

Summary of the Minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Panel (AAP)

Meeting 2 – 8 September 2016

Welsh Government (WG) Pavilion, Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Powys.

Attendance

Lionel Walford – Chair

Peter Rees – Independent Member

Steve Hughson – Independent Member

Darren Williams – FUW

John Davies - NFU

Daryl Williams - UNITE

Ivan Monckton – UNITE

Bridget Henderson – UNITE Researcher

Kim Howell – Geldards

Helen Snow - Geldards

Gary Haggaty – Welsh Government

Paula Whitfield – Welsh Government

Adriana Kiss - Welsh Government

Medwyn Roberts – Welsh Government

Item 1 - Welcome.

The Chair welcomed attendees and set out the agenda for the day.

Item 2 – Conflicts of interest

One of the farming unions stated that there were both employers and employees who were members. His was noted.

Item 3 – Minutes of meetings

The Panel approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

Item 4 - Matters arising

Clarification was provided that Panel members wishing to claim reimbursement of their expenses should send their claims to the Panel Manager.

The Panel agreed that amendments were needed to the Order (see later paragraphs) and that the guidance provided on the Wages Order would be updated and clarified accordingly.

Item 5 - The Sub-Committee on Skills Development and Training

The Sub-Committee's terms of reference were approved. The Panel agreed that the terms could be amended by consensus if this was considered appropriate when the Sub-committee was operational.

The Chair confirmed that providing advice on skills and career development in agriculture is a statutory responsibility for the Panel. A view was expressed that the work of the AAP sub-committee on skills and training should be aligned with, and benefit from, the Farming Connect initiative (FC) as their work is a key vehicle for knowledge transfer to the agriculture industry. It was also agreed that this was not the only focus and the work of the agricultural colleges and other sources of training should be included with a view to enabling development within the agriculture and forestry sectors as a whole.

The Sub-committee will be looking to develop a learning culture at all levels and for ages. The Panel would call on this work when considering proposals to modernise and update Agriculture Wages Orders.

The Chair invited suggestions from the Panel for members of the sub-committee. The Panel agreed to consider nominations. They also agreed that they would seek the advice appropriate experts as required. It was also suggested that up to date Labour Market Information (LMI) was needed to inform the Panel and its Sub-committee. This information would include perception analysis surveys, and that the sub committee would benefit from the capacity to commission this sort of work when necessary.

A question was asked in relation to the communication aspects of the work on skills and how the information would be disseminated out to farmers and farm workers. A wider discussion followed on the nature of communicating with a wide range of stakeholders and using different media. It was suggested that the Panel need a communications strategy to ensure no stakeholders are missed.

Item 6 – Presentations on Proposed Amendments to the 2016 Order

Discussions recognised that that the sector is facing increases in the cost of labour at a time of considerable change and that this was at a time when there were rises in the cost of living for all workers. The uncertainty as to how the outcome of the Referendum on the UK leaving the EU , such as fluctuations in exchange rates, changes in in trade agreements and free movement of citizens etc. also formed part of the discussion. There was reference to the need to comply with the National Minimum and National Living Wage rates. All on the Panel, employer and employee representatives alike, agreed that employees to be treated in the best possible way at all times as this was in the best interests of the sector and the economy.

Papers setting out the different preferred approaches to proposing a new Wages order were tabled, one by the NFU and FUW jointly and a detailed proposition from UNITE. In depth discussion of each point followed.

The Panel considered possible amendments to the Agricultural Wages (Wales)

Order 2016 in detail. These included correcting typing errors as well as the provisions for flexible workers, overtime, holiday pay, on-call allowance and minimum rates of pay.

The Panel representatives made formal offers as to what the amendments and minimum rates of pay should be and counter offers were made. The minimum pay levels to be proposed were amended during discussions.

When final proposals emerged the a vote was taken with a majority in favour. The proposals would be the basis of a draft proposed order which would be the subject of consultation during September to October 2016. It was agreed that results of the consultation would be discussed at the Panel's next meeting before the proposal was submitted to Welsh Government Ministers responsible for making the Order.

Item 7 – Any Other Business

The Chair called for opinions on the Guidance document circulated to the Panel in advance of the meeting.

A date of 24 October was set for the next meeting. The Chair thanked all present for their contributions and their attendance.

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