
Summary Minutes: AWERB (Standard agenda items meeting)

Status: FINAL

Meeting held: 6 December 2022 at 1pm via MS Teams

Present: 11 plus 1 in attendance, 1 by invitation and 6 apologies

1 BIODIVERSITY

The Environmental Sustainability Manager was welcomed to the meeting. She had been invited to give a brief overview of what was being done at the RVC in terms of biodiversity.

Key points were:

- A new Biodiversity Action Plan had been developed to help maintain and enhance where possible the existing species-rich habitats, such as the woodlands, the grasslands and ponds. This plan was being overseen by the Land Management Group. The Action Plan would provide opportunities for students, staff and also the local community to get involved.
- As part of a land review, the hedgerows and fencing were being examined to see what needed to be done to improve them: for example, the hedges needed cutting back to make sure that they had enough berries and that the structure was right to support wildlife.
- With help from students from the Wildlife Ecology Course, camera trapping was being undertaken at the farm to monitor what wildlife was around. The camera trapping was being expanded to include the nature trail too. This would be a continual project to build up information about the surrounding wildlife species.
- Students were being provided with opportunities to take part in biodiversity monitoring as well as other projects.
- The RVC have signed up as a pilot for the Farming for Carbon and Nature programme, which would look at how much carbon is sequestered in the soil. Students would get the opportunity to be trained to take soil samples.
- A lot of work was being done at the farm in terms of biodiversity such as wildflower planting.
- At Camden, work was being done with the SU Gardening Club to see what could be done in terms of planting. There was also a potential redevelopment of the student accommodation green space outside area. The internal courtyard area was being looked at to see how that could be improved. There was also a camera trapping exercise planned for February.

A query was asked whether the BSU fields would be included in the land review. Some of the fields were unsafe for horses as they had acorns and sycamore seeds in them which were toxic to horses. Could advice be provided about cutting down some of these trees in an environmentally sensitive way to make these fields safe for the horses? It was agreed that this would be discussed further so that it could be incorporated into the hedging plan.

A further query was raised about the trapping of the animals – was it just camera trapping or would physical trapping be involved? It was confirmed that at this stage it would just be camera trapping but that students have been in contact about possibly including interventional trapping, which would need ethical approval.

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The Environmental Sustainability Manager was thanked for attending the meeting. She would separately provide a link to the intranet pages that she used to communicate activities to staff and students.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/ACTION LOG

3.1 Item 2.1: AWERB Terms of Reference – adding “strategy elements” (1 November 2022 meeting)

Following discussion, it had been concluded that these were already addressed through AWERB’s legislative responsibilities as an AWERB under A(SP)A.

3.2 Item 2.5: Ethics oversight of RVC Wildlife and Pest Control used (01 November 2022)

The new Head of Campus Operations would be attending AWERB in February 2023 to discuss pest control.

3.3 Item 2.10: Breeding and Colony Management Discussion Group update (1 November 2022)

Researchers would be reminded at the next set of BSU user group meetings and PPL training of the importance of ensuring there was sufficient funding or reasonable mitigation for their planned research before it went ahead.

3.4 Item 4.4: Paper for senior management about the proposed BSU virtual tour (5 October 2022 meeting)

Comments on the draft paper had been provided.

3.5 Item 5.1.3: BMS/thermoregulation system (1 November 2022 meeting)

Meeting had been held with Estates to discuss the BMS system ongoing review and future actions.

3.6 Item 5.2.1: Animal Welfare Barn (1 November 2022 meeting)

The new parts for the barn had been received and partially fitted. The fitting would be finished when there were no animals in the area.

3.7 Item 5.2.2: Fields (1 November 2022 meeting)

As agreed at this meeting, a review of the trees as part of the hedging plan would be taken forward with the Environmental Sustainability Manager.

4 3RS

4.1 GA mouse breeding strategies at the RVC

The policy on Management of GA Colonies to sustain a line between experiments was in the process of being reviewed. The policy outlined that tick over colonies were commonly used so that users did not lose their genetic lines. As there were welfare issues with maintaining tick-over colonies AWERB had previously agreed that colonies could not be kept longer than a year and should be cryopreserved. The following changes however were being recommended:

- Tick over colonies should be reviewed after 6 months to avoid animals being wasted and to reduce genetic drift.
- If the breeder wanted to keep the colonies longer, they should be advised to consider freezing.

There was discussion that although AWERB currently recommended that colonies should not be kept longer than 12 months, as the RVC was not set up to freeze embryos or sperm and there was uncertainty about how to do this externally, was this policy being followed?

Actions:

- Investigation to be done to find out information about organisations that offered cryopreservation and how much it cost.
- Enquiries to also be made about how much it would cost to purchase the necessary equipment.

4.2 RVC institutional review using the NC3Rs 3Rs self-assessment tool:

This item was deferred to the next standard agenda items meeting to give AWERB members time to review the results of the institutional review.

5 REVIEWING OF RESEARCH POLICIES

The comments from the Establishment Licence Holder on the proposed changes to the research policies would be followed up.

5.1 Policies for single use needles and non-aversive handling

A query was raised whether the RVC had policies for these? Although there was no formal policy it was included in the GLP SOPs and was also standard practice in the units. There were also posters promoting single use of needles.

6 NVS REPORT - CAMDEN

6.1 Condition 18 reports

Two condition 18 reports had been submitted for a project licence. Discussions have been held about how to improve the procedure.

6.2 Condition 18 report

A condition 18 report on another study had recently been submitted.

7 NVS REPORT – HAWKSHEAD

7.1 Dog Unit

Following previous issues with coccidia and giardia within the dog unit, the areas that the puppies had used had been thoroughly disinfected including using disinfectant specific for coccidia, and a new steam cleaner. However, another batch of puppies were showing similar symptoms, so it seemed that the parasites might still be in the unit. Tests have been done but the lab results had not yet been received.

7.2 Barns

Estates have been asked to get quotes to repair some of the barns. The situation would be monitored to ensure that animal housing was not impacted.

8 NACWO REPORT – CAMDEN

8.1 BMS/thermoregulation system

Problems were still being experienced with the temperatures and humidity and the sensors in the rooms not working properly.

9 NACWO REPORT – HAWKSHEAD

9.1 Floodlights

More floodlights were going to be added to the area around the Animal Welfare Barn.

9.2 DMD dog unit

More puppies were expected to be born in the new year.

10 HOME OFFICE

10.1 ASRU Facilities Audit report

The official report had now been received. It was a standard report. There were a couple of minor queries that needed to be responded to.

11 PROJECT LICENCES UPDATE

AWERB noted that during November 2022

- two new project licences had been granted
- One project licence with secondary availability had been amended

12 STUDY REQUESTS APPROVED SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AWERB noted that during November 2022 five study requests had been approved.

13 MID TERM PPL REVIEW

AWERB noted the mid term PPL review that had been submitted. Several queries had been raised which would be fed back to the PPL Holder, including a query whether as a result of a project licence amendment that had been submitted more animals would be needed.

14 RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT FOR THE HOME OFFICE

AWERB noted the retrospective assessment. Several suggestions for how to improve the review would be fed back to the PPL Holder including an addition of a table to clearly lay out how many animals had been used.

15 REMAINING AGENDA ITEMS

As the meeting had run out of time it was agreed that the remaining items on the agenda (AWERB Terms of Reference review and condition 18 reports) would be carried over to the next AWERB meeting.

16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 11 January 2023 and would be a PPL review meeting.

Secretary

13 December 2022