

# **Animals in Science Committee**

## **Minutes of the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting: 9<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

### **1. Welcome, Introductions and Conflicts of Interest**

1.1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Animals in Science Committee (ASC).

1.2. Apologies were received from Dr Hannah Clarke. A full list of attendees is provided at Annex A.

### **2. Minutes and Actions from the previous ASC meeting**

2.1. Minutes from the last meeting had been agreed and had been published on the ASC website.

2.2. Actions were complete with the following exceptions:

2.2.1. The Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) to provide an update on the response to the ASC Review of Harm Benefit Analysis Review at the next ASC meeting. (See para 6.1)

2.2.2. ASRU to send the Project Licence Applications (PLA) responses to the ASC. (See para 6.3)

2.2.3. ASRU to provide an update on the advice received from Home Office Legal Advisers (HOLA) on status of the Animal Scientific Procedures Act (ASPA) and reanimated animal tissue at the next ASC meeting. (See para 6.5)

2.2.4. The Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body Subgroup (AWERB SG) to agree on content for 'Top Tips Poster' and update the ASC at the next meeting. (See para 7.3)

2.2.5. ASRU to undertake a full review of the new electronic licensing system on Project Licences (PPLs) application process, once 200 new style PPLs have been granted.

### **3. Chair's Update**

#### **3.1. Futures Capability**

3.1.1. The Chair met with the Science Secretariat Futures Team to discuss developing the ASC Futures Capability programme of work.

- 3.1.2. Following this, the Science Secretariat Futures Team interviewed ASC members and other stakeholders using the Go Science Toolkit '7 questions' approach. Details on the outputs from these interviews would be discussed in Section 4.

### **3.2. Animals in Science meeting 2019**

- 3.2.1. The Chair informed the members that he had attended the Animals in Science Meeting on the 6th December, organised by the Royal Society of Biology and ASRU. ASC AWERB SG Chair Dr Robinson also attended the meeting and presented on the work of the AWERB SG and the role of AWERBs.

### **3.3. Media Reports about Contract Research Organisation (CRO)**

- 3.3.1. The ASC reflected on the recent media reports of mistreatment of animals in a German CRO. The ASC expressed their concern that this had occurred. Members understood that authorities in Germany were investigating.

## **4. Presentation on ASC Futures Capability**

- 4.1. The ASC Secretariat presented the results from the '7 questions' interviews carried out by the futures team who undertook interviews with ASC members, and other key stakeholders.
- 4.2. The results from the interviews would be used to inform discussions on the scope of the new Futures Working Group being established to help the ASC explore future issues that may impact upon or affect the use of animals in science.
- 4.3. The members noted that a significant range of issues had been identified, and further discussion would be needed to define the scope of the Futures Working Group and determine a starting point. Members also recognised that there may be differences between the issues they felt were of most general concern, and those which the ASC could potentially have a direct impact upon.
- 4.4. The Secretariat would liaise with ASC members to progress the setting up of the Futures Working Group.

**Action: Secretariat and Futures Team to develop timescale for a Standing Futures Subgroup.**

## **5. Presentation from ASRU on Governance and Priorities**

- 5.1. The Committee received a presentation on ASRU Governance and Priorities, from the ASRU Head of Unit (HoU)
- 5.2. The presentation covered the following points;

- i ASRU's regulatory responsibility to protect animals in science. ASRU's responsibility to deliver a robust regulatory framework within which it acts to achieve compliance against minimum standards.
- ii ASRU's duties, as set out through its Guidance and Codes of Practice. Oversight and performance monitoring are achieved through a comprehensive system of oversight and governance.
- iii ASRU's direct accountability to: Parliament, Ministers and the Department through internal frameworks. ASRU's outward facing accountability channels including: Parliamentary Questions, Ministerial Correspondence, Public Correspondence, the Freedom of Information Act, the Data Protection Act and Subject Access Requests and the Management Assurance Framework.

## **6. Update from the Animals Science Regulation Unit (ASRU)**

### **6.1. ASRU response to ASC Harm Benefit Analysis Review recommendations**

- 6.1.1. ASRU Head of Policy (HoP) informed the ASC that the response to the Harm Benefit Analysis Review recommendations had been sent to the Minister. A response is expected from the Minister once Parliament resumes.

### **6.2. ASRU response to whistle-blowing incident**

- 6.2.1. ASRU HoP informed the ASC that the response was in preparation, and that he would expedite sending it to the ASC

### **6.3. Projects Applications Referrals to the ASC**

- 6.3.1. ASRU HoP advised the ASC that responses were being finalised and would be sent shortly sent to the ASC.

**Action: ASRU to provide the ASC with the overdue responses to the PLA Subgroup before the next PLA Review meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January.**

- 6.3.2. Members previously discussed with ASRU issues relating to the reporting of actual severity. ASRU HoP advised that ASRU was developing their strategic review, which would include a review of the use of retrospective severity for audit and future application within a continued programme of work.

**Action: ASRU to provide the ASC with their procedures for handling inaccurately reported retrospective severity scores.**

- 6.3.3. The ASC Chair advised the committee that they had been informed by the NC3Rs that permission must be sought from project licence applicants to release their grant application assessment to the ASC Project Licence Application Subgroup. ASRU will investigate whether

permission to release the NC3Rs assessment is necessary and, if possible, will develop a mechanism to share these assessments with the PLA Subgroup

**Action: The ASC to write asking ASRU to request the sharing of the NC3Rs grant assessment with the PLA Subgroup ahead of the application review meetings.**

#### **6.4. ASRU Inspector training**

- 6.4.1. ASRU HoP invited ASC Committee members to attend sections of their structured Inspector training programme to provide further insight into how the Inspectorate functions.

**Action: Secretariat to circulate Inspector training programme to ASC members.**

#### **6.5. Yale: Post mortem reanimation of pigs' brains**

- 6.5.1. ASRU HoP advised the ASC that ASRU is developing a policy position regarding the authorisation of research using reanimated brains currently taking place outside of the UK, and feel that the UK should have a considered position in preparation for any enquiries from applicants who may wish to carry out similar research in the UK.
- 6.5.2. ASC members were concerned about the ethical implications of research in this field and agreed it required further consideration and the Minister should be informed of their concerns.

**Action: ASRU to consider the development of a policy position on brain reanimation research.**

#### **6.6. Animal sentience**

- 6.6.1. The ASRU HoP confirmed to the ASC that the proposed legislation from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), which would have included recognition of decapod crustaceans as sentient, had been halted due to the prorogation of Parliament. However, should legislation be reintroduced to the new Parliament, the ASC may be asked to provide an expert opinion on the topic.

#### **6.7. Non-Technical Summaries and New e-Licensing System (ASPeL)**

- 6.7.1. ASRU HoP confirmed the Non-Technical Summaries (NTS) from 2017 and 2018 would be published on the ASRU website after the election period.
- 6.7.2. The ASC expressed dissatisfaction at the delay in publication of the NTS and offered assistance, if this were helpful, to speed up publication.

**Action: ASRU to review the publication plans for future NTS and consider the ASC offer of assistance.**

## **7. AWERB Subgroup update**

7.1. The Committee had been provided with a written update on the work of the AWERB Subgroup prior to the meeting.

### **7.2. AWERB Hub Network update**

- 7.2.1. A review is underway to assess 'active' AWERB membership. As Section 24 and the Data Protection Act limit opportunities for internal data sharing, the Secretariat was contacting each AWERB to update membership details.
- 7.2.2. Members were also informed about updates to AWERB Subgroup Hub pairings.

### **7.3. AWERB Top Tips poster**

- 7.3.1. The subgroup agreed that the 'Top tips' poster would benefit from supporting content from other sources e.g. RSPCA. To that end, the poster would be further reviewed, and an update given at the next Plenary meeting as to its progress.

### **7.4. 'The Hub' newsletter – Edition 5**

- 7.4.1. The members were advised that Edition 5 of 'The Hub' newsletter was awaiting publication pending a decision regarding the 'Top Tips' poster.

### **7.5. Work programme**

- 7.5.1. The HBA Review recommendations aimed at AWERBs would be reviewed by the AWERB SG to identify where it could help make progress with their implementation.
- 7.5.2. Following the ratification of the Licence Analysis Report, the AWERB Subgroup would look to take forward appropriate recommendations arising from it relating to the role of the AWERB.
- 7.5.3. ASC Members were reminded of the upcoming work programme for the AWERB SG for 2020.
  - i Updating the AWERB Hub Support Note
  - ii Reviewing processes used in human ethics committees and their potential applicability to use by AWERBs
  - iii Non-Technical Summary guidance
  - iv Mechanism to assess the value of the Hub Network
  - v Dissemination of non-animal alternatives and 3Rs through the AWERB network.

## **7.6. Hub Chair Workshop 2020**

- 7.6.1. Members were informed that the next Hub Chair Workshop would take place on the 18th March 2020.

## **8. Task and Finish Group Updates**

### **8.1. Licence Analysis Subgroup update**

- 8.1.1. The SG Chair presented the final draft of the Licence Analysis Report to the Committee.
- 8.1.2. The report summarised the Subgroup's review of a number of randomly selected licences, making recommendations for improvements.
- 8.1.3. The Committee noted two recommendations that would benefit from further textual clarity, with suggestions accepted by the SG Chair.
- 8.1.4. The report noted a specific issue in relation to Project Licence Application Review meetings for regulatory licences. Members agreed that this subject required further consideration and requested that ASRU provide details on the number of regulatory licence applications received that apply to all protected species under ASPA.
- 8.1.5. Having discussed the report and its recommendations, the Committee agreed to its ratification by email, subject to those minor changes as agreed to by the SG Chair.

**Action: In section 3 of the LA report, to clarify that the Review was conducted on licences that were written before the ASPeL update was launched.**

**Action: Recommendation 6.2 to be moved to the 'General Points' section.**

**Action: Addition of a paragraph to the LA report, relating to the internal quality assurance process for establishments e.g. 'Retrospective review allows ASRU the opportunity to quality assure the justification of the products being tested.'**

**Action: Additional recommendation to be added – recommending that ASRU review licences already on the new electronic system and their compliance with recommendations made in the report.**

**Action: ASC members to submit any editorial changes to the Secretariat.**

**Action: ASRU to provide ASC with the numbers of regulatory licences that apply to animals listed under 'protected species' by ASPA.**

### **8.2. Non-Human Primate (NHP) Welfare Assessment Subgroup (NHPWA SG)**

- 8.2.1. Apologies had been received from the NHPWA SG Chair for this meeting and therefore a full update was not possible. However, the ASC Chair was able to advise Committee members that the NC3Rs had recently held a workshop on assessing non-human primate

welfare. The Chair understood that the NC3Rs will shortly publish a report of this meeting.

- 8.2.2. Consequently, the Chair suggested a further discussion with the SG Chair to determine whether the outputs from the workshop help to address those issues under consideration by the SG. If so, members agreed that it may be unnecessary to continue with this workstream, noting that the NC3Rs is well positioned in the community to gather evidence and disseminate the results of this work.

**Action: The NHPWA SG Chair to review the outputs of the NC3Rs workshop for the Non-Human Primate Welfare Assessments workstream.**

### **8.3. Comparative study of Regulation**

- 8.3.1. The SG Chair advised the Committee that the Subgroup had submitted a return in response to Article 54(1) Member State Implementation Report Directive 2010/63/EU, summarising the role of the ASC. However, in respect of the second stage of the workstream, research on the comparison of regulatory systems around the world revealed that this work had already been carried out by others. In addition to this the ASC already has good awareness of the functioning of regulatory systems in other countries. Further work in this area was unlikely to add substantially to the evidence base, and the SG Chair recommended the workstream be closed with the Committee agreeing.

## **9. Minister's commission of work (2018-19)**

- 9.1 Committee members discussed the commission of work provided by the Minister in July 2018. With the period of the commission coming to a close the Committee agreed to write to the Minister with an update on progress made on the workstreams.

**Action: ASC to write to the Minister to provide an update on progress on the Commission workstreams.**

## **10. AOB**

### **10.1. Regulation of Animal Husbandry**

- 10.1.1. The Chair brought to the attention of the Committee an issue relating to the regulation of aspects of animal husbandry. He had noted that whilst clear guidance exists in the Veterinary Surgeons Act enabling procedures to be carried out on animals under research where that procedure would be of benefit to the animal, the same did not apply in the case of animal husbandry. For example, in cases of recognised animal husbandry, such as castration of lambs, the guidance is unclear about requirements under ASPA, when these procedures were carried out on animals under study. Clarity was required to

ensure that the large number of agricultural/farm colleges currently carrying out undergraduate student projects involving animals do not contravene the formal ASPA 'Guidance'.

**Action: ASRU to provide advice about use of recognised animal husbandry on animals and where this intersects with ASPA to ensure institutions are in compliance with ASPA guidance.**

## **Annex A**

### Animals in Science Committee Members

Dr David Main (Chair)

Mrs Wendy Jarrett

Professor Stephen May

Dr Donald Bruce

Dr Virginia Warren

Professor Christine Watson

Dr Sally Robinson

Mr Barney Reed

Dr Noelia Lopez-Salesansky

Professor Clare Stanford

Mrs Susan Sparrow

Professor Andrew Jackson

Professor Johanna Gibson

### ASRU

Mr Will Reynolds (Head of Unit, ASRU)

Dr Giles Paiba (Head of Policy, ASRU)

### Science Secretariat

Dr Joanne Wallace (Head of Science Secretariats)

Mrs Caroline Wheeler (ASC Secretary)

Ms Jessica Daly (ASC Secretariat)