

# **Minutes of the Horticulture Forum Meeting**

**Monday 20 February 2017, 7:30 pm, Portadown Rugby Club**

**Chair:** Keith Crawford

**Present:** Barclay Bell, Mark Conway, Peter Donnelly, Ian Duff, Barbara Erwin, Kieran Hughes, David Laidlaw (RUAS), Hamilton Loney, Roy Lyttle, Adrian Magowan, Robin McKee, Paul Mooney, John Shannon, Alfie Shaw, Elaine Shaw, Patrick Taggart, Fiona Walker (Invest NI)

## **1. Apologies**

Patricia Erwin, Doug Thomson

## **2. Minutes of previous meetings**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2017 were agreed.

### **21 November 2016, 10. AOB**

**Patrick to request Dr Simmons' Powerpoint presentation again (following his unsuccessful attempt after the meeting on 30 January).**

### **30 January 2017, 3. Reception at Parliament Buildings**

Elaine gave a cheque for payment of the Fresh Graphics invoice to Patrick (two signatures were needed).

**Patrick to forward cheque to Fresh Graphics.**

### **30 January 2017, 4. DAERA Knowledge Framework consultation**

This was covered later in the meeting, under item 6.

### **30 January 2017, 6. Farm Innovation Visits**

Paul is continuing to consult with industry, with the help of the Horticulture Development Advisers.

### **30 January 2017, 7. NI Regional Food Programme (NIRFP)**

Ian Duff submitted an application on behalf of the Forum. The Forum recorded its thanks.

## **3. Balmoral Show**

David gave an overview of the horticulture area at Balmoral 2017.

The area, previously known as the "Garden Village" will be rebranded as "Healthy Horticulture" (or similar).

The Forum's main exhibit will be in the 12m x 9m Grow Marquee, which will contain displays of vegetables, apples, mushrooms, strawberries, cut flowers and ornamentals. Total cost of the Marquee will be £600 + VAT. Members agreed that the exhibit should be attractive and flow, rather than there being distinct demarcations between sectors. As well as plants and plant products being on display, consideration will need to be given to text and images on boards and possibly interactive displays. Dressing the outside of the Marquee with plants is also to be considered.

As well as the Grow Marquee, Healthy Horticulture will include displays focusing on: landscaping/garden design; social horticulture (e.g. therapeutic horticulture, allotments, community gardens and gardening societies); horticulture education; sportsturf; and environmental horticulture (e.g. RSPB and bee keepers). There may be opportunities for Forum members to participate also in these areas.

There will be an option of using the Mighty Spud's mobile kitchen during some of the show. Cooks can be arranged through FoodNI.

Ian Duff gave an overview of the NI Regional Food Programme application that he made on behalf of the scheme. It covers both Balmoral Show and the reception that originally was to be held in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings in April 2017.

**Members to forward to Patrick, before the next meeting, their ideas for the Marquee display, including both plants/plant products and images and text for boards.**

#### **4. Reception**

The reception is on hold, pending a political settlement. In the event of no political settlement being reached, it could be held in autumn 2017 in a hotel with potential customers of the horticulture industry as the target audience.

#### **5. Representation of the NI Park Managers' Forum on the Horticulture Forum**

Mark Maher (NILGA) has recommended Danny McCartney from Derry City and Strabane District Council as a potential new Forum member. Danny is Chair of the NI Park Managers' Forum. Members agreed that he should be invited to join, since the Forum currently has no members representing this sector.

**Patrick to invite Danny (and a colleague from the NI Park Managers' Forum) to join the Horticulture Forum.**

#### **6. Knowledge Framework consultation**

Suggestions for responses to the consultation, including Barbara's response (already submitted on behalf of NIFFA), were discussed. The vague language of the consultation document, particularly with respect to the status of the horticultural sectors, was noted. It was agreed that rather than querying the status of the

horticultural sectors, which could appear defensive, the Forum should state that it assumes that DAERA continues to recognise all sectors within horticulture as being part of the agri-food industry.

**Keith to submit the Forum's response to the consultation before the deadline (27 February).**

## **7. A Rates Rethink consultation**

Much of the consultation concerns the retail and hospitality sectors and the regeneration of disadvantaged urban areas. The Forum was, therefore, unsure of how to respond. Perhaps the Forum should suggest that more thought should be given to the needs of horticultural businesses, in general, and the possibility of rates relief in particular hardship circumstances (e.g. difficult production or trading conditions because of increased labour costs, reduced labour availability or border problems).

**Patrick to discuss with Patricia.**

## **8. AOB**

Fiona Walker gave an overview of her work in Invest NI.

She is a member of Invest NI's Food and Drinks Team. The focus of her work is very much on export potential and she has clients from horticulture (e.g. cut flowers/foilage producers, nurseries, cider producers). Generally, businesses must have a turnover in excess of £250,000 with >25% of produce exported to be eligible to become an Invest NI client.

Innovation Vouchers (worth up to £5000) are available to businesses (including businesses that are not Invest NI clients) on a competitive basis to help businesses work with knowledge providers (e.g. CAFRE). The opportunity to apply for Innovation Vouchers re-opens several times annually.

Invest NI also provides a wide range of services to businesses, including interest-free loans, a Boosting Business helpline and consultancy services on matters such as energy efficiency.

Fiona welcomes contacts from horticultural businesses ([fiona.walker@investni.com](mailto:fiona.walker@investni.com)).

## **9. Date of next meeting**

7.30pm, 6 March at Portadown Rugby Club.