

Summary of the Minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Panel (AAP) Meeting 7 – 15 February 2018

Welsh Government Pavilion, Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells

Attendance

Lionel Walford – Chair

Peter Rees – Independent Member

Steve Hughson – Independent Member

Will Prichard – NFU

Ivan Monckton – UNITE

Bryan Godsell – UNITE

Paula Whitfield – Welsh Government

Karla Price – Welsh Government

Apologies

Darren Williams – FUW

Item 1 – Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting noting one apology. He also welcomed Karla Price who had joined the Welsh Government Secretariat and Will Prichard who had joined the Panel as the NFU representative following John Davies' appointment as NFU Cymru President.

Item 2 – Update from Chair

The Labour Market Initiative (LMI) work was progressing. The Sub-Committee on Skills Development and Training had discussed this and Continued Professional Development (CPD) recording at their last meeting and work was ongoing.

The objective of this meeting was to open up discussion on modernising future Agricultural Wages Orders.

Item 3 – Approval of Notes of Last Meeting (9 November 2017)

The minutes of the previous Panel meeting were discussed and approved. The Panel discussed the commission of an Independent Economic Report to inform the work of the Panel as discussed in Meeting 6. AHDB was identified as a possible source for this work as they had an in depth and current awareness of the sector but it was agreed that a balanced view of this subject was needed.

Item 4 - Modernisation of Wages Orders

A discussion paper had been tabled on this subject prior to the meeting. The purpose of modernising was to consider whether the current structure and content of agricultural wages orders that they had inherited was still fit for purpose in 2018 and the future. The Chair emphasised the Panel needed to put forward clear proposals for change and the rationale for their thinking.

The Panel accepted that introducing orders less frequently than annually would be helpful. Members were asked to consider what provisions would need to be included in an Order set to last for 2 years.

UNITE's initial thoughts were to stipulate time limits e.g. rates of x for one year followed by a rate of y for a subsequent time. This was considered an acceptable approach but more detail was needed as a focus for discussion at the next meeting.

The Panel also considered the issue of young people working on farms. Clarity was needed on the employment status of young people / family members / partners working on farm. It was agreed that a fact sheet would be drafted on the status of various types of workers, apprentices etc. for consideration at the next meeting.

The Panel then discussed if the Grades of Worker needed re-defining as there was ongoing concern about the appropriateness / fairness with regard to payments, especially for the first 2 grades, which seemed to need sharper definition perhaps merging in some way. It was pointed out that certain criteria such as "working with machinery / animals" has changed considerably since Wages Orders were first established.

It was agreed that clarity was required on the following areas:

- How to treat Apprentices as Grades 1 and 2 were closely related;
- The definition of "supervision";
- Could there be a percentage of a given rate for trainees? National Minimum Wage / National Living Wage rates would need to be respected at all times.
- Are all the allowances still relevant?

The Panel showed their concern about skills being acquired by workers for their development which were not related to the job a worker was employed to do. It was thought that an employer needed to agree a training programme. The orders could include a provision for this.

Item 5 - Any Other Business (AOB)

The Independent members of the Panel reported they had attended a conference on project / personal development planning that had included Farming Connect and the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society. A report would be issued in due course.

There was no further AOB's. The Chair closed the meeting.