

**Animals in Science Committee**  
**Minutes of the 31st meeting: 24 May 2021**

**1. Welcome, introductions and conflicts of interest**

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the thirty-first meeting of the Animals in Science Committee (ASC), which took place via video conference.
- 1.2. No apologies were received. The list of attendees is attached at Annex A.

**2. Minutes and actions from the previous ASC meeting**

- 2.1. Minutes from the previous meeting were with the Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) to review their contributions and would be circulated to members for comments as soon as possible.
- 2.2. An updated actions log was circulated to members as a paper ahead of the meeting. The Chair provided a brief verbal update on the following actions:
  - 2.2.1. ASRU to request that the Government Digital Services include an ASC member in its review panel.
    - i. ASRU would provide an update on this action during the meeting.
  - 2.2.2. Secretariat to arrange topic discussions with HRA on human ethics.
    - i. The Secretariat had been liaising with HRA but as yet had not been unable to schedule a date.
    - ii. The Chair advised the committee that this action should be put on hold pending HBA related outputs from the ASC/ASRU workshop.
  - 2.2.3. Further to the discussion held at the March ASC meeting, ASRU advised they were continuing to seek advice from Home Office legal advisors on the scope of the ASC regarding their role in advising on policy development in Northern Ireland and would provide an update as soon as possible. They would also shortly provide an update on the clarification of the cosmetics policy.

**Action: ASRU to provide an update on Northern Ireland and the cosmetics policy for September meeting of the ASC.**

**3. Chair's update**

**3.1. Workshop key points and actions**

- 3.1.1. The Chair opened up discussion on the May ASC/ASRU Workshop, seeking comments from the committee on the key points and actions that had arisen on the day and which had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting.
- 3.1.2. The members discussed the following points:
  - i. That whilst the ASC's strategic remit in advising the minister had been clarified, there remained the potential for occasional overlapping of strategy and operational areas.

- ii. Use of animals in science had wider government interest beyond the regulatory role of the Home Office. Therefore, greater clarity on the remit of wider policy ownership was required, for instance for issues such as animal sentience and animal welfare as it pertains to ASPA. Given the cross-government interest, it would be useful to consider any benefit from ASC collaboration with other bodies.
- iii. The ASC noted the pace of the Change programme and the infrequency of plenary meetings was such that they would welcome, as far as possible, regular updates on progress of developments including outside of the plenary setting.
- iv. As a result of the workshop, the ASC felt more informed about the ASRU Change programme. However, they noted there were still areas where more information would be helpful.
- v. The scope of the ASC as a 'route by which an informed public has input'.
- vi. Implications for the role and remit of the ASC as a result of the ASRU Change programme.
- vii. A proposed joint ASC/ASRU working group to identify priority topics for the ASRU performance measurement system.
- viii. To enable a full discussion on any potential impact of the Change programme and the role of the ASC in relation to HBA, a proposed ASRU led workshop, to be held before the September plenary meeting on the legal, policy and operational inputs into the policy relating to Section 5B (3)(d) of A(SP)A.

**Action: Key points and actions to be updated as discussed and circulated to ASC for agreement.**

## **4. Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) update and presentation**

### **4.1. ASRU presentation on bridging ways of working and external engagement framework**

- 4.1.1. Fínnuala Lonsdale from ASRU gave the committee a presentation covering the following elements:
- 4.1.2. **Bridging ways of working**
  - i. This presentation covered the strategic direction of ASRU and the key components of bridging ways of working.
  - ii. ASRU's dedicated teams for regulatory advice and compliance assurance, with mailboxes and phone numbers set up for urgent queries. For the regulatory advice this would also include centralised advice and reviews of trends.
  - iii. Licensing assessments and an expanded relationship/customer service model would also be introduced as part of bridging ways of working.
  - iv. ASRU updated the committee on their timeline for implementation and dissemination of their plans to the research community.

#### **4.1.3. External engagement framework**

- i. This presentation outlined the framework that ASRU had decided they would be implementing as part of their Change programme.
- ii. As part of their Change programme ASRU needed to formally review their engagement with external groups to ensure all parties were clear about:
  - roles and responsibilities
  - the objective of engagement
  - expectations
- iii. ASRU outlined its forthcoming engagement framework across all stakeholder groups.

#### **4.1.4. Discussion and Q&A**

- i. Members had been provided with briefing on the topics ahead of the meeting and the committee were given the opportunity to discuss the Change programme and ask ASRU any related questions.
- ii. Further reflecting on the role of the ASC as a route to channel 'informed public views' on matters relating to the nature and implementation of regulation, the Chair advised that members need to discuss the committee's scope and remit. Noting the committee was 'a' route for public input but not the sole one.
- iii. Members further suggested that it would be helpful for another Ipsos Mori survey on public attitudes to animal research to be undertaken. Last run in 2018, it was a useful longitudinal source of public opinion, dating back to 1999.
- iv. Whilst recognising ASRU's goal of achieving a modern and more consistent service, ASC members voiced a number and range of concerns including that removing named ASRU inspectors for each research establishments may result in a loss of longstanding personal insight into a particular project or research team, and understanding of the local culture in place at the establishment, with the risk that this might affect a range of decision making about establishments as well as affecting potential opportunities for picking up low level concerns.
- v. There was also some concern about the 'Special measures' section of the bridging ways of working approach. An ASC member noted a potential risk for those researchers who work with special species in that they may feel scrutinized to a higher degree than others. It might also lead to a disparity in the impression for the public that those establishments who do not use special species may have a lesser degree of inspection.
- vi. Ahead of the September workshop on harm benefit analysis (HBA) the Chair did flag the following points made by members:
  - The different interpretation of HBA by the committee (as reflected in the ASC HBA report and the committee's understanding of the relevant advice notes) to that described by ASRU at the workshop earlier in May.
  - That given the differences in interpretation, that ASRU should provide, for the September workshop, written descriptions on the

protocols and processes used by ASRU to deliver their legislative requirements as set out in Section 5B (3)(d) of A(SP)A.

- That any proposed changes to the HBA as part of the ASRU change programme should not be implemented until after the issue had been fully explored at the September workshop, seeking this assurance from ASRU.

vii. ASRU responded to these comments, informing the ASC that:

- They agree Inspectors' insight into an establishment/researcher was important, but this more open and transparent approach would encourage establishment/researchers to develop a relationship with the Home Office regulator rather than one particular inspector.
- With regards to special measures, these would be applied on a risk-based approach when there was a history of non-compliance.
- The HBA is a core deliverable and work is underway looking at the legal and policy perspectives but that there would be no movement on this issue until further engagement with ASC at the September workshop.

**Action: A small ASC working group to be formed to discuss the ASC's functions and developing an evidenced based approach to capture the wide range of public perspectives on the use of animals in science.**

## **5. AWERB subgroup update**

**5.1.** The committee had been provided with a written update ahead of the meeting on the following workstreams:

- 5.1.1. AWERB Hub Chair support note – This was due to be sent for publication shortly once some minor layout amendments had been rectified.
- 5.1.2. Newsletter – The AWERB SG were due to publish Issue 5 of the Hub newsletter; this would be done following the publication of the support note to enable a link to the document to be included in the newsletter.
- 5.1.3. Topics covered in the newsletter:
  - i. A summary of the Hub Chair's workshop
  - ii. A short summary of the HBA
  - iii. Updates on current work in progress
  - iv. Links to recent publications such as the Licence Analysis report

### **5.2. Hub Chair workshop**

- 5.2.1. The AWERB SG Chair advised the committee that the Hub Chair workshop 2020 report was being sent for publication and that the next Hub Chair workshop was planned for early October. Topics for this workshop were still under discussion.

**5.3.** The SG Chair informed the committee that their current programme of work was almost completed, and SG members would begin discussion on their future workstreams. The SG Chair welcomed any suggestions from ASC members to be sent into the Secretariat.

**Action: ASC members to send in suggestions to the Secretariat on future topics for the AWERB SG to consider.**

#### **5.4. NTS advice**

- 5.4.1. The committee were advised that the NTS advice note was still under discussion and a further draft would be available at the next plenary meeting.

**Action: NTS draft guidance to be submitted ahead of the next plenary meeting in September.**

## **6. Project Licence Strategic Review (PLSR) subgroup**

- 6.1. At the February plenary meeting the subgroup's terms of reference had been ratified and initial priority of topics had been considered. Since then the SG had met to discuss how to move forward with their work program.

### **6.2. Work programme**

- 6.2.1. ASRU had requested that the SG focus on the topic of antibody production as this would be the topic most likely to have an output of immediate use.
- 6.2.2. The SG Chair met with ASRU to clarify ASRU's output requirements for this piece of work. The key points of this meeting were summarised in a written update and provided as a paper to the committee.
- 6.2.3. The SG would be looking to produce a set of principles against which ASRU can assess PPL applicants' efforts to explore 3Rs option. The methodology for this would consist of evidence gathering by reviewing the available documentation for the relevant licences.
- 6.2.4. The SG would shortly meet to agree next steps for the licence review.

## **7. Task and finish groups**

### **7.1. Futures Capability Working Group (FWG)**

- 7.1.1. The ASC were provided with a written update ahead of the meeting which was then summarised by the FWG Chair.
- 7.1.2. The group have a workshop planned for the 29 July which has a full and varied list of participants.
- 7.1.3. The futures team had been working on refining the horizon scans received as submissions were varied in length and detail. Each scan had been distilled to a single slide each in preparation for the workshop.
- 7.1.4. Following the workshop, the FWG will produce a report with recommendations and hope to use the workshop outputs to inform the next stage of the FWG's work.
- 7.1.5. The FWG would provide the key findings from the workshop for the ASC plenary in September.

**Action: Futures SG to provide key findings from the July workshop for the next plenary meeting**

### **7.2. Brain Organoids, Reanimation and Sentience Group (BORSG)**

- 7.2.1. The BORSG SG Chair provided the ASC with an update on the progress made by the Subgroup since the last ASC plenary. Members were also provided with a written update ahead of the meeting.
- 7.2.2. The SG had been due to hold a workshop at the end of April. Unfortunately, due to several last-minute withdrawals of participants including a main speaker, the workshop had been postponed.
- 7.2.3. The SG Chair also informed the committee that the SG was still seeking participants from the field of anaesthetics and pain which has also contributed to the decision postpone.
- 7.2.4. The SG planned to hold a workshop later in the year and would keep the committee informed of developments.

## **8. Committee matters and AOB**

### **8.1. Exposé at Spanish CRO**

- 8.1.1. Following the media reports of alleged mistreatment of animals at a Spanish contract research organisation the committee sought an update from ASRU on inspector engagement with establishments, particularly during over the past year when inspections had been reduced due to COVID-19 lockdown.
- 8.1.2. ASRU HoU informed the committee that they were confident that the GB regulatory framework was strong and would signal early warning signs.
- 8.1.3. ASRU HoU advised that whilst inspectors had not been able to physically enter establishments, due to the public health concerns related to COVID-19, inspections had been carried out through use of:
  - i. documentation
  - ii. video calls
  - iii. video tours
  - iv. physical inspection if there had been an animal welfare concern

### **8.2. Codes of practice for housing and care of animals bred, supplied or used for scientific purposes**

- 8.2.1. One ASC member had been invited to participate in a meeting of the Animal Welfare Research Network where an issue raised during discussion was the lack of update to the 'codes of practice for housing and care of animals bred, supplied or used for scientific purposes' since they were issued in December 2014. This was despite the significant advances that had been made in recent years in the understanding of animals, their behaviours, and their needs for good welfare, and also that at the time of publication ASRU had announced it would be their intention to review and update the document 5 years after its publication.
- 8.2.2. It was also reported that the animal welfare science community would welcome advice on what level and nature of information would be useful to ASRU with regards to their activities to keep the document reflective of

new animal welfare knowledge, as well as how evidence that could potentially support amendments to the CoP should be presented to the Home Office.

- 8.2.3. ASRU HoU advised that the codes of practice state that amendments would be made 'as necessary'. ASRU noted that they had provided several advice notes on other areas.
- 8.2.4. ASRU HoU welcomed the submission of evidence from the sector noting this could be done via the ASRU email address which could be found on the ASRU website.
- 8.2.5. ASRU HoU noted that the guidance would be prioritised for review as part of the Change programme.

### **8.3. Retrospective assessments and hyperlinking HBAs in ASPeL**

- 8.3.1. At a recent meeting of the Southeast AWERB Hub several issues had been raised for consideration by the ASC:
  - i. The Hub felt there could be more guidance on retrospective assessments, which should be in a more condensed format. Responding, ASRU advised that as part of the Change programme ASRU would review guidance notes to be more focused and user friendly.
  - ii. The Hub also enquired as to whether there was any possibility of publishing retrospective assessments due to the wealth of information they contain.
  - iii. The Hub also wondered about the utility of hyperlinking the HBA with their corresponding PPL within ASPeL.
- 8.3.2. These points were raised for information and consideration by the ASC AWERB SG.

## **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

Professor Clare Stanford

Mrs Susan Sparrow

Professor Andrew Jackson

Professor Johanna Gibson

Dr Hannah Clarke

Ms Linda Horan (co-optee)

### ASRU

Mr William Reynolds (Head of Unit, ASRU)

Dr Giles Paiba (Head of Policy, ASRU)

Dr Finnuala Lonsdale

### Science Secretariat

Mrs Caroline Wheeler (ASC Secretary)

Ms Jessica Daly (ASC Secretariat)