

## MINUTES OF THE HORTICULTURE FORUM MEETING

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014, Rugby Club, Portadown

**Chair:** Keith Crawford

**Present:** Thomas Gilpin, Barclay bell, Roy Lyttle, Hamilton Loney, Robin McKee, Patricia Erwin, Barbara Erwin, Doug Thomson, Peter Donnelly, Eric Long, Paul Mooney, Claire Woods, Elaine Chapman (minutes)

**Apologies:** Elaine Shaw, William Montgomery, Jason Podris, Tim Hunniford

### 1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

### 2. *Effective Representation* – Input to the AFSB Arable and Horticulture Sub Group Priorities and Review of Costings

Elaine Chapman reviewed the 'Horticulture Sector Growth – Making it happen' document prepared to give an indication of the costs associated with the consolidated programmes identified to deliver the growth indicated for horticulture within the Agri-Food Strategy Board *Going for Growth* publication. For arable and horticulture this involves growing turnover by 76%, value added by 100%, external sales by 82% and employment by 44%.

Comments were noted and an amended document will be produced prior to the AFSB Arable and Horticulture Sub Group meeting on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2014. **Elaine Chapman to progress.** The chairman stressed that this document is speculative and aims to provide an indication of likely costs. Preparation of this document does not hold any guarantee of any further funding or support becoming available to the horticulture industry.

### 3. *Skilled Workforce* – Proposals for a degree in horticulture, Paul Mooney and Claire Woods

Paul Mooney and Claire Woods discussed proposals for the introduction of a degree in horticulture at CAFRE. The Horticulture Forum was very much in favour of the introduction of a degree and would like to see this proposal being progressed. The consensus was that it would be beneficial to the industry to have a degree course available locally, helping to create future industry leaders and providing recognition for horticulture as a career choice at all levels.

Claire asked the forum if she could review modules with members to ensure the content meets industry needs. Members were in favour of this approach.

Claire also suggested the Horticulture Forum support the Horticulture Ambassadors, a team of 12 young people who promote careers in horticulture. The Horticulture Forum could provide support to the ambassadors via Twitter and create a link from the Horticulture Forum website. **Claire to send information about Young Ambassadors to Elaine Chapman.**

Doug highlighted the Fargro GrowCareers initiative which aims to support young people to develop careers within the horticulture industry. For example they coordinated a 'pilot' Growcareers event at GroSouth where 12 students from the region were introduced to the horticulture trade. They offered the GrowCareers Passport which included presentations, mentoring from leading industry experts and a tour of Roundstone's production facilities. Further information can be obtained within Fargro Croptalk .

**[http://www.fargro.co.uk/content/croptalk/croptalk\\_spring2014.pdf](http://www.fargro.co.uk/content/croptalk/croptalk_spring2014.pdf)**

**4. *Policy Development – Arrangements for a meeting with Colette McMaster***

Colette McMaster, Director of Food, Farm and Rural Policy Division, DARD has agreed to meet with Horticulture Forum representatives to discuss development of the new Rural Development Plan and key priorities to take forward the horticulture industry.

It was agreed that the following members would meet with Colette:

Elaine Shaw, Keith Crawford, Shane Donnelly, Hamilton Loney, Doug Thomson and Roy Lyttle.

**Elaine Chapman to contact Colette to arrange a suitable date.**

**5. *Improved Communications – Horticulture Forum NI website***

Elaine Chapman updated members on the development of the new Horticulture Forum website. This is available at [www.horticultureforumni.co.uk](http://www.horticultureforumni.co.uk). Elaine Chapman has received training on making minor amendments to the site. Members were asked to forward any amendments required to Elaine Chapman.

**6. *Effective Representation – the role of the Horticulture Forum in plant health***

Keith explained the new proposals for plant health. At the Plant Health Stakeholders event in March it was agreed that the Horticulture forum, UAS and UFU Potato Committee would nominate representatives to comment on plant health related consultations. DARD often receive consultation requests on proposed Defra actions in respect of Plant Health pests/diseases risk assessment and further official control proposals. Given the quick turnaround often required, Plant Health Policy Branch will email these to designated contact persons who will cascade for comment from their organisations. The following members were nominated as key industry contacts for plant health related consultations and other issues:

Amenity plants including flowers – Doug Thomson

Vegetables – Roy Lyttle

Soft fruit – Peter Donnelly

Top fruit – Tim Hunniford

**Elaine Chapman to forward these contacts to Plant Health Policy Branch.**

**7. AOB**

There were no AOB items.

**8. Date of next meeting**

Paul Mooney invited Horticulture Forum members to attend the 2014 Student Awards day at CAFRE, Greenmount Campus on **Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June** at 2:30pm. It was agreed that the Horticulture Forum would have a meeting prior to this at 11:00 am and attend the lunch and awards ceremony. Neill Bragg, Chairman of the HDC, will present the awards this year. Neill will join Horticulture Forum members before lunch.