

**Animals in Science Committee**  
**Minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> Meeting: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022**  
**Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**Welcome, Introduction and Conflicts of Interest**

1. Professor David Main, Chair of the Animals in Science Committee (ASC), welcomed Members to the final meeting of 2022. Apologies were received from Linda Horan. No conflicts of interest were declared. A full list of attendees can be found at Annex A.
2. The Chair also welcomed officials from the Home Office Animals in Science Regulation Policy Unit (ASRPU).
3. The Chair advised that the minutes for meetings held in 2021 had been published on the ASC website.
4. Members raised the issue of the Ipsos MORI survey gathering data on public attitudes to animal research. This had not taken place for 5 years and represented a loss of continuity for this valuable information.
5. ASRPU informed the Committee that the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) were responsible for the survey and had been contacted regarding their plans for any future surveys. ASRPU were awaiting a response.

**Chair's Update**

Meeting with UK Bioscience Sector Coalition

6. The Chair met with the UK Bioscience Sector Coalition (UKBSC) to share updates on their work programmes. For the ASC this had been:
  - a. Current and future work programmes
  - b. Future recruitment
  - c. Stakeholder engagement and cross government engagement
7. The UKBSC updated on their work, which included:
  - a. Stakeholder engagement on issues related to regulatory reform sector resilience
  - b. Business continuity in response to increased activism

Laboratory Animals Science Association Establishment Licence Holder Forum

8. The Chair updated the Committee on his attendance at a recent Laboratory Animals Science Association (LASA) establishment licence holder (PELh) forum. The Chair

presented at the forum on the topic 'Your role as a stakeholder with the ASC', which included the topics of:

- a. Working within a modern regulatory framework
  - b. Cross government working
  - c. Engaging with the animals in science community
9. A number of Members who attended the forum noted the potential misunderstanding by forum attendees about the role of the Committee in relation to the Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) change programme. Specifically, that the ASC had a greater role as a driver for change or played an integral role in pushing forward the change programme, which was not the case. Members, in line with other stakeholders, had been consulted on the proposed change programme and provided their views.
10. Members felt this should be clarified, as this misunderstanding could make it more difficult for the ASC to engage with stakeholders in the future.

#### Meeting with Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

11. The Chair advised he had scheduled an introductory meeting with Lord Sharpe immediately following the plenary meeting. The Chair intended to raise with Lord Sharpe:
- a. Cross-government work – with a focus on understanding wider policy requirements for the use of animals in science.
  - b. Timeliness – requirement from the sector for timely responses from ASRU following establishment audits and the need for improved resourcing in ASRU to achieve this.
  - c. Quality assurance process – with a focus on consistent and auditable decision making both in establishments and ASRU, to maintain public trust and societal licence in the use of animals in science. It would be noted that, as independent advisors, it was not the role of the ASC to provide this assurance.

#### Genetic Technologies (Precision Breeding) Bill

12. Several Members had recently attended a Genetic Technologies (Precision Breeding) Bill meeting and reflected on some of the issues raised. Members noted the main item had been to announce a Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) research project, on behalf of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), on a proposal to constitute an animal welfare advisory body to consider animal welfare aspects of any application that would fall under the Precision Breeding Bill.
13. One Member reported that they had raised questions around the requirement for this new advisory body to carry out ethical considerations within a harm/benefit assessment. This Member informed the Committee that they would separately attend a project meeting, not as an ASC Member but in a personal capacity, to

discuss options for welfare assessments and to recommend an appropriate framework.

14. Another Member observed that the initial gene editing consultation related to farm animals, but the latest version of the Bill included a more general reference to 'animals'. Members noted the expanded scope of the Bill and the implications of gene editing i.e. disease resistant animals and designer pets. Responding, ASRPU noted the current constraints in place in respect of permissible purposes, as set out in the Animals Scientific Procedures Act 1986 (ASPA), and any use of animals beyond those permissible purposes would require legislative change to ASPA.

#### Meeting with Chair of the Animal Sentience Committee

15. The Chair advised that the Secretariat had requested a meeting between himself and the Chair of the Animal Sentience Committee. This meeting would be to discuss relevant points of engagement between both Committees.

#### **Project Licence Strategic Review Subgroup**

16. The Chair thanked the Project Licence Strategic Review (PLSR) Subgroup for their work on the review of licences involving the forced swim test procedure. This was followed with an update from the Subgroup Chair on their current progress on the Forced Swim Test report.
17. The Subgroup had reached out to project licence holders and stakeholders to gather evidence. It was noted that there had been some delay in receiving some of the evidence from stakeholders and that this could have an impact on the timing of the final report.
18. The Subgroup Chair requested that ASRPU extend the deadline due to unforeseen complexities and collation of additional evidence, which was agreed.
19. The Subgroup Chair finished their update by informing the Committee that preparations for the next review, of non-human primates used in service licences, would shortly begin.

#### **Animals in Science Regulation Policy Unit Update**

20. ASRPU communicated the progress of the animals in science policy programme and work to set-up a cross-Whitehall group on the wider aspects of animals in science policy. ASRPU emphasised the importance of improved co-ordination across government departments as no government department holds sole leadership regarding the use of animals in science, which cuts across many areas. The Committee would be updated at the next plenary meeting.
21. The Chair welcomed the work being carried out by ASRPU to work across government departments to establish clear responsibilities and emphasised the importance of communicating this change to the wider community.

22. A Member raised concern around transport of animals for research, and the need to ensure exemptions from the 'Kept Animals Bill'. ASRPU assured the Committee that this issue would be raised with DEFRA who lead the work on the Bill and who own the transport legislation.

**Action: ASRPU to raise with DEFRA the issue of transportation of animals for research in respect of the Kept Animals Bill.**

23. The Committee were also updated on future areas of work for ASRPU including the revision of Guidance on the Operation of ASPA and the revision of the Code of Practice for the housing and care of animals bred, supplied or used for scientific purposes. The priority for this work would be subject to recruitment of staff to ASRPU. However, they were committed to providing a consolidated core guidance on which the Committee's advice would be sought, as part of modernising the regulation programme.

**Action: ASRPU to provide an update to the Committee on progress on cross-government working.**

24. The Committee received an update on the issue of retained EU legislation and where this applies to the ASPA. It refers to everything already transposed into the ASPA in 2012 as a result of EU Directive 2010/63, along with some further EU legislation which came into effect in 2019 regarding timescales for publication of non-technical summaries (NTS) and retrospective assessments. The next stage was to bring all this under UK legislation which would take place during 2023.
25. In a recent response to a Parliamentary Question regarding frequency of inspections of establishments, one Member asked what was being used as the definition of 'regular', and whether this would likely align with the public's understanding. ASRPU stated that the requirements for frequency of inspections are set out in legislation and published guidance.
26. The Chair thanked ASRPU for an informative update on the policy position and ASRU operations. In relation to ASRU operations, the Chair asked that for future meetings it would be helpful to have some additional information to provide context for issues such as outputs from stakeholder engagement.

**Action: ASRPU to provide some contextual information for the ASRU operational update.**

## **Ways of Working**

27. The Chair informed the Committee of the ongoing work on the 'Ways of Working' document, carried out by the Secretariat.
28. The Committee discussed the draft document which had been updated with previous comments and suggestions made by Members. One Member suggested additional detail on the process for commissions of work from the Home Office as

well as ASC self-commissioned work along with processes for evidence gathering and conflicts of interest.

29. It was also noted by Members that recent activity by the ASC could be more clearly highlighted on the ASC website.

**Action: Secretariat to investigate using the ASC website to more clearly highlight recent updates.**

### **Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body Subgroup**

30. The Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body (AWERB) Subgroup Chair updated the Committee on the success of the most recent AWERB Hub workshop. The Committee discussed the workshop report and how these could best be formatted to deliver advice to the Minister.
31. A Subgroup Member provided a verbal update on the current stage of the NTS report which may now consider a review of the NTS section of the recently published project licence guidance and NTS questions on AsPEL.

### **Futures Working Group**

32. The Futures Working Group (FWG) Chair noted that the report had been updated to reflect discussions held at the last plenary, specifically around clarity on where recommendations should be focused. The final section had also been redrafted to centre more on the three themes:
  - a. future considerations of the regular ASC work programme,
  - b. futures resource as part of cross-departmental discussions
  - c. and the establishment of a portal for the submission of horizon scans.

### **Committee Matters and AOB**

33. The Committee received an update on progress being made with the development, validation and uptake of non-animal alternatives (NAA) for the regulatory testing of biological toxins and antitoxins, and the jurisdictions in which NAA were deemed acceptable.

## **Annex A – List of Attendees**

### Committee Members

Professor David Main (ASC Chair)  
Mrs Wendy Jarrett  
Dr Donald Bruce  
Dr Sally Robinson  
Mr Barney Reed  
Professor Clare Stanford  
Professor Andrew Jackson  
Professor Johanna Gibson  
Professor Christine Watson  
Dr Hannah Clarke

### Secretariat

Caroline Wheeler  
Zahi Muhammad Sulaiman  
Ana Ali  
Kimberly Stiff

### Animals in Science Regulation Policy Unit

William Reynolds  
Gideon Winward

### Apologies

Linda Horan