teague, Head of Policy and Local Authority Partnerships  
Helen George - Secretariat  
Lucy Edwards - Secretariat  
Andy Morling via Skype for Paper FSAW 18-06-04  
Stuart Armstrong, David Alexander and Colin Thompson via Skype for Paper  
FSAW 18-06-05  
Simon Dawson via Skype for Paper FSAW 18-06-06  
Catriona Stewart via Skype for Paper FSAW 18-06-07  
Steve Cowperthwaite via Skype for Paper FSAW 18-06-08  
Laura Eden and Zoe Bond via Skype for Paper FSAW 18-06-09

**1. Introduction and Apologies**

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the open meeting and notified those present of  
the guest speakers who would be presenting papers.

1.2 Apologies were noted from the Interim Director for FSA in Wales.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

2.1 Committee members advised the following declarations of interest:

- David Peace advised that he is non-executive chairman of Hall Mark group, Director of Vorenta Ltd, Director of Umentas Ltd and business advisor to a farm-based food business in Monmouthshire. David also has a daughter with a challenged immune system.

- Norma Barry advised that she is a member of the Wales Food and Drink Industry Board and is also Wine Ambassador for Wales as part of this role.
- Ruth Hussey advised that she is the Governor of The Health Foundation, Commissioner, LSE/Lancet Commission on the 'Future of the NHS' and an Advisory Board Member for the School of Public Health Research.
- Ronnie Alexander advised that he is a member of the National Assembly for Wales Remuneration Board.
- James Wilson advised that he is a member of the Wales Food and Drink Industry Board, also sits on the FSA Shellfish Stakeholders working group and owns a shellfish business.
- Alan Gardner advised that he is a livestock keeper with a small flock of sheep.

2.2 All declarations were noted. No members withdrew from discussions.

### **3. Minutes of the Last Open Meeting (Paper FSAW 18/06/01)**

3.1 The draft minutes of the meeting held on 8 March were accepted as a true record of discussions. It was agreed that the final minutes should be translated and placed on the website.      **Action: Secretariat**

### **4. Report from Chairman (Paper FSAW 18/06/02)**

4.1 The Chair presented her written report which gave a summary of discussions at the last Board meeting which included discussions on Science; Raw Drinking Milk; and International Strategy. The report also highlighted the April meeting with Vaughan Gething, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services and a meeting with Dave Thompson the newly elected Chair of Directors for Public Protection Wales.

4.2 The report also informed the Committee of the meeting held, in early January, with a number of Welsh Government Ministers where topics discussed were ROF and EU exit issues and of a separate meeting held with representatives of Directors for Public Protection Wales to discuss Welsh perspectives of the ROF programme.

4.3 The Chair also took the opportunity to report on the May business meeting of the WFAC where members provided further input into the review of Food Advisory Committees in Wales and Northern Ireland. The Chair also gave an update on her involvement in the recruitment process which is underway to appoint two new members to the Committee.

4.4 The Chair conveyed her sincere thanks to committee member Dr Hugh Jones for his invaluable contribution of scientific knowledge and advice to the committee during his term of appointment.

#### **5. Director's Update (Paper FSAW 18/06/03)**

5.1 The WFAC received the regular report from the interim Director in Wales, which was presented by Alice Teague, Head of Policy and Local Authority Partnerships. The report informed of recent engagements, including the Ministerial meeting in April and of discussions held with the Chair of Directors of Public Protection Wales and of several meetings with local authorities.

5.2 The report informed of FSA Wales' EU exit work has focused on imported food over the last few months and work with a number of key ports across Wales, to understand more about the volume and type of food that comes through Welsh ports and what resources may be needed in the future to undertake risk based proportionate checks. In this relation to this the WFAC was also informed of a successful bid to Welsh Government for additional resources to support FSA Wales' EU exit work.

5.3 The report also advised of work undertaken by the FSA in Wales on food supplements on behalf of the FSA. The WFAC were updated on the imminent publication of consumer insight work which was commissioned to inform the development of the FSA's work on food supplements over the next few years and on the production of an enforcement toolkit for local authorities to assist them with planning and undertaking inspections of food outlets selling food supplements.

#### **6. The Development of the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) (Paper FSAW 18/06/04)**

6.1 Members considered the paper which updated on progress with plans to develop the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) towards having end to end operational capabilities (Phase 2) as discussed by the Board in December 2017. This follows HM Treasury approval of funding following the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) submission in early May of a business case approved by a sub-group of the Board on 18<sup>th</sup> April.

6.2 During its discussions, the WFAC noted that there are several unresolved issues about the nature of the Welsh Unit in terms of the legacy of the current Welsh Food Fraud Coordination Unit (WFFCU) and how it might be aligned to the National Food Crime Unit. In this respect, WFAC noted that discussions with the WFFCU, and its current host local authority, had been held, and would continue following the Board's considerations. Mindful of this, the WFAC made the following observations:

- that it would welcome further information in relation to timescale for implementing the Unit in Wales, taking into account the location, scale and size of future arrangements and implications for staff currently in place in the WFFCU;
- that it would welcome further detail on the operations of the NFCU with particular reference on how it will be reviewed and monitored, and its performance assessed against key performance indicators;
- noting the proposal that the NFCU will be the single point of contact for UK and overseas law enforcement agencies and other partners, the WFAC is keen to understand what the current relationship is with Food Standards Scotland and how this will be impacted in the future; and
- noting that in Wales, the WFFCU currently hold investigative powers, WFAC members are keen to ensure that these powers are maintained while legislation is made to secure investigative powers within the NFCU.

6.3 The WFAC acknowledged that due to the nature of food fraud and food crime, the creation of this Unit provides Wales with a positive opportunity to be more exposed to a wider intelligence and capability network. In conclusion, the WFAC welcomed the 3nation approach to the NFCU, and was appreciative of the view of what works best for Wales was being considered in the planning of the future of the NFCU.

## **7. Raw Drinking Milk Controls (Paper FSAW 18/06/05)**

7.1 The WFAC welcomed the paper which follows on from the paper considered in March 2018 which looked at current arrangements for the delivery of RDM and possible options to be considered for future arrangements. The WFAC welcomed the paper which discusses the principle of addressing RDM sales within the context of Regulating our Future (ROF) principles and the Risky Foods Framework (RFF) and seeks comments on recommendations to improve the existing controls for RDM.

7.2 In its considerations, the WFAC observed written comments submitted by the Welsh Heads of Trading Standards lead for Food Standards on the paper. These comments focussed on a number of food standards issues with an emphasis on ensuring that RDM should not be exempt from full labelling requirements given the importance of risk and traceability information associated with the product.

7.3 In relation to the increase in outbreaks of illness associated with RDM, and the increase in number of RDM producers, it was noted that it was difficult to draw any firm conclusions relating to trend in production over time. In commenting on potential reasons why there has been an increase in RDM production, the WFAC enquired about the availability of government grants, in Wales and Northern Ireland, that encourage diversification. In noting that there were proposals to draw up a best

practice guidance booklet, and to set up a producers group, the WFAC commented that it was important to ensure that both farming unions in Wales had input into this process.

7.4 During its discussions, some WFAC members were of the view that prohibition of sale of RDM should be the preferred option and while this was not a unanimous view, there was a shared concern about consumers being in no doubt about the lack of health benefits and the risks associated with consuming RDM.

7.5 Other observations made by the WFAC included:

- a shared view that WFAC remains concerned at the rise in outbreaks and harm to human health;
- while recognising a lack of data, the WFAC noted that the risk may escalate with the increased production of RDM;
- that food must be fit for human consumption and this is the responsibility of the Food Business operator to ensure that the food it produces is safe; and
- the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires a preventative approach. In this respect, the WFAC welcomed the proposed increased controls and advised that there should be clear trigger points for further escalated action, supported by regular monitoring.

7.6 In agreeing that marketing controls are needed with clear labelling, emphasising that this product should not be consumed by children, the WFAC emphasised the importance of these being underpinned by a robust communications campaign aimed at specific consumer groups. Further, the WFAC agreed that financial incentives to increase production of RDM should not be encouraged.

## **8. Review of Cutting Plants and Cold Stores (Paper FSAW 18/06/06)**

8.1 The WFAC considered the paper which was an interim paper summarising the progress made by the FSA's and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) in its UK wide review of cutting plants and cold stores, in the wake of non-compliance issues identified at various cutting plants. In noting the initial findings from the review, the WFAC acknowledged the complexity of the current operations. It was of the view that the review outcomes would present a good opportunity to make substantial improvements to how cutting plants and cold stores operate.

8.2 The WFAC shared a concern around the confusing split of responsibilities between local authority and FSA monitored establishments. The WFAC noted the review is aligned to the Regulating Our Future programme, particularly in relation to the role of private assurance data and how these data can be used.

8.3 In informing next steps for the review, the WFAC highlighted the importance of involving key Welsh stakeholders including, but not limited to, Welsh Government, primary producers and the farming unions in Wales

## **9. Regulating Our Future – Mid point Programme Report (Paper FSAW 18/06/07)**

9.1 The WFAC considered the paper provided an update on progress made across the Regulating Our Future Programme (ROF) since June 2017. The paper describes the key changes that will be made to the regulatory regime in time for the UK leaving the EU and outlines work being undertaken on other elements of the new regulatory system in preparation for delivery post EU exit. In considering progress made on the programme the WFAC made the following comments:

- in relation to business start-up and enhanced registration, the WFAC noted that an online service is currently being tested by a number of local authorities and food businesses, including local authorities in Wales, and that the ambition is to launch a first iteration of the new digitally enabled approach in time for the UK's exit from the EU. Further, the WFAC was keen to know how evidence would be gathered to inform the decision on pursuing permit to trade and was assured that an evaluation process was being established to inform this option;
- with regard to segmentation of food businesses, the WFAC highlighted the need to maintain the integrity of the FHRS in Wales. The WFAC commented that it would welcome further assurances on how this is going to be achieved;
- on Primary Authority National Inspection Strategies, the WFAC noted work undertaken to test the concept of NIS, and would welcome the opportunity to see the evaluation report from these tests when available; and
- in pursuing sustainable funding approaches, it was noted that Wales has high levels of poverty and therefore the cost and availability of food is a concern for business and consumers.

9.2 Subject to the above comments the WFAC welcomed the update and is keen to receive further update reports on this major programme of work.

## **10. The FSA's International Strategy (Paper FSAW 18/06/08)**

10.1 The WFAC considered the paper which described a draft international strategy which is being developed for the FSA. The WFAC commented that it was important that the delivery plans being developed to support the strategy provide detailed clear governance, monitoring and review arrangements to track the FSA's international work. In noting that overall aims of the International Strategy in advancing the FSA's

recognition and weight, the WFAC commented that it was important that the strategy should support both UK and devolved administration interests.

10.2 With reference to Wales, the WFAC commented that the strategy should support the aspirations of the Welsh Government's growth agenda with regards to food and drink. Subject to this, the WFAC welcomed the approach taken in the Strategy and is keen to be consulted on the detail which will be provided in the delivery plans.

## **10. Review of the Food Advisory Committees (Paper FSAW 18/06/09)**

10.1 The WFAC considered the paper which reported on findings of a review commissioned to consider how the valued contribution of the FACs could be improved and strengthened particularly given the current uncertainties about the future role of the FSA once the UK has left the EU. The WFAC was grateful for having been given the opportunity to input into the review at its early stage and to help shape some of the findings.

10.2 A number of questions were raised on the recommendations, and how they might work in practice. The Chair informed that the detail would be scoped in an induction plan which would be developed over the coming months. It was agreed that WFAC would want to input into the implementation plan. The WFAC welcomed the review and its findings and commented that it looked forward to the reshaping of the inter-relationship between the Board and the WFAC.

10.3 The WFAC concluded that it was very positive on being able to continue to provide effective well-informed advice to the Board and is keen to work within a new format which will enable more meaningful contribution to policy development at its earliest stages.

## **11. Feedback from Committee Networks**

11.1 A committee member advised that as part of the Food and Drink Industry Board they had attended a Brexit session that was held with Welsh Government officials in March.

11.2 A committee member attended the CIEH conference and informed of the interesting presentations delivered.

## **12. Question and Answer Session**

12.1 All issues raised as part of the session are reflected in the comments above.

### **13. Any other Business**

13.1 The Chair shared with the WFAC a communication she had received from a fellow Board member in relation to the findings from recent research into rates of display of stickers under the mandatory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in operation in Wales and Northern Ireland. The Chair informed the WFAC of the latest information on the rates of display and business compliance in Wales. It was noted that the extent of enforcement activity is greater in Wales. The Chair also informed members that the FSA Wales is currently funding a surveillance project with two Welsh local authorities to gauge information on business compliance in targeted areas with a view to wider roll out across Wales following evaluation.

13.2 The Chair also shared with the committee correspondence received from the Chair of Directors of Public Protection Wales (DPPW) in relation to less than thoroughly cooked burgers and consumer messaging at point of ordering. It was noted that a formal reply to the correspondence is being prepared by officers. This is an area which the WFAC continues to have some concern and the Chair welcomed the dialogue with DPPW.

13.3 The Committee noted that the next open meeting would be 13 September 2018.



**Action points**

Index	Action	By	Status
Para 3.1	Minutes of the March meeting to be translated and placed on website.	31 July 2018	