

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Food held in
Committee Room 1 of the Scottish Parliament on 17 February 2015**

Present

John Scott	MSP (Chair)
Claudia Beamish	MSP
Jamie McGrigor	MSP
Christian Allard	MSP
Geoff Ogle	Food Standards Agency Scotland
Ross Finnie	Food Standards Scotland
Bill Gray	Community Food & Health Scotland
Gary Stephenson	Devro
Ewan Macdonald –Russell	Morrisons
Archie Gibson	Agrico
Mary Lawton	Scottish Food and Drink Federation
Colette Backwell	Scottish Food and Drink Federation
Kirsty Ritchie	Scottish Food and Drink Federation
Fiona Bayne	NHS Health Scotland
Marnie Somerville	The Nutrition Training Company
Carrie Ruxton	Nutrition Communications
Wendy Barrie	Scottish Food Guide
Bosse Dahlgren	Scottish Food Guide
Jackie McCabe	REHIS
Uel Morton	Quality Meat Scotland
Ana Hart Dyke	Footprint
Myles Fitt	Coeliac UK
Alex Scott-Tonge	Growing Forth
Willie Ferguson	Zero Waste Scotland
Laura Stewart	Soil Association
Helen Browning	Soil Association
Graham Findlay	SQA
Mona Vaghefian	McDonalds
Wendy Wrieden	Newcastle University
John Sleith	Society of Chief Officers of Environ Health
Abigail Harper	Kettle Produce
Christine Graham	Kettle Produce
Luke Boddice	Grayling
Gillian White	Automatic Vending Association
Jonathan Wilkin	Abertay University
Robbie Beattie	Edinburgh Science & Environ Services
Moyra Burns	NHS Health Lothian
Polly Jones	Asda
Miriam Smith	Queen Margaret University (QMU)
Mike Pretious	QMU/Social Enterprise East Lothian
Martin Irons	QMU
Kelvin Thomson	Pinnacle Food and Drink
Julie Edgar	Scottish Salmon Producers Association
Phil Thomas	Scottish Salmon Producers Association
Paul Birkin	Glasgow City Council
Julia Brown	Pinsent Masons LLP

James Graham	SAOS
Tony McElroy	Tesco
Donald Reid	The List
Peter Brown	The List
Alasdair Hutchinson	Pagoda PR
Ceri Ritchie	SAC Consulting
David Martin	Scottish Retail Consortium
Gillian Kynoch	Fareshare
Christine Fraser	Food Training Scotland
John Cooke	Slow Food Scotland
Pat Abel	Nourish Scotland/Transition Edinburgh
Stephen Hutt	Royal Highland & Agri Society of Scotland

1. Apologies for Absence

These were received from James Withers, Nicki Holmyard, Viv Collie, Julian Mercer, Douglas Scott, Frances Birch, Robert Burns, Susan Pryde, Michael Craig, Martin Meteyard, Karen McCallum-Smith, Helen Pratt and Sarah Dempster.

2. Notes of the Last Meeting

The notes of the last meeting on 25 November 2014 were proposed by Archie Gibson and agreed.

3. Election of new Co-Convenor

Claire Baker MSP had tendered her resignation as Co-Convenor following her change of portfolio. Jamie McGrigor MSP proposed Claudia Beamish MSP in her place. This was seconded by Christian Allard MSP and unanimously approved.

4. A New Food Body for Scotland

Geoff Ogle (GO) Chief Executive of the new Food Standards Scotland (FSS) presented on the transition from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Scotland to the FSS. GO made the following main points:

- FSS has a Scottish focus, Scottish Board, and will have a Scottish strategy based on the needs of Scottish consumers.
- FSS has diet and nutrition included in its remit, (FSA does not) and can focus on what's best for Scotland.
- The horsemeat incident had shown that consumers don't always make distinctions between food safety and food fraud; legislation should bring a better balance.
- FSS, whilst working in partnership with other organizations, as one single body should be more nimble and fleet of foot and be able to make decisions more quickly.
- Close co-operation with FSA UK was vital especially for issues such as incident management and research programmes. In terms of incident

management, if there is a Scotland only issue FSS would deal with it and FSA could lead if it is UK wide.

- FSS will be accountable to the Scottish Parliament; this gives a level of scrutiny that will protect Scottish consumers.

Ross Finnie (RF), Chair of the new FSS presented on how the Board will work and made the following key points:

- The shadow Board will become fully operational on 1 April and will be responsible for the strategic direction of FSS.
- The Board has a gender balance of 6:2 female: male
- Staff that work for FSS will now be responsible to the Board which is a different reporting line from FSAS.
- The aspiration is that consumers and stakeholders will find FSS even easier to approach.
- The Board and the Executive Team will be responsible for the remit of FSS and they will take the chance to look afresh at different ways of working, including issues such as relationships with Scottish manufacturers and how to deal with their evidence without compromising risk to the consumer.
- The need for proportionate regulations and enforcement
- The safety of food products will remain the priority.
- Diet and nutrition will be one of the areas for FSS to focus on but they are not solely responsible. The aim is to work in partnership with others towards clear objectives.
- Different ways of working and learning from other regulatory regimes will be taken on board as long as the consumer is not compromised.

Bill Gray, Community Food and Health Scotland, made the following points:

- When responding to the Good Food Nation consultation he had looked at what community groups had said when FSA Scotland was being set up 17 years ago. What they were looking for from FSA back then is the same as what they would like to see from FSS now; for individuals that were previously excluded from policy to become more involved.
- Many community groups had experienced positive interactions with FSA and saw it as a trusted source.
- Community Food and Health Scotland has had a good relationship with FSA in Scotland and wants to continue this with FSS.
- He quoted Andrew Carnegie, who said “As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do” and said that the proof of the pudding would be in the eating.

Dr Gary Stephenson, Devro, said he was heartened by the earlier presentations focussing on science based policy, building a knowledge base and risk assessment. He highlighted the following:

- Partnership was key - he would like FSS to understand each other's strengths and work together to ensure safe food for Scotland.

- He would like FSS to give support for growth and help good businesses grow. The many regulation changes made it difficult and he thought FSS should play an informative role.
- FSS and industry should work closer together on complex EU regulations so both understand how to help meet the needs of the consumer.
- Proportionate regulations were essential, he cited the HACCP approach where critical points are highlighted.
- Environmental health officers and analysts in Scotland with an expertise in food were vital and industry could help with this. A strategy was needed for sharing knowledge, expertise and working in partnership toward a safer Scotland.

Ewan Macdonald-Russell, Morrisons, said that FSS could affect all their work including their farm. With respect to diet his one key aspiration would be for food education. He outlined their Lets Grow voucher scheme recognizing that other retailers had similar but different schemes It was important to change how children looked at food and thought there should partnership working towards a coherent strategy going forward.

There was then an open debate.

Marnie Somerville, the Nutrition Training Company, asked about the relationship between FSS and the expert advisory committees.

GO said that the Scottish Food Advisory Committee (SFAC) would no longer exist but the Board could set up expert committees on issues as necessary. For Committees where FSA Scotland has an observer status on such as the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) this would continue.

Jamie McGrigor MSP asked who would have responsibility for diet and nutrition. Scotland was the 2nd fattest nation and something needed to be done and asked if FSS would be prescriptive on what we should eat and what should be on the shelves.

GO said diet and nutrition was already something FSA in Scotland does and FSS will take over this work. The Board however would not have the powers to be restrictive or prescriptive. They will be able to make recommendations but the Minister would decide if legislation was warranted.

RF noted FSS was not the only body with an interest/duty to this area. He thought FSS could contribute for example in assisting in curbing conflicting nutrition messages. He said he was under no illusions and that work on diet and nutrition needed to be in partnership.

Bill Gray highlighted that NHS Health Scotland work closely with FSA and this partnership with FSS will remain essential with a common approach agreed.

Gary Stephenson said that it is important that recommendations made are based on science based policy and recommendations tested for efficacy. Evidence that interventions worked should be gathered.

He asked how FSS will deal with regulations and whether there would be a direct route into Brussels for example whether FSS planned to have a permanent representative on Brussels or work through the UK.

RF said that initially FSS will go through the UK route and that FSS needs to retain a close relationship with FSA on range of issues including scientific advice. It would be important that there was consultation with FSS before any UK position is agreed. Going forward he noted budget constraints but that intelligence on issues was also needed.

GO pointed out that staff in Scotland have attended working groups in Europe when they know an issue better than UK based staff for example on shellfish and that would not change. There may be a benefit in having direct contacts with UKRep or Scottish Government contacts in Europe but it was unlikely that we would need a permanent individual.

Paul Birkin, Glasgow City Council, asked about FSS would develop their relationship with local authorities.

GO said FSS would continue the FSA's strong relationships with local authorities. Given the pressures across public sectors there was a need to look at how the delivery model might be changed. The Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee was continuing and could look at how to make the delivery more effective.

Phil Thomas, Scottish Salmon Producers Association, said that Scotland was good at exporting and promoting exports but not good at simplifying legislation and having proper discussions with industry about it. He hoped FSS would have an "adult" relationship with industry going forward.

GO emphasised that in principle there was no problem in engaging with retailers and manufacturers on regulations but that the issue was balancing the needs of all stakeholders. For example there could be differences between larger companies and SMEs. It was important that FSS knew who to go to when discussing issues, understood that regulation was not always a solution and he agreed that a mature relationship should be fostered.

RF said that FSS would win confidence by being open and transparent and using modern ways of communicating. Engagement with stakeholders should be publicised. He noted Brian Pack's work on simplification.

John Sleith, Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health, said there was a resource issue for local authorities and FSS should monitor levels through audit.

GO said FSS as part of their work needs to be satisfied with the delivery taking place. He noted that the differences between capability and capacity raised different questions. With capability there was the extreme theoretical response that FSS would have to take over the work of a failing local Authority. With regard to capacity an intelligence led approach was important. Compliant businesses were good for all; growth and the consumer and the question was how to award and recognise good compliance.

Christian Allard, MSP thought it very important to help Scottish food and drink companies. He noted the balance needed between exports and local markets.

GO pointed out that the new act referred to other interests for consumers which was a broad canvas. The question was how to define this and whether it meant advocating local markets. Close engagement with Scottish Government will be needed on this and how FSS could support the broader agenda to help company compliance and growth and where FSS could contribute or lead.

On terms of measuring the success of FSS the Executive would look to the Board to make decisions on outcomes and metrics and take into account the stakeholder view.

RF said that FSS is not a food promotion body but is there to assist. He highlighted the New Zealand Food Standards Agency as a good example of balancing the two. He also noted FSS can't compromise as a regulator and needed to have the public's confidence.

Laura Stewart, Soil Association, noted that food education is important and asked if FSS would give information on a sustainable diet as well as a healthy diet as happens elsewhere in Europe.

GO agreed food education was important but there wasn't a single solution. He noted that messages in the media could be confusing and there was a need to better understand issues and behaviours. In education there could be a focus to educate children on good habits which would trickle up to parents. It was also about energy in and energy out. He said health and sustainability are important but there are other factors.

Wendy Wrieden, Newcastle University, said there was a need to monitor the Scottish diet and wondered whether research funding would continue. She said a recent article in the British Medical Journal complained that much research was industry funded and compromised so public funded research was vital.

GO said there was the intention and ambition to continue to fund research and he has not seen evidence of undue influence when industry fund research. He stressed that research needed to be robust, credible and peer reviewed.

Jonathan Wilkin, Abertay University had been in touch with FSA about European certificates for novel foods and they had been too busy to help and suggested using another Member State. He wondered how adaptive the new FSS will be.

GO said that the aspiration is to be as adaptive as possible. He wanted to support innovation especially when it will benefit consumers but noted the need to be cautious to make sure the products are safe. There was also the need for clarity from Europe.

Uel Morton, Quality Meat Scotland, asked about the practicalities of the shadow Board and whether the strategic objectives would be more of the same or whether there would there be fresh ideas.

RF said that the new Board was meeting with a wide range of people including staff and the Executive. Once they have the knowledge and understanding the strategic plan would be produced. He hoped this would be tackled in an open and imaginative way.

GO hoped the good work on food education and food hygiene would continue. He said that food education was important but thought there was a need to take step back on diet and nutrition and discuss what Board wants to do. He noted there are a lot of organisations in that space and he was not wedded to the FSS leading all this work.

Colette Backwell, Scottish Food and Drink Federation, asked how relationships on diet and health should be managed. Different Scottish Government departments had Supporting Healthy Choices and the Good Food Nation including the new Food Commission as well as the FSS. It was important for stakeholders to understand responsibilities and how to work with these parts of Scottish Government.

RF recognised that Scottish Government has a number of competing pressures. He said that there were already conversations to see how work could be co-ordinated. He noted that FSS didn't have absolute power in this area and need to decide how new body could play a role. Parliament had expectations for FSS to make a contribution in this area but there was a need to act within the legislation.

GO said that diet and nutrition is in the FSS portfolio and they can give recommendations to Scottish Government. He said the Scottish Government are a key partner and they won't always agree but both organisations will continue to work well together.

Archie Gibson, Agrico, asked whether attendees had heard of PAS 96 Defending Food & Drink (<http://shop.bsigroup.com/Browse-by-Sector/Food--Drink/PAS-96-2014/>) and asked if this area will sit with FSS or another government body.

GO said that the Scottish Government rural area would be responsible but that FSS would have a role. In terms of food security FSA and FSS will have a joined up approach to working.

Jamie McGrigor MSP asked about the Transatlantic trade treaty with the USA where an EU Committee was collecting evidence. He thought most people thought it was a good idea in terms of employment and scale but that some primary producers had raised issues regarding US hygiene with him. He asked who was responsible.

GO said it was EU issue and Europe would lead on this.

Claudia Beamish MSP asked how FSS would actively engage with communities and connect better for public procurement.

GO noted that under the Scudamore review FSS will be looking at public procurement. He also said that consumer engagement can be difficult but that in the first place they would look at existing models for community engagement.

RF said that the new Board all had good experience of engaging with consumers and communities.

Wendy Barrie, Scottish Food Guide, said that food education is important for food safety. She thought there needed to have more Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) on the ground.

GO agreed that EHOs have an important role and FSS need to look at how to develop that.

Christine Fraser, Food Training Scotland, said EHOs played a vital role especially in helping new food businesses. She thought FSS should have a role to play in educating the public with scientific answers to claims made in the media and point out when it just hype.

GO said he FSS should be a trusted source for sensible advice but did not think an ongoing debate in the media would be fruitful.

5. Date of Next Meeting

Mary Lawton, SFDF said the meeting scheduled for the 18 March was cancelled and so the next meeting would be the AGM on June 17th after the General Election.