

MINUTES OF THE HORTICULTURE FORUM MEETING

Monday 4th November 2013, Rugby Club, Portadown

Chair: Robin McKee

Present: Hamilton Loney, Elaine Shaw, Tim Hunniford, Thomas Gilpin, Roy Lyttle, Barclay Bell, Kieran Hughes, Keith Crawford, Ian Duff, Doug Thomson, Eric Long, Shane Donnelly

Apologies: Peter Donnelly, Patricia Erwin, Barbara Erwin

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2. Horticulture education provision at CAFRE – Paul Mooney and Ciaran Mulholland, CAFRE

Paul Mooney asked for an ongoing two way communication between the Horticulture Forum and CAFRE as highlighted within the Horticulture Forum Strategy document. He then explained the current horticulture education courses provided at CAFRE.

Ciaran then explained the Apprenticeship Scheme and the substantial employer benefits attached to it. Details of the scheme are attached.

The chair encouraged all members to consider the Apprenticeship Scheme very carefully and urged members to be proactive in using the scheme to help train and develop young people within the horticulture industry.

Paul stated that he and Ciaran would be happy to meet with any subgroup/group of like minded growers who wish to explore the possibility of taking people in under the apprenticeship framework.

Ciaran Mulholland was asked to pass details of food courses at Loughry Campus to Elaine Chapman to forward to forum members.

3. Annual General Meeting

Robin McKee handed over to Ian Duff to chair the AGM. Ian reviewed the Horticulture Forum Operational Guidance document and Members suggested some improvements. **Ian agreed to make the necessary amendments. A copy of the**

amended version is attached. It was agreed that the Guidance, as amended, would form the basis of the conduct of that evening's AGM.

The payment of fees to the Horticulture Forum by participating organisations was discussed. It was agreed that all participating organisations had to pay £125 by 31st December. Failing that their representatives would no longer be members of the Forum and their names would be removed from the circulation list. Doug Thomson suggested, and member's agreed that membership should be left open to allow new membership from other horticulture organisations on the forum. Doug also felt the HTA would pay for Horticulture Forum membership. They want to remain involved and to be kept informed. They may fly a member of staff to NI for meetings.

Ian proposed, and it was agreed, that although a maximum of four co-options to the Horticulture Forum had previously been suggested this shouldn't be restrictive – good people are needed on the forum to represent the various interests within the industry.

Based on the information provided by the various organisation in response to the Secretaries letter, the following organisations will be represented on the 2014 – 2016 Horticulture Forum.

Organisation	Nominations
STANDING Members	Robin McKee Elaine Chapman
MEMBER ORGANISATIONS	
Ulster Farmers Union	Roy Lyttle (Vegetable Committee) Hamilton Loney (Fruit Growers)
ALCI	Keith Crawford Lyn Sherriff
NI Flower and Foliage Association	Barclay Bell Barbara Erwin
Northway Mushrooms	Elaine Shaw Frank Donnelly
Growers NI	William Montgomery Doug Thomson
Soft Fruit Growers	Peter Donnelly AN Other
<i>Horticulture Trade Association</i>	<i>To be confirmed</i>

Following the election of office bearers Ian Duff thanked everyone for their co-operation and wished them well for the future of the forum. He also expressed thanks to Robin for his considerable input to the forum since 2005 and extended gratitude to all members involved with the forum since it started.

Robin wished the Horticulture Forum all the best for the future and said he felt it was a very positive step to formalise the forum. He handed over the chairmanship to Elaine Shaw.

Elaine thanked Robin for his years of excellent service to the forum and thanked Ian Duff for helping to give the forum momentum.

4. Collection of fees

Elaine Shaw asked Tim Hunniford as Treasurer to set up an account for collection of fees. Tim suggested and it was agreed that he should do this with the Ulster Bank who currently offer 2 years with no charges.

5. Development of website

The Dungannon based company Concept NI are to develop the Horticulture Forum website. **Ian Duff and Elaine Shaw had agreed a simple design concept and had received an acceptable quotation from Jonathan Higgins of Concept NI to progress the website development with the aim of completion by January 2014. Ian Duff, Elaine Shaw and Shane Donnelly to take the lead in website creation.** Elaine Shaw, Shane Donnelly and Elaine Chapman to keep new website updated. Training would be part of the development package.

Each sector represented on the Horticulture Forum will be required to forward information relevant to their sector. Much of the information required is available in the Horticulture Forum strategy. Elaine Shaw stressed the need for photographs for the new site. **Members were asked to send any existing photos of the Horticulture Forum they may have to Elaine Shaw and Shane.** A template for the new website is to be prepared and will be sent to members for their agreement at the next meeting.

Shane recommended members check the American Flower Growers Forum on the internet. This is a discussion forum where information, questions etc can be posted online. Shane suggested the Horticulture Forum website be interactive. **Shane to forward the link to Elaine Shaw for information.**

Horticulture Forum NI was the agreed title for the website.

Ian suggested that money is still available from SCDP for branding. Also leaflets could be produced through the SCDP. Funding available has to be used by 31st January 2014. To date £1900 has been spent out of a potential £5000. The brochure could be put on the website as a pdf file.

Tim Hunniford proposed creation of an App for use on Smartphones etc., linked to the web. Elaine Shaw is keen to ensure the new website adapts to use on new phones and tablets and this had been incorporated within the design specification.

Creation of the website will have to be paid by the Horticulture Forum and then claimed back from DARD through Countryside Services. Robin has agreed to continue to act as Lead Applicant for the SCD programme and provide the backup for funding. The website and any other expenditure will have to be paid by 31st January 2014.

6. AOB

Agri-Loan Scheme – letters were sent to MLAs highlighting how the first phase of the scheme is aimed at the poultry industry and emphasising the need for investment within the horticulture industry. The letter asked that the horticulture industry be provided with the same facility within the Agri-Loan scheme as for other sectors.

Edible Crops Adviser – Eric informed the forum that a new Edible Crops Adviser, Lauri Hartman, had been appointed to his team at CAFRE.

7. Date of next meeting

Monday 6th January 2014