
Summary Minutes: AWERB: PPL review meeting

Status: Final

Meeting held: Wednesday 27 August 2025 at 10am: MS Teams

Present:

MS Teams: 13, plus one in attendance, one by invitation and 16 apologies

1 **NEW HOME OFFICE PROJECT LICENCE APPLICATION**

The applicant attended the meeting to discuss a new project licence intended to replace an expiring licence.

The proposed work focuses on rare inherited childhood diseases that lead to neurodegeneration and epilepsy. The aim is to improve understanding of these conditions and accelerate the identification of potential treatments. Zebrafish will be used as the disease model due to their suitability for genetic studies, rapid development, and small size, which enables large-scale chemical testing within short timeframes.

Key points raised by AWERB:

- **Humane Endpoints:** Concerns were raised about defining clear endpoints given the unpredictability of new disease models. The applicant confirmed that endpoints will be based on observable signs such as seizures, altered locomotion, and posture. Fish with stable but abnormal phenotypes will be monitored for up to four days, with immediate culling if feeding is impaired. These details, including absolute limits, will be added to the licence.
- **Swimming and Welfare:** Questions were asked about whether swimming difficulties could impact welfare. The applicant explained that welfare assessments will consider feeding ability; fish unable to feed will be culled.
- **Breeding and Maintenance protocol:** what monitoring procedures would be in place to detect adverse effects? It was confirmed that additional monitoring would occur if seizures were observed, supported by routine locomotion experiments.
- **Non-Schedule 1 Euthanasia:** Clarification was sought on the proposed method. It was confirmed that training will be undertaken under veterinary supervision, and feedback will be reported to AWERB.
- **Patient Impact:** It was suggested that the application include data on patient numbers to highlight potential impact
- **Non-Technical Summary:** AWERB noted that the revised summary had been significantly improved following external lay panel member's feedback.

The applicant was thanked for attending and for the detailed responses. Amendments will be made to incorporate AWERB's feedback, and the revised draft will be reviewed by an AWERB subgroup.

2 TRANSITION OF ZEBRAFISH FACILITY TO BSU MANAGEMENT

AWERB requested an update on the transfer of the zebrafish facility from researcher-led management to BSU oversight.

It was reported that the transition is underway but has been delayed by technical challenges, including environmental parameters and lighting. Discussions with the Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS) are ongoing to ensure fish colonies are transferred carefully and new breeding colonies are established smoothly. Meetings with facility users are being scheduled to agree clear plans and shared expectations.

Once operational, the BSU-managed system is expected to improve both fish welfare and scientific outcomes.

A question was raised about whether a formal policy exists for aged zebrafish, similar to the policy for mice. It was clarified that while no formal policy is currently in place, draft protocols specify breeding up to 15 months and maintenance up to 18 months, with guidance on health and breeding assessments. AWERB suggested formalising these protocols into a policy.

3 CULTURE OF CARE WORKSHOP

AWERB noted that it has been nearly a year since the first Culture of Care Workshop, run by the RSPCA, had been held. It was suggested that a follow-up event would be timely.

It was confirmed that the Culture of Care subgroup are planning on arranging another workshop, which will be held at Camden (the previous event took place at Hawkshead).

4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES FROM 30 JULY 2025 AWERB MEETING

The minutes of the AWERB Standing Agenda Items meeting held on 30 July 2025 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Secretary
December 2025