

Animals in Science Committee
Minutes of the 33rd Meeting: 13 December 2021

1. Welcome, introductions and conflicts of interest

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the thirty-third meeting of the Animals in Science Committee (ASC), which took place via video conference.
- 1.2. Apologies were received from Stephen May who would not join today's meeting, a list of attendees is attached at Annex A. There were no conflicts of interest raised.

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. Minutes of the September and December 2020 had been circulated to ASC members and should shortly be published on the ASC website.
- 2.3. The Chair advised the committee that several actions were marked as 'ongoing' as they will be further actioned after confirmation of the outcome of the animals in science policy position.

3. Chair's update

3.1. ASC member resignation

- 3.1.1. Committee member Sue Sparrow had resigned from the ASC, her last day would be 31 December. The Chair thanked her for her contributions to the Committee.

3.2. Home Office Science Advisory Council (HOSAC) – presentation of futures

- 3.2.1. The Chair updated the ASC on his attendance at the latest HOSAC meeting where he gave a presentation on the ASC's Futures work. The presentation was well received by HOSAC, providing insight into how futures work can be carried out within an advisory body setting.

3.3. Northern Ireland

- 3.3.1. The Chair informed the committee that the outstanding enquiry with ASRU regarding the administration of ASPA in Northern Ireland (N.I.) continues to be delayed.
- 3.3.2. In N.I. ASPA is regulated by the Department of Health managed by the NI Executive. ASRU's role is to advise a Home Office minister who has no remit for N.I., this leaves the scope of the ASC unclear as their role in provision of advice to policy development in N.I.
- 3.3.3. The Chair had liaised with an N.I. inspector and understands this topic would be addressed once the animals in science policy position had been further clarified.

3.4. Letter to Professor Rubin

- 3.4.1. The Chair reminded the committee that they had previously written to the Home Office chief scientific adviser to summarise the ASC's position and what their interpretation of their role was.
- 3.4.2. Further discussions would take place once the animals in science policy position had been agreed. This would also be revisited as part of the draft terms of reference for the ASC.

3.5. National Committee Non-Animal Antibody (NAA) production working group

- 3.5.1. The Dutch National Committee had invited the ASC to nominate a representative to join the new National Committee NAA production working group.
- 3.5.2. Following discussion between the ASC Secretariat and Home Office EU Directorate, ASC participation with the group was agreed in the role of an observer.
- 3.5.3. The attending ASC member reported that the NAA working group consisted of members of different national committees who agree that the topic of NAA needed wider discussion. The working group was not EU commission led or had any EU commission representation. The main topic at the meeting was to look at the methodologies available to test assurances that the 3RS had been applied as fully as possible within a research project. This could result in a framework for questions, judgements and considerations to be applied when reviewing a project application.
- 3.5.4. ASC members discussed communicating with national committees in the future, agreeing that it was important for the ASC to be able to share experience and knowledge with other countries whilst still respecting UK government policy.

3.6. Committee meetings 2022

- 3.6.1. The Chair informed the committee that the first meeting in 2022 would be on the 7 March and he had invited a representative from NC3Rs to attend. The Chair thought it would be useful for the ASC to receive an update from the NC3Rs on their work programmes.

3.7. Testing on animals of pre-approved compounds when for other purposes

- 3.7.1. The Chair advised the ASC that he had received a letter from DevelRX Limited and Canna Consultants expressing their concern that the FSA toxicity testing recommendations for novel food applications of Cannabidiol (CBD) are based on incomplete data.
- 3.7.2. Whilst this matter is being looked at by the FSA and the Committee on Toxicology (CoT), there is concern that the recommendations made will result in unnecessary duplication of toxicity tests in animals.
- 3.7.3. The Chair advised he would respond to the letter to explain that the ASC cannot comment on individual cases but would refer this to ASRU who has responsibility for ensuring that the 3Rs are fully implemented and no unnecessary duplication occurs.

Action: Chair to write to DevelRX and Canna Consultants.

4. ASRU update and presentation

- 4.1. ASRU Head of Unit (HoU) joined the meeting to provide the ASC with an update on cross-government policy leadership and co-ordination for animals in science, policy priorities, specific policy issues and ASRU's regulatory reform programme (Change programme).
- 4.2. The policy leadership and co-ordination for animals in science had been raised by the ASC Chair when he took up the role. Policy leadership was a complex landscape due to different government departments having responsibility for different aspects of animals in science. The ASC and ASRU had looked to see how this could be resolved and potential courses of action were now being considered on how to bring together and co-ordinate policy and legislation for animals in science across government.
- 4.3. ASRU HoU updated the committee on the governmental policy priorities for 2022, these included policy on regulatory testing, openness and transparency policy and addressing the Dunlop¹ review recommendations.
- 4.4. The ASC were provided with updates on specific policy issues such as animals testing of cosmetic products/ingredients, debates/petitions including ending the use of animals in science, use of dogs in science and the benefits of animals in science.
- 4.5. ASRU's HoU finished the presentation with an update on their Regulatory Change programme. The main aim of this reform was to align the regulator to leading regulatory practice. ASRU's focus in the next year would be on furthering their operating model and looking at the organisational design of ASRU.
- 4.6. The ASC Chair thanked ASRU's HoU for the update and opened up questions from the committee.
 - 4.6.1. One committee member raised the question of the potential to review and modernise ASPA. ASRU HoU was unable to confirm whether this would be possible but agreed that there could potentially be identifiable reasons to support this.
 - 4.6.2. There was also some discussion about multiple guidance available for AWERBs, for instance from the RSPCA as well as ASRU, as a result AWERBs are not always clear on which guidance they should be following. It was also noted that there was no official training for AWERB members. ASRU HoU agreed that clarity on expectations of AWERBs was needed.
 - 4.6.3. It was noted by 1 member that they had received feedback from an AWERB Hub who had concerns about ASRU's change programme; other groups had also expressed concern. Other AWERBs had reported that they had submitted similar questions in the last few months and received different answers, thereby the process was still lacking in consistency. The ASC member was unsure if this had been fed back to ASRU already or not. The ASRU HoU confirmed that ASRU had received correspondence surrounding the change programme which had delayed their responses to other standard enquiries.

Action: ASRU to circulate a letter on the cosmetics policy once it has been finalised. This will then be sent to all establishments and posted on ASRU's website.

¹ [The Dunlop Review into UK Government Union capability](#)

5. AWERB subgroup update

- 5.1.** The Subgroup Chair updated the committee on the latest work of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body subgroup.
- 5.2.** The ASC AWERB Hub Chair workshop was held on the 5 October as a virtual workshop. Three topics were covered on the day, with presentations from (NC3Rs) and (RSPCA). These presentations were:
- i. Hub chairs, how's it going, how have they managed through COVID-19, benefits and challenges of AWERB Hub mechanism, looking forward.
 - ii. 3Rs and the role of AWERBs – how can AWERBs be better advised on updated 3Rs and how this can be disseminated.
 - iii. Severe suffering – advice to AWERBs on how to reduce severe suffering.
- 5.2.2.** The report from the workshop had been drafted and would soon be ready for finalisation and publication. The report would be circulated to the ASC when published.
- 5.3.** The AWERB subgroups workstream had recently been focused on the effectiveness of the AWERB Hub Network and impact due to restrictions and pressures during the pandemic. The SG had been focused on how to resolve this and had agreed to follow up with their assigned Hub Chairs to further explore the issues and encourage engagement.
- 5.4.** The SG Chair informed the ASC that they would like to organise a roadshow in 2022, this would be open to all AWERBs rather than just the Hub Chairs. One of the potential topics for the day could be the outputs from the PLSR SG's antibodies work if there are recommendations relevant to AWERBs.
- 5.5.** The SG were also producing another newsletter which would be published in the first quarter of 2022. This would be focused on the AWERB workshop and knowledge hub.
- 5.6.** The SG advised the ASC that they had not yet finalised any other workstreams for the SG as they were awaiting a meeting with ASRU to discuss the role of the SG and where their remit lies.
- 5.7.** The ASC Chair suggested that it might be beneficial to the SG to co-design guidance documents with ASRU (such as the NTS guidance), in order to avoid any confusion amongst AWERBs, about which advice to follow.

Action: ASC to contact the new policy unit, about co designing the NTS document from the AWERB SG.

6. Project Licence Strategic Review (PLSR) subgroup

- 6.1.** The SG Chair informed the ASC that the licence review had begun and the SG had met to discuss the emerging themes. The SG had consulted 2 independent antibody experts on the appropriateness and relevance of the criteria questions. The feedback received was very helpful and positive with minimal suggested changes that had been taken on board by the SG.
- 6.2.** Each member of the SG would take responsibility for an identified theme and would use the completed spreadsheet of questions/criteria to identify examples of relevant good practice.

6.3. These themes will then have a secondary review conducted by a different member of the SG to ensure that the review is unbiased.

6.4. The SG advised they planned to share these findings at the next plenary meeting in March.

6.5. It was noted by the SG Chair that it would be useful to have input from ASRU.

Action: Secretariat to liaise with ASRU or new policy unit for input to the PLSR SG's work on antibodies.

7. Task and finish groups

7.1. Futures Capability Working Group (FWG)

- 7.1.1. The SG Chair updated the ASC on the FWG's progress since the last plenary meeting.
- 7.1.2. The SG Chair informed the committee that the Home Office Futures team member, had drafted a report of the workshop that was held in July. This was a draft skeleton structure summary of the processes carried out so far and the evidence collected to date.
- 7.1.3. The SG had reviewed the report which was a helpful starting point for the next stage of including the wider evidence collected throughout the project. The SG also discussed drafting scenarios and using these as a basis for further Futures research.
- 7.1.4. The SG Chair advised that they had also facilitated a discussion at the Royal Society of Biology Animals meeting (RSB). This discussion was entitled "Foresight and Horizon Scanning". The Chair found this discussion very useful with 3 major points arising from the conversations:
 - i. the potential of futures research for social governance in animal research
 - ii. the need for interdisciplinary futures research and opportunities for experts to interact with lay people on aspects of their research in town hall style meetings
 - iii. co-ordinating with the regular horizon scanning exercise undertaken by the RSB

Action: FWG to prepare a revised draft report for the March plenary.

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

- 7.2.1. The BORSG SG Chair provided the ASC with an update on the work of the BORSG task and finish group.
- 7.2.2. The SG Chair reported that the SG had had great difficulties in securing participants and presenters for a workshop. During this time there had also been several reports produced on sentience from different departments. Therefore, the group had decided to step back from holding a workshop and consider other formats for their evidence gathering.
- 7.2.3. The SG had identified two methods by which they could move their work forward:

- i. Undertaking a review of the documentation and research already completed on sentience and reanimation, along with
 - ii. Drafting a set of focused questions for circulation to representative individuals within the animals in science sector, either for discussion as part of an 'interview' style meeting or for written reply only.
- 7.2.4. The ASC supported this change in direction and noted that the report on sentience produced by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) raised some important points on the sentience of decapods and how licensing will work.

8. AOB

8.1. Sentience in cephalopod molluscs and decapod crustaceans

- 8.1.1. The Chair drew the committees attention to the LSE Report which contained an 8-point framework against which to evaluate evidence of sentience.
- 8.1.2. The Chair requested that the ASC consider the potential implications, as this report had triggered the government to announce that they would be amending the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill to include cephalopods and decapods.
- 8.1.3. The Chair agreed that it would be appropriate to write a letter to the minister from the ASC supporting the LSE report and agreeing that decapods should be included in ASPA.

Action: ASC to write to the minister in support of the LSE recommendation

8.2. Nuffield Council on Bioethics' report on genome editing and farmed animal breeding

- 8.2.1. The ASC had previously been made aware of the Nuffield Council report, there had since been a government response to the report.
- 8.2.2. The Chair asked the committee for their views on whether they should be involved in advising on the legislation amendments of the definition of genetically modified organisms.
- 8.2.3. It was generally felt that the wider discussion on how this would be regulated was not within the ASC's remit of expertise. It was noted that the ASC, ASRU and ASPA may become involved at a later date, at which time the ASC could provide their views.

8.3. Stakeholder engagement

- 8.3.1. The Chair reminded the ASC that he had regular meetings with the Royal Society of Biology and the Animal Science Group, along with ad hoc meetings with other stakeholders.
- 8.3.2. The Chair informed the committee that he would like to consider widening the scope of stakeholder engagement and requested the members consider a more formal stakeholder engagement programme.
- 8.3.3. The Chair noted that this topic could be considered in conjunction with any agreed expansion of the work programme of the FWG and agreed to discuss this in a separate discussion with the FWG Chair.

Action: Stakeholder engagement to be discussed at a future plenary meeting.

8.4. Recruitment

8.4.1. The Chair reminded the ASC that a recruitment exercise was planned for 2022.

8.4.2. The Chair requested that members submitted any suggestions to the Secretariat on how to diversify the background and expertise of the committee.

Action: The Chair to liaise with new policy unit to discuss competencies and areas of expertise that would benefit the committee for the next round of recruitment.

Annex A

Animals in Science Committee members

Dr David Main (Chair)

Mrs Wendy Jarrett

Dr Donald Bruce

Dr Virginia Warren

Professor Christine Watson

Dr Sally Robinson

Mr Barney Reed

Mrs Sue Sparrow

Professor Clare Stanford

Professor Andrew Jackson

Professor Johanna Gibson

Dr Hannah Clarke

Science Secretariat

Mrs Caroline Wheeler (ASC Secretary)

Ms Jessica Daly (ASC Secretariat)

ASRU

William Reynolds (Head of Unit)