

Minutes of the Horticulture Forum Meeting

Monday 06 March 2017, 7:30 pm, Portadown Rugby Club

Acting Chair: Barbara Erwin

Present: Victor Chestnutt, Peter Donnelly, Patricia Erwin, Kieran Hughes, Hamilton Loney, Roy Lyttle, Adrian Magowan, Danny McCartney, Paul Mooney, Heather Stewart, Patrick Taggart.

1. Apologies

Keith Crawford, Elaine Shaw, Doug Thomson.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2017 were agreed (apart from the error of recording Doug as both present and absent; he was absent).

21 November 2016, 10. AOB

Patrick repeated his request to Dr Simmons, via telephone and email, for a copy of his Powerpoint presentation again (following his unsuccessful attempt after the meeting on 30 January) but has not had a response.

30 January 2017, 3. Reception at Parliament Buildings

Patrick forwarded the cheque to Fresh Graphics in payment for their design work.

30 January 2017, 4. DAERA Knowledge Framework consultation

Keith submitted the Forum's response to the consultation on 27 February.

20 February 2017, 3. Balmoral Show

Barbara/NIFFA and Paul both forwarded ideas for the Balmoral exhibit.

20 February 2017, 5. Representation of the NI Park Managers' Forum on the Horticulture Forum

Danny McCartney, Derry City and Strabane District Council and Chair of the NI Park Managers' Forum agreed to join the Forum and was present.

20 February 2017, 7. A Rates Rethink consultation

Patricia explained that some horticultural businesses, if categorised as retail businesses, could be affected by the proposed changes. UFU has responded to the consultation.

3. Balmoral Show

Theme

It was agreed that the overall theme should be “Health” and that messages on banners should be fairly simple and focused on health in its broadest sense.

The precise name for the horticulture exhibition needs to be finalised. Options include: “Healthy Horticulture”; and “Horticulture for Health”.

Paul to liaise with David Laidlaw (RUAS) to agree the overall name for the exhibition.

Draft banners

Paul gave an overview of ideas for banners that he had drafted.

Banners 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8 cover aspects of the exhibit for which the Forum will not be responsible. Banners 1 and 2, however, because they are envisaged to be at the entrance to the marquee, are of interest to the Forum.

Members to feed back to Paul any changes they feel are needed to banners 1 and 2.

Paul to liaise with David Laidlaw (RUAS) to agree the content of non-Horticulture Forum banners.

The banners for which the Forum will be responsible are: 4; 5; and 6. These are for inspiration only. Each sector (flowers and foliage, landscape and amenity, mushrooms, ornamentals, soft fruit, top fruit and vegetables) may decide to have their own banners (see below).

Banner text template

It was agreed that information on banners should focus on: key sector data; contribution of sector to NI economy; health benefits of produce; seasonality and the importance of buying local; and quirky/interesting facts.

Patrick to create a template for the gathering of key data and circulate it to members.

Members to fill in template and return it to Patrick by 10 March.

Layout of marquee

Paul confirmed that Claire Woods would arrange for the entrances to the marquee to be decorated with planters.

It was agreed that opening the sides of the marquee would make it more inviting for visitors. This would, however, limit opportunities to hang banners from the sides. It is

envisaged that one side of the marquee would be closed and a long banner, containing information from the reception leaflet, could be positioned there. Sectoral banners could hang internally, over large circular display tables. These banners would need to be double-sided.

The display and banner for landscape/amenity will be located at the entrance or exit to the marquee.

Where produce is unavailable, because of unseasonality, seedlings/young plants can be displayed with photos of the finished crop (or cold-stored produce) as a backdrop. Unusual varieties (e.g. non-orange carrots) might be useful.

Sectors to plan their own exhibits.

Sectors to consider: how they will maintain the quality of their exhibits over the four days; whether a fridge will be needed and, if so, what capacity.

Hamilton to confirm size, number and availability of large round tables.

Activities

It was agreed that activities would be useful in engaging visitors, particularly children. Suggestions included: a “grown here or flown here” quiz; seed planting (possibly with a seeds company and a compost company providing sponsorship); and seed giveaways (with a message from the Forum printed on the envelope).

Members to decide and plan their activities.

Leaflets

It was agreed to get the leaflet originally prepared for the now postponed Stormont reception printed for giving out to MLAs/VIPs.

Patrick to arrange to have the few outstanding edits made and get quotations for printing 500 and 1000 copies, A5 page size, on good quality paper (e.g. 300gsm silk).

Costs

Concern was expressed about costs, given the ambitious Balmoral plans. There is no guarantee that the application to the NI Regional Food Programme will be successful. Only food-related elements of the exhibit will be eligible for assistance. The Programme provides assistance retrospectively, on the basis of paid invoices.

Elaine to provide an update on the Forum’s financial position (showing income and projected outgoings) at the next meeting.

Rota

Sectoral organisations will be responsible drawing up duty rotas for the Show. It was recognised that it may be unrealistic to have one (or more) person on duty for each sector for the entire duration of the Show.

Paul to explore the possibility of getting help from CAFRE students.

4. AOB

DAERA Brexit Team

The DAERA Brexit Team has offered to meet the Forum. It was agreed that although to date much of the available “information” on Brexit was little more than speculation, a meeting would be desirable as an opportunity for the Forum to express its concerns.

Patrick to invite a member of the Brexit Team to its meeting at CAFRE Greenmount on 27 June.

Perennial

Perennial, the charity for the horticultural industry, has requested a meeting with the Forum. The Forum agreed to invite Perennial to its September meeting.

Patrick to invite a Perennial representative to the Forum’s September meeting.

Review of the regulatory status of EU regulated organisms

The Review considers whether certain organisms currently with “quarantine” status should be reclassified as “regulated non-quarantine pests”.

Member organisations or individuals wishing to respond to do so directly to Defra (richard.mcintosh@defra.gsi.gov.uk) by 11 May 2017.

DAERA Plant Health Conference

Peter confirmed his intention to attend the Conference on 22 March.

Regional Lantra meeting

Peter confirmed his intention to attend the meeting on 28 March.

Peter to raise the problem of the increasingly burdensome problem of mandatory training within industry.

5. Date of next meeting

7.30pm, 20 March at Portadown Rugby Club.