

Minutes of the Horticulture Forum Meeting

Monday 27 November 2017, 7.30 pm, Portadown Rugby Club

Chair: Keith Crawford

Present: Barbara Erwin, Roy Lyttle, Adrian Magowan, Jenny McNeill (RUAS), John Shannon, Patrick Taggart, Doug Thomson, Claire Woods (CAFRE)

1. Apologies

Paul Mooney

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2017 were agreed.

Barbara mentioned that she intends to phone Stiofán Nutty, Coordinator of ROI's Horticulture Industry Forum, with a view to exploring opportunities for collaboration.

3. Balmoral Show 2018

Keith welcomed Jenny and Claire to the meeting and invited them to talk about Balmoral Show 2018.

Jenny explained that the show in May 2018 would be the 150th. RUAS is keen to develop the horticulture zone further, with the help of the Forum and others. Members present expressed the desire to participate again in the Show in 2018.

RUAS envisions the horticulture zone in 2018 as being more integrated and less disjointed. Those present agreed that the following suggestions should be taken forward:

- It would be desirable to be able to open the sides of the marquee, weather permitting, to attract passers-by.
- The marquee should be transparent so that, even if weather dictates that the sides must stay closed, passers-by can still see what is inside.
- More prominent signage outside the marquee should be explored.
- Inspiration should be taken from Bloom.
- Seating should be available.
- An electricity supply will be needed.
- There was synergy in 2017 from having the Mighty Spud in close proximity. Participation, again, of the potato sector should be encouraged.
- Cooked sample vegetable dishes, courtesy of Food NI's van and demonstrators, should be arranged again.
- The possibility of businesses being able to sell plants etc just outside the marquee should be explored.
- Children's activities (e.g. seed planting, as previously arranged by Suttons) should be provided.

- Greater differentiation between the Growers NI and ALCI exhibits would be desirable. This could be achieved, perhaps, by ALCI designing a garden at the entrance to the marquee.
- Efforts should be made in 2018 to secure the participation of the mushroom sector.
- Securing the participation of a herb grower would result in more interest, particularly enticing flavours and smells.
- The possibility of having Perennial participate should be explored. Proceeds of sales on the last day could be donated to the charity again.
- Assuming it re-opens in time, an application to the NI Regional Food Programme should be made.

Adrian to share his photographs of Bloom with Patrick.

Jenny to arrange electricity.

Jenny to clarify conditions for selling plants outside marquee.

Jenny to circulate draft floor plan when available.

Doug to enquire about participation by Perennial.

Patrick to make enquiries about whether the potato sector has plans to participate.

Patrick to enquire about participation of Food NI demonstrators.

Patrick to act as Forum contact point for RUAS.

4. AOB

The new CEO of Dobbies, Nicholas Marshall, has announced his intention that Dobbies stores should focus on local plants and foods. Doug has arranged to explore the possibility of Growers NI businesses supplying Dobbies, Lisburn.

Patrick reminded those present that the AGM is due in January 2018. He has received no nominations for membership from organisations represented on the Forum: ALCI; FIF; Growers NI; HTA; NIFFA; NI Park Managers' Forum; NISFGA; Northway; and UFU. He has also received no nominations for co-opted members or the offices of Vice Chair and Treasurer.

All members to consult with their organisations and forward to Patrick: two nominations from their organisation; suggestions for co-opted members; and nominations/volunteers for the offices of Vice Chair and Treasurer.

Patrick to enquire whether Ian Duff would be willing to chair the AGM.

5. Date of next meeting

22 January 2018. (Meeting to include AGM.)