

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RL PROJECT BOARD  
HELD ON THURSDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2014  
BSPB, LANCASTER WAY, ELY**

**MINUTES**

**Present:**

**Chairman**

Susannah Bolton (HGCA)

David Houghton (Chairman cc)

Paul Taylor (AIC)

**Graham Jellis**

David Cranstoun (HGCA)

Heather Peck (Chairman cc)

Jonathan Tipples (HGCA)

Robert Hiles (BSPB)

Richard Summers (BSPB)

Jeremy Widdowson (BSPB)

**In attendance:**

Peter Gregory (Chairman Elect)

Simon Oxley (RL Manager)

Denise Lawson (minutes)

**Apologies:**

Thomas Jolliffe (BSPB)

Andrew Ward (Chairman cc)

Penny Maplestone (BSPB)

Colin West (MAGB)

Gary Sharkey (nabim)

**Minute**

**Action**

**01/18**

**ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked them for coming.

Apologies were received from Dr Jolliffe and Dr Maplestone, Mr Hiles and Mr Widdowson were attending as their alternates respectively. Mr Ward, Mr Sharkey and Mr West had also offered their apologies.

Mr King had resigned from the RL Board due to his level of commitments and MAGB had made a nomination to replace Mr King, but this was yet to be finalised.

**02/18**

**CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION**

Publication of the 2014/15 Recommended List had taken place since the last meeting and this had raised one issue which would be addressed later. The Crop Committee Chairmen's meeting had taken place and this had raised several issues which were included in the agenda.

Decisions were required on a number of issues before commencement of the Crop Committee Planning meetings to give members guidance on the way the crop committees would operate.

**03/18**

**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**a) CONFIDENTIAL**

The minutes were checked by page and signed as correct.

**b) NON-CONFIDENTIAL**

The Board agreed with the proposed deletions and a final copy would be signed as correct

**04/18**

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

**a) CHANGES TO DECLARATIONS OF BUSINESS INTEREST**

There were no changes to the interests already declared. The alternate attendees had completed declarations and returned them before the meeting.

**05/18 MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE**

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS:**

Late sown wheat – the cut off point for Late Sown Wheat had been extended from 31<sup>st</sup> December until 31<sup>st</sup> January.

Discussions about the format of the Late Sown Wheat tables were ongoing. As an interim measure, in the 2014/15 Recommended List, recommended varieties were entered using bold text and described varieties for comparison purposes used non-bold text to differentiate them. Breeders had been requested to indicate which varieties they required including in the late sown trials, and this will be raised at the Crop Committee Planning meeting. BSPB will also prepare a paper with feedback from their Crop Group on suggestions of how this might be managed in an endeavour to control costs.

**BSPB**

IT issues at the HGCA Regional Office in Huntingdon were in the process of being resolved – BT had now been tasked with some actions, and alternative arrangements for hosting the database were being discussed.

The date for the nabim Group meeting had been confirmed for the end of March, and information on Skyfall would be released as quickly as possible for inclusion in the pocketbooks.

**b) CIRCULATION OF THE NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES FROM RL PROJECT BOARD MEETINGS**

Following a query from MAGB, the Board agreed that the non-confidential copies of the minutes should be loaded onto the HGCA website. Ms Lawson will liaise with the web developers to identify the most suitable area on the website and arrange for past copies of non-confidential minutes to be made available.

**DL**

**c) RUST TRIALS**

Contractors had now been contacted and details would be forwarded to BSPB for their records.

**BH**

The UKCPVS Stakeholders meeting had taken place on 6<sup>th</sup> March and it had been proposed that the virulence survey could be used to feed into the disease ratings and make the industry more aware of any potential risks. BSPB should provide feedback to the Wheat Crop Committee planning meeting on the use of UKCPVS information on variety susceptibility in the RL thumbnail sketches following discussion of further information on the proposed use of UKCPVS data to be provided by Dr Watts to BSPB's Cereals Crop Group for its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> May.

**BSPB**

**JWatts**

**d) ITEMS RAISED AT CROP COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN'S MEETING NOT INCLUDED LATER ON THE AGENDA**

**Regional selections/recommendations**

This had been discussed previously and it was proposed that the breeders should make a member of the RL team aware when they required their variety to be considered for regional selection/recommendation. This had worked well in the past and crop committees also recognised obvious

regional strengths. If a variety was proposed for regional selection/recommendation, this was also discussed as part of the consistency check. It was agreed that the crop committees would use the highest yielding variety in the region under discussion to set the yield target and the identification of regional benefits would be left to the expertise of the crop committees.

#### Grounds for appeal

It was agreed that there was sufficient flexibility within the system and procedures to allow the Appeals Board to overturn a proposal if it was clearly incorrect. It would be possible to appoint an appropriate technical expert to the Appeals board if the nature of the appeal was made clear prior to the commencement of the meeting.

**06/18**

#### **RL MANAGER'S REPORT**

A statistics training session had taken place for specified members of the RL team – subjects being discussed had ranged from basic to more in-depth analysis.

A meeting had taken place with NIAB to discuss their trials.

The NL site reports were being prepared.

Preparation of the Pocketbooks was ongoing.

A general guide to the RL procedures had been prepared, and would include a link to the Crop Committee Handbook. This would be circulated to Board members for comment, along with a guide to the disease ratings.

**SO**

#### **a) TRIALS UPDATE**

Validation of the oilseeds trials was underway and nearly complete. Most of the trials were performing quite well.

One trial in Hampshire had been rejected due to poor establishment. One trial in Oxford had failed due to poor establishment and one trial in Warwickshire had also suffered from poor establishment as well as pigeon damage. There were queries over two further trials in Teeside which may not have been sown to protocol. The latter two had been assessed by BSPB members and a copy of their reports would be forwarded to Mr Handley. These will be inspected by a member of the RL team and a judgement made whether they should be abandoned.

Two winter wheat trials had not been drilled and one rye trial abandoned due to flooding.

Trials inspections in Scotland had taken place and no problems noted.

**JW**

#### **b) CEREALS 2014**

The demonstration RL plots were developing as expected, including the oilseed rape which had initially required re-sowing but now may require thinning. There were some issues with the mustard research plots.

**07/18**

#### **PROPOSED CHANGES TO WINTER MALTING BARLEY TESTING TIMETABLE**

Three scenarios had been circulated to the breeders and there was general agreement that the delay in commercial testing was the most acceptable option. This would not jeopardise acceptance of varieties as the seed production was more cautious with malting varieties. They had also agreed that the availability of more robust data would be valuable in the analysis.

The RL Board proposed that the agreement in principle to delay the commercial testing should now be reported to the Malting Barley

**DC**

Committee. There were minor cost implications for HGCA and the breeders would no longer be required to commit to seed production ahead of the recommendation decision.

The new procedure will need to be updated in the Crop Committee Handbook

SO

**08/18 MINIMUM STANDARDS AND WEIGHTING OF DISEASE RESISTANCES**

This had been discussed at previous Board meetings and at crop committee meetings, and subsequently led to discussions about the definition of minimum standards. Discussions had also taken place at the Crop Committee Chairmen's meeting and two papers prepared for the Board – one by Dr Maplestone and one by Dr Oxley.

The paper from Dr Maplestone had been the basis of the discussions at the Crop Committee Chairmen's meeting and involved the collective input of BSPB, with an indication of the wording to be used in the Crop Committee Handbook.

Both papers were summarised.

The paper prepared by Dr Maplestone clarified the rules and procedures which should be in place and the proposed BSPB seminar on disease resistance should help the crop committee members decide on the importance of resistance to specific diseases, i.e. low/medium/high. The Board agreed that there was some confusion over the definition of minimum standards They are in place to prevent any threat to the national crop.

The Crop Committee Chairmen had agreed to endorse the proposed revisions to the Crop Committee Handbook with some minor changes which had been made to the version presented to the Board. They had further agreed that the most important factor should be the weightings of importance placed on the disease resistance characteristics.

Each crop committee should now evaluate the disease risks and whether the minimum standards should be changed in accordance with the criteria set out in the wording proposed for the Crop Committee Handbook. The test of this system would be the consideration of the minimum standard for light leaf spot in oilseed rape in the East/West region. The Board proposed that the minimum standard should be a level of disease resistance which would mean that growing the variety would constitute a threat to the national crop, and any variety which did not achieve all of the minimum standards set for that crop should not normally qualify for a full UK recommendation.

The Board then considered where the levels of the minimum standards should be set, and generally agreed that '3' would be a suitable point for most diseases, and this should not be increased without a very strong case, with sufficient regard being paid to the weightings before considering changes in the minimum standards.

They further agreed that they would accept the revised wording of the Crop Committee Handbook suggested by BSPB and that the handbook should be amended accordingly.

In conclusion it was agreed that the crop committees would need to spend additional time on considering the weighting of characteristics and that full background information on changing disease pressures should be available at the planning meetings.

SO

**09/18 TREATMENT OF OILSEEDS VARIETIES WHICH FALL BELOW MINIMUM STANDARDS**

This was discussed at the Crop Committee Chairmen's meeting – they had agreed that slight fluctuations in disease rating that resulted in a variety dipping below the minimum standard should not mean that a variety would automatically lose recommendation, but that it could be called for review, and the breeder invited to attend the meeting to make a presentation to aid the decision. Those varieties which had a significant fall in disease rating represent a more significant threat. This must be a considered decision, rather than automatic, and varieties must be considered on a case by case basis.

10/18

### **BREEDERS USE OF ALTERNATIVE COMPARATORS**

Dr Maplestone had presented some amended wording to cover this issue and this had been discussed at the Crop Committee Chairmen's meeting. In order to ensure consistency of procedures across all crops, it was agreed that breeders should be able to suggest additional comparators rather than alternative comparators. The Chairmen had agreed that it would be preferable to have notice of breeders' intentions to introduce an additional comparator, but recognised that this might be problematical due to the timing of the crop committees, especially at candidate selection. The Recommendation meetings should be easier to manage as the data was available earlier in relation to the timing of the meetings. The breeders must give a clear justification for the use of an additional comparator. The use must focus on balancing features rather than the yield – the yield target would remain the same (as set at the Planning meetings).

In conclusion, the Board agreed that the terminology in the Crop Committee Handbook should indicate that advance notice from the breeders would be preferable and should be given to the RL team the night before the crop committee meeting, to enable the committee to consider the use of the additional comparator before the breeder's presentation. However, they also recognised that this may not always be logistically possible. The Crop Committee handbook should be amended accordingly.

SO

11/18

### **FINANCE**

#### **a) 2013/14 UPDATE**

Dr Oxley summarised the paper which gave details of the budget position in the current financial year. Outstanding invoices had been accrued.

The 2014/15 budget still required some minor work as the committees budget needed adjusting to take account of additional meetings. The Board requested that Table 3 should be expanded to show historical expenditure from the beginning of the project. This would enable them to consider any funding proposals and ensure that the overall project budget was not overspent

SO

#### **b) POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL TRIALS AND TESTS 2011-2016**

This additional paper was e-mailed.

Dr Oxley summarised the paper and indicated that selection of additional tests and trials may impact on existing work.

Following further discussion, it was suggested that some of the proposed tests and trials should be addressed as discrete research projects. It was agreed that any proposed additional work must provide economic benefit to growers and proposals would be discussed further after a cost benefit analysis presentation in June.

In addition, it was noted that applications to HGCA for additional funding for the RL Project might encounter problems at HGCA Board level, as the

funding for a single project would represent a greater proportion of the total research project allocation.

In conclusion the Board agreed that for any additional RL trials, full proposals to the relevant crop committee would be required. These could then be presented as recommendations to the Project Board.

**12/18 LICENCES TO USE RL DATA/MATERIAL ETC**

The processing and collating of applications to use RL data had in the past worked well, but the increasing number and types of applications being presented had caused a backlog in the system.

Although the process still worked well for applications to use data, there were problems with requests for any physical interaction with trials, as the level of control required was that much greater e.g. applications to do plant counts, take measurements etc. It had previously been agreed that three different applications were required:

- An application to use RL data
- An application to make non-invasive measurements
- An application to use plant material collected from trials sites.

An example of the proposed new form was presented which clearly differentiated between the types of application, with requests for details of the proposed methodology and likely use of output and how the results were planned to be exploited. The draft application form was presented for feedback before it was sent to the legal advisor.

Following some further detailed discussions, and consideration of all of the associated issues and concerns, the Board made the following proposals:

Applications to use material: these would now be handled directly by BSPB, who would then contact the relevant breeders and feedback directly to the applicants.

Applications to use data: as this data was already available in the public domain, it would be very difficult to prevent use of data. However, with each application an attempt would be made to adhere to the principles of agreement. The default position would be that the applicant should acknowledge use of RL data and make any research results available to all parties in the consortium.

Applications for non-invasive tests/measurements (e.g. plant heights, plant counts etc): this would be handled by HGCA and still required input from the RL Board. Any use of trials would require strict controls and caveats to ensure agreement from the trials managers.

**13/18 APPLICATIONS TO USE DATA/MATERIAL FROM RL TRIALS**

- a) APPLICATION FROM TANYA CURTIS & NIGEL HALFORD OF ROTHAMSTED RESEARCH**
- b) APPLICATION FROM WALNES LTD**
- c) APPLICATION FROM NEAL EVENS OF WEATHER INNOVATIONS**

Following the decision reached under item 13/17, it was agreed that these should be dealt with outside the Board meeting.

**14/18 AOB**

An issue had arisen from the publication of the 2014/15 Recommended List. Information on the hullability of oats had been included, and, although the availability of this data had been mentioned at a Board meeting, it had not been agreed that such data should be published. The mock tables presented at the

November meeting had not included the data but it had been mentioned during the discussions. Minute 07/16(b) recorded: 'Information on overseas malting suitability for Spring Barley was still to be finalised, as was the data on hullability of Spring Oats.' This was assumed as approval for the inclusion of the information and apologies for the misunderstanding were offered to the Board.

A breeder had indicated his concern that the publication of this data might prejudice his varieties, but reassurance had been given that the data would not be used when making selections or recommendations. Apologies had been offered to the breeder and they had not requested any further action to be taken. When the 2014/15 Recommended List was re-printed to include the information from the nabim commercial tests, it was suggested that the hullability data could be removed.

It was agreed that an error had been made in publishing data which had not been included in the mock tables presented to the Board, and this must be avoided in the future.

The Board agreed that feedback from the breeder would be requested to indicate whether they required the information to remain in the re-printed 14/15 List planned following the nabim decisions. A written apology would also be made to them.

**GJ**

**a) REPORT FROM PLANNING MEETING BETWEEN BSPB AND HGCA (MR WIDDOWSON AND MRS RYALL)**

This meeting had now taken place and a written schedule with associated actions was now being prepared.

**b) UPDATE ON CROP COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT AND RL PROJECT BOARD**

The proposals for changes to the crop committees were approved.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 14:45

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....