

MINUTES OF THE HORTICULTURE FORUM MEETING

Monday 13th January 2014, Rugby Club, Portadown

Chair: Elaine Shaw

Present: Patricia Erwin, Hamilton Loney, Tim Hunniford, Roy Lyttle, Robin McKee, Thomas Gilpin, Keith Crawford, Graham Hewitt, Sam MacNeice, Peter Donnelly, Kieran Hughes, Ian Duff, Doug Thomson, Eric Long, Paul Mooney, Patrick Taggart, Elaine Chapman (minutes)

Apologies: Barbara Erwin, Shane Donnelly, Barclay Bell, William Montgomery

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. Details of the food courses available at Loughry Campus are available on the CAFRE website www.cafre.ac.uk/he-prospectus_food.

Members were given a revised copy of the Horticulture Forum Operational Guidance document.

2. *Skilled Workforce* – BTEC National Qualifications – Paul Mooney

Paul Mooney, Head of Horticulture Education Branch at CAFRE Greenmount Campus, explained that CAFRE is now a full member of LANDEX - 'Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence') a subscriber organisation with 36 member colleges and universities across the UK. To qualify for membership the provider must deliver significant volumes of education and training in land based occupational areas. Previously CAFRE had been a non voting Associate Member.

Paul explained that Landex had recently issued a standard letter from the awarding body (Edexcel) seeking that industry would return it to them on headed paper endorsing their Edexcel Level 2 and Level 3 Horticultural Qualifications as being fully fit for purpose. Paul explained that the driver was to get these qualifications on the League tables of concern to English Colleges but that this had no impact on NI.

He further explained that CAFRE did not deliver these qualifications at present but had opted instead for the more practically based City and Guilds versions of the qualifications and because of this he could not recommend endorsement at this point in time. The forum supported this position.

Paul explained that Landex were now working closely with Edexcel in a new initiative to write improved qualifications for Equine and Agriculture and that CAFRE

Horticulture Representatives would hopefully be similarly involved in 2015. Paul highlighted that the forum would have a chance to endorse qualifications then.

Paul also briefed the group on progress with the Apprenticeship Scheme. He explained that CAFRE meetings had been held with Keith and Lyn from ALCI and also Northway PO. There are also plans in place for CAFRE to meet with Growers NI at their next meeting and there had been some contact pertaining to the apple growers through David Johnston in Loughgall.

Paul explained that Ciaran Mulholland was making a visit to Pershore College that day to see how they managed and organised apprenticeships for the production side of the industry.

Three apprenticeships have been taken out under the Apprenticeship Scheme to date. These were attending the existing college based, Work based Qualifications at level 2

3. ***Effective representation – CAP Reform Consultation response***

The Horticulture Forum response to the Consultation on the Policy Options arising from the Reform of CAP (Pillar1 Direct Payments) was prepared. **Elaine Shaw agreed to forward the response to DARD by Friday 17th January.**

4. ***Improved communications – Website Development***

The Supply Chain Development Programme finishes at the end of January. The Horticulture Forum website has to be paid for by then. Any comments or amendments to the draft content must be forwarded to Ian Duff by close of play on Wednesday 22nd January at the latest. **Elaine Shaw to ask a member of staff to proof read the final document.**

A photoshoot for the website photographs has been arranged for Thursday 19th January at Greenmount Campus from 11:00 am until 12:30. All members are asked to attend. Members to meet in the Walled Garden.

5. ***Annual Review of Progress – Review and Progress Monitoring of the Action Plan for Future Development of the Industry***

The Action Plan Timeline from the *Review and Strategic Priorities for the Development of the Horticulture Industry in Northern Ireland* was reviewed. Eric Long stressed the importance of regularly reviewing Horticulture Forum activities against strategic priorities. **Ian Duff to update the document.**

A number of action points arose from the review:

- Ian Duff to send a copy of the Strategic Priorities document to Arlene Foster.
- The need to gather information on the level of imported for some products eg trees and shrubs to be addressed with John Thompson at the next AFSB Arable and Horticulture Sub Group meeting.

- Link to HDC to be added to Horticulture Forum website.
- A letter of invitation to be sent to Jason Podris, CAFRE CAG member, to attend Horticulture Forum meetings as an observer.

6. **AOB**

A Sports turf event is to be held at CAFRE Greenmount Campus on 1st April 2014.

7. **Date of next meeting**

Monday 7th April, 7:30pm in the Rugby Club, Portadown