

## **Minutes of the Horticulture Forum meeting**

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2013, Rugby Club, Portadown**

**Chair:** Robin McKee

**Present:** Thomas Gilpin, Eric Long, Elaine Shaw, Tim Hunniford, Peter Donnelly, Ian Duff, Paul Mooney, Doug Thomson, Shane Donnelly, Patricia Erwin, Hamilton Loney, Barclay Bell, Roy Lyttle, Elaine Chapman (Minutes)

**Apologies:** Barbara Erwin, Kieran Hughes, Keith Crawford, Lyn Sherrif, Sam MacNeice

### **1. Minutes of the last meeting**

Kieran Hughes name was added to the list of apologies for the last meeting. The remainder of the minutes were agreed.

### **2. Proposed EU Regulations on Plant Reproductive Material**

Doug explained the new European Commission proposals to modernise and simplify the agri-food chain in Europe. Their intention is to condense 70 existing pieces of legislation covering animal health, plant health and plant reproductive material into 5 new regulations. However, for the ornamentals sector, the proposals as drafted would deliver a system that would be unnecessary, disproportionate and exorbitant in cost and bureaucracy. The HTA are calling for a removal of Plant Reproductive Material for ornamentals from the scope of the regulation, limiting the regulation to edible crops. **Doug Thomson to produce a draft letter on behalf of the Forum to be sent to local MLAs urging them to ensure ornamentals are excluded from this proposed change in legislation.**

### **3. Roles and operation of the Horticulture Forum**

The need for an AGM has been raised at several meetings and must be addressed together with the need for collection of funding. It was agreed that the next meeting should be an AGM. At the Horticulture Forum meeting in July it was agreed to elect a chair and vice chair and other office bearers, who rotated every 2 years, including a Treasurer and PRO.

Barclay Bell gave the chairman a cheque for £125 on behalf of the Northern Ireland Flower and Foliage Association (NIFFA). Members were urged to encourage their respective sectoral organisations to pay the £125. This money will be used to fund the maintenance of a Horticulture Forum website that will be developed using funding from the Supply Chain Development Programme.

**Ian Duff to talk to Elaine Shaw about creation of a website.**

**Elaine Chapman to talk to Growers NI about nominees for the Horticulture Forum and to discuss payment of £125 with Growers NI and HTA.**

**Paul Mooney to discuss Horticulture Forum participation with the Golfing Union of Ireland and to check if the Florists Association is operating.**

#### **4. Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020**

The proposals within the consultation document for the new Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 were discussed at length. **Elaine Chapman to summarise the issues discussed in the response form and circulate to members for their comments.** The deadline for responses to DARD is Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October at 5:00pm.

Doug calculated the amount of investment required within the bedding plant/hardy nursery stock sector. It was agreed this should be done for all sectors and included with the RDP consultation response. **Doug to forward his calculations to Elaine Chapman.**

#### **5. AOB**

##### SAWS

Patricia Erwin informed members that the SAWS scheme is soon to come to an end. This will be of particular concern to the horticulture industry which depends on this scheme for seasonal workers. Patricia urged members who would be impacted upon by this change to call Jim Nicholson MEP directly or contact Patricia at UFU.

##### Agri-loan Scheme

Concern was expressed that the new Agri-loan scheme, recently promoted within the press, would not be available to horticulture businesses. **Ian Duff to prepare a response on behalf of the forum.**

#### **6. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be an AGM. It will be arranged for Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2013 in the Rugby club, Portadown.