**MINUTES OF DEPARTMENTAL BOARD (DB) MEETING**

**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 MARCH 2017 IN THE BOARD ROOM, NIEA WATER MANAGEMENT UNIT, LISBURN**

**Members:**

Noel Lavery Permanent Secretary

David Small Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group

Louise Warde Hunter Deputy Secretary, Central Services and Rural Affairs Group

Graeme Wilkinson Director of Brexit Programme

Perpetua McNamee Director of Epizootics Branch, Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group

Norman Fulton Deputy Secretary, Food and Farming Group

Geraldine Fee Director of Corporate Services

Frank Caddy Independent Board Member  
David Russell Independent Board Member

James Brooks Independent Board Member

**In attendance**

Alistair Carson Food and Farming Group, Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Branch

Lisa-Jane McIlveen Food and Farming Group, Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Branch

Janine Fullerton HR Director, NICS HR

Tom Rodgers Financial Policy Branch

Roger Downey Financial Planning Branch

Malcolm Beatty CEO, Forest Service

Marcus McAuley Corporate Services, Forest Service

Patrick Savage Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group, Agri-Emissions and Land Branch

Susan Topping Board Secretary

Alison Morrow Board Secretariat

**Apologies:**

Robert Huey

David Reid

Sean McGuinness

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| **Item** | **Description** | **Action Owner** |
| **1.0** | **Proposals for a DAERA Science Transformation Programme** |  |
| 1.1 | Introduction:  Noel Lavery welcomed everyone to today’s meeting and as this was both Frank Caddy and Jim Brooks’ last meeting as Independent Board Members (IBMs), he thanked them for all their contributions and hard work. He also extended best wishes to Louise Warde Hunter who would soon be leaving to take up a new post.  Alistair Carson and Lisa-Jane McIlveen delivered a presentation on the Proposals to establish a DAERA Science Transformation Programme.  Board members discussed the project. Suggestions were made to Alistair regarding the use of language in his presentation and the inclusion of AFBI’s role in emergency response and their input to the Civil Contingencies Group (NI). The IBMs also asked why DB had not been made aware of these proposals at an earlier stage of the planning.  Further consideration is to be given to who should act as SRO and sit on the sponsor group for this programme.  The Board thanked Alistair and Lisa-Jane for their presentation, they left the meeting. | **Alistair Carson**  **Lisa-Jane McIlveen**  **Louise Warde Hunter** |
| **2.0** | **Departmental Update** |  |
| 2.1 | Noel Lavery provided a general update. He reminded executive members of the need for regular communication with their stake holders. He thanked DAERA staff for all their hard work in the collation of information to the inquiry on the Renewable Heating Incentive (RHI) scheme and to Geraldine Fee for co-ordinating the response.  There was a short discussion on what the role of the Board is in supporting the Accounting Officer in the absence of a Minister.  LFACA debts were discussed and Noel Lavery stated that he would be seeking advice on this from the ARAC Committee. | **Noel Lavery** |
| **3.0** | **Standing Items** |  |
| 3.1  3.2  3.3 | Declaration of Interests  Perpetua McNamee declared that a close family member had received funding through Invest NI.    Minutes from 22 February DB Meeting  The Minutes of the February 2017 meeting were agreed.  Action 1 – Ongoing, Norman Fulton to write to Noel Lavery by end of next week ;  Action 2 – Complete. To be presented to next Brexit Board;  Action 3 – Ongoing, to be presented to Noel Lavery by 31 March and presented at April’s DB;  Action 4 – Complete;  Action 5 – Ongoing, paper to go to April DB;  Action 6 – Ongoing, for April DB; and  Action 7 – Complete  Matters Arising  Actions arising 1: Norman Fulton to write to Noel Lavery by 31 March 2017  Action arising 2 complete and to be presented to next Brexit Board; Action arising 4 complete; Action arising 7 complete.  Actions arising 3, 5, 6 ongoing to next month | **Noel Lavery** |
| **4.0** | **Brexit Update** |  |
| 4.1 | Graeme Wilkinson provided the Board with an update on the current position. He advised that Article 50 had been triggered today by the Prime Minister.  A lot of work was being carried out within the Department. Key areas were Budget, Borders, Citizens and Agencies.  Graeme, along with representatives from all NI Departments, attended a workshop hosted by The Executive Office (TEO).  Graeme emphasised the assistance that could be provided by the Brussels NI office regarding EU issues.  There was some discussion around the upcoming Agricultural Ministers’ Meeting and how this should be handled in the absence of a DAERA Minister. Graeme will discuss this further with Noel Lavery.  There was further debate on cross border concerns post Brexit and on the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships with both NIO and the Irish Government.  Reference was made to a letter from Michelle McIlveen to Andrea Leadsom MP sent on 2 March 2017. Follow up is required regarding Environment Issues, further correspondence to be considered regarding this.  There was some discussion around staffing and the need for writing policy instructions and secondary legislation skills. Further consideration to be given to this by the Brexit Team.  Noel Lavery thanked Graeme Wilkinson for his continuing work. | **Graeme Wilkinson**  **Graeme Wilkinson**  **Graeme Wilkinson** |
| **5.0** | **CAP Reform Programme Report** |  |
| 5.1 | Louise Warde Hunter and Norman Fulton provided the Board with updates on the CAP Reform Programme.  Noel Lavery stated that in future any input to the CAP Reform Progress Report must be cleared by Grade 5’s.  The Board discussed the need to set up a Finance Sub Committee for the FBIS Co-operative Scheme and the timeframe for this. David Reid is to be asked to take this forward.  Louise Warde Hunter was also asked to circulate Lessons Learned to staff. She also proposed taking the Programme Board off line. To consider further.  Noel Lavery asked that a short update note from Paul McGurnaghan to the Board be added to the CAP Reform Progress Report at paragraph 7.2. | **Louise Warde Hunter**  **David Reid**  **Louise Warde Hunter**  **Louise Warde Hunter** |
| **6.0** | **DAERA Business Plan 2017/18** |  |
| 6.1 | Tom Rodgers gave an overview of progress with the Business Plan 2017/18 and stated that the document had been re-circulated and all comments received were now included. He asked the Board to:   1. Agree content; and 2. Note the refreshed draft 2017/18 Plan.   The Board agreed and there was some discussion about what should happen next to the plan in the absence of a DAERA Minister.  Some amendments were suggested to the Plan and there was further debate around targets and reporting periods. Tom is to follow this up with David Small.  Noel Lavery thanked Tom on behalf of the Board for this superb piece of work. | **Tom Rodgers**  **David Small** |
| **7.0** | **Strategic Business Planning 2024** |  |
| 7.1 | Tom Rodgers advised the Board that the Strategic Plan was available as an internal reference document and that further guidance was pending from The Executive Office. It had not been published on the Internet.  Board members provided Tom with some amendments to the document, these included:   * Equine Strategy – amendment to wording * International relations – Perpetua McNamee to provide form of words * A separate item on Biodiversity * DAERA People Strategy – amendment to wording   With regard to the PFG Environmental Outcome it was agreed that more thought needed to be given to this. David Small was to consider this further.  Louise Warde Hunter asked the Board to note an event planned for 25 April 2017 with DAERA senior management to discuss updating the DAERA Vision and Strategic Outcomes. It is intended to use this event to encourage group discussion and feedback and will allow an opportunity to hear the Senior Civil Service Group (SCSG) and the Grade 6s and 7s views on the next steps for the Department.  Most recent version of the DAERA Vision and Strategic Outcomes to be circulated to Board members.  Graeme Wilkinson left the meeting. | **Tom Rodgers**  **David Small**  **Louise Warde Hunter** |
| **8.0** | **Budget Position 2016/17 & 2017/18** |  |
| 8.1 | Roger Downey provided the Board with an update on the Budget Position for 2016/17 and 2017/18. It would be a number of weeks before the 2016/17 outturn position was finalised.  Board members discussed possible upcoming pressures on the 2017/18 DAERA budget. Noel Lavery suggested a further detailed discussion about budget cuts in 2017/18 and asked for a paper to be put forward at the next DB meeting to include all pressures, resource allocations and capital issues. Noel will speak to David Reid and Roger Downey about the paper.  Noel Lavery thanked Roger Downey for his input.  Tom Rodgers and Roger Downey left the meeting | **Roger Downey** |
| **9.0** | **Forest Service Business Plan** |  |
| 9.1 | Malcolm Beatty gave an overview of the draft Forest Service Business Plan 2017/18. He outlined the impact of Brexit on the timber trade and talked about the ongoing work on plant health, biosecurity and maintaining the Forest Estate.  There was discussion about further forestation in Northern Ireland, Land Use and the consideration being given to the planting of trees on flood plains to reduce the impact of future flooding events.  The Board was content with the draft plan but could not approve until costs had been finalised and included. Noel Lavery requested that a budget be included in the Business Plan and it be re-submitted to him.  Noel also asked that Malcolm Beatty meets with Janine Fullerton to discuss his experience of relocating his HQ to Enniskillen.  Malcolm Beatty and Marcus McAuley left the meeting. | **Malcolm Beatty**  **Malcolm Beatty** |
| **10.0** | **DB Effectiveness Review** |  |
| 10.1 | Geraldine Fee advised the Board of the results of the DAERA survey on DB Effectiveness. Overall it was a picture of full effectiveness. As there would be a change in IBM membership and in the format of Talkback and Team Brief, it was agreed that DB should revisit this topic in September. It was also agreed that results should be benchmarked against other Departments and the findings submitted to the Board.  There was further debate on the DB Board and its effectiveness. As there would be only 1 IBM from next month, the dynamics of the Board would change significantly and it was agreed to consider further the operational nature, composition and diversity of the Board and how to engage DB members earlier in proposals for new programmes/projects.  It was also noted that the use of acronyms in Board papers made them difficult to understand and it would be beneficial if IBMs had more time to consider papers before meeting.  It was agreed that the Board needed to be more visible to DAERA staff and the decision to hold Board meetings outside Dundonald House was welcomed. Allowing Board members from across NI Departments to be brought together and advised about what was expected of them would also be helpful.  It was also suggested that the Board be provided with key statistics every 3 months. Geraldine Fee to consider this. | **Geraldine Fee**  **Geraldine Fee** |
| **11.0** | **DB Operating Framework** |  |
| 11.1 | The Finance Sub Committee was discussed. It was agreed that members find the Committee helpful, although it was unclear at what stage papers must be submitted to the Finance sub-committee and whether any policy challenge is separate from this. Janine Fullerton advised members that she would be producing a report on what Boards require from HR to inform strategic discussion. Volumetrics were also discussed.  It was noted that it would be helpful for new Board members to receive an induction. Some of the current IBMs and Board Members had not received this. | **Geraldine Fee** |
| **12.0** | **Update on Sustainable Agricultural Land Management** |  |
| 12.1 | The paper on Sustainable Agricultural Land Management was discussed. John Gilliland, Chair of the Expert Group on Sustainable Land Management, was keen for this work to advance. The former DAERA Minister, Michelle McIlveen, wrote to Mr Gilliland on 2 March 2017 outlining DAERA’s proposed initial response to implementation. Further correspondence to John Gilliland was required. Pilot work on soil testing would take place in 2017/18. There was further discussion on the membership of the project board.  It was agreed to send John Gilliland a note updating him on DAERA’s current position on this. It should also advise him that DB was content with the objectives of the Strategy but further discussion was needed on the way forward. | **David Small**  **Patrick Savage**  **David Small** |
| **13.0** | **DB Forward Agenda** |  |
| 13.1 | Noel Lavery to speak to Geraldine Fee about this and the next 3 DB meeting agendae. | **Noel Lavery** |
| **14.0** | **Internal Communications Messages for Team Brief** |  |
| 14.1 | Items Agreed:  1.Brexit  2.Science Transformation Programme  3.Business Plan 2017/18  4.Sustainable Agricultural Land Management | **Geraldine Fee** |
| **15.0** | **NIEA Board Minutes** |  |
|  | Paper noted. | **David Small** |
| **16.0** | **ARAC Report** |  |
| 16.1 | Board members discussed the internal audit programme. Noel Lavery would like these discussed further at DB. |  |
| **17.0** | **CAP Management Board** |  |
| 17.1 | Paper noted. | **Norman Fulton** |
| **18.0** | **Staffing Update** |  |
| 18.1 | Geraldine Fee advised that DHR had now signed off responsibilities to NICS HR. The DAERA Final Quarterly Report showed that there has been some reduction in monitoring compliance.  Noel welcomed Janine Fullerton, DAERA’s Strategic HR Business Partner, as a member of the Board.  Janine Fullerton informed the Board members that NICS HR would be open for business from 3 April 2017. Each of the strategic business partners had specific departmental responsibilities. They were currently looking at how best to use their resources. Details of contacts would be issued to all staff and Team meetings would be arranged on a roll out basis. | **Geraldine Fee**  **Janine Fullerton** |
| **19.0** | **Relocation Update** |  |
| 19.1 | It was agreed that a substantive update on relocation should be provided at the next DB meeting. Update to include areas such as construction contract and staff in post targets.  Louise, Geraldine and Colin will attend the next Project Board Meeting. | **Louise Warde Hunter** |
| **20.0** | **Priority Issues Dashboard** |  |
| 20.1 | To be discussed at TMT meeting on 3 April 2017 | **Geraldine Fee** |
| **21.0** | **Any Other Business** |  |
| 21.1 | No other business.  Noel Lavery thanked Board Members for their attendance. The venue and agenda for the next meeting is to be agreed. | **Noel Lavery** |
| **22.0** | Close |  |