

AGREED AT 17 MARCH OPEN MEETING

**Scottish Food Advisory Committee
4 February 2009
Best Western Huntingtower Hotel, Perth
Open Session**

Present

Committee Members:

Prof. Graeme Millar - Chair

David Cameron

John Cowden

Charlotte Maltin

Moyra Burns

Carrie Ruxton

Amanda O'Donoghue

Christopher Trotter

FSA Officials:

Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director, FSAS

George Paterson, Director FSAS

Melanie Martin, Committee Secretary, FSAS

Neil Douglas, Committee Administrator, FSAS

Anna Whyte, Head of Science Branch, FSAS

Peter Midgley, Head of Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Branch, FSAS

Elsbeth MacDonald, Head of Animal Food Chain and Novel Foods Branch, FSAS

Jane Barrett, Head of Social Science Research Unit, FSA Headquarters

Robyn Ackerman, Social and Market Research, FSA Headquarters

1 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

1. The Chair welcomed members, guests and observers to the open meeting of the Scottish Food Advisory Committee (SFAC). The Committee was pleased to be in Perth.
2. The role of SFAC is to provide advice to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on all food safety and standards matters, in particular those with specific Scottish perspective. The Agency in turn has to fully consider the Committees views when determining its actions and the policy advice it gives to Ministers. Food issues are devolved to Scottish Ministers and legislation is implemented by the Scottish Parliament. This Committee is an essential element to the Agency to ensure that devolution is fully taken into account. The Committee holds regular meetings throughout Scotland.
3. Members of the Committee were invited to declare any conflicts of interest on specific areas before they are discussed to allow a decision to be taken on whether participation would be correct.
4. The Chair asked for items of AOB. No matters were raised.
5. There were apologies from SFAC members Brian Ratcliffe and Catherine Benton, and Jim Thomson, Assistant Director, FSAS.

6. The Chair welcomed Dr David Cameron as the new second Scottish FSA Board member. Dr David Cameron has also been appointed for a third term with the Committee; he will begin a three year term from 1 March 2009.
7. The Chair welcomed the newly appointed SFAC members Dr Lesley Stanley, Dr Jim Wildgoose and Mr Bernard Forteach, who were in the audience as observers. They all begin a three year term from 1 March 2009.

2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

8. The Chair directed the Committee to the minutes from the previous meeting on 29 October 2008.
9. The Chair discharged the following actions:-

Under Para 17 Page 7

SFELC (Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee) survey on prosecution for non-compliance with food law in Scotland 2003-2007 was issued to the Committee on 1 December 2008.

Andrew Morrison, FSAS provided the Committee with figures on what proportion of food samples, both chemical and biological failed at a later date at the previous meeting verbally. A hard copy of these figures was distributed to the Committee on the 4 February.

Under Para 29 Page 9

The amended SFAC sub group response to the Scottish Government Aquaculture consultation, incorporating the Committee discussion which took place at 29 October SFAC meeting, was circulated to all SFAC members for agreement. The agreed Committee response to the consultation was forwarded to FSAS on 3 November, in advance of the 4 November deadline.

Under Para 35 Page 10

A letter was drafted and sent to Richard Lochhead MSP. The letter informed Mr Lochhead of the Committee's concerns regarding the Scottish Government Food and Drink Policy, and asked for reports of progress to be put into the public domain. A response was received from Richard Lochhead dated 30 December, in January. The letter informed the Committee that his officials were currently updating the Scottish Government web pages and he had asked that they contacted the Committee once this had been done.

A copy of both letters were included in the Committee papers as info paper 02/09/01.

Secretariat sent a reminder email to the Committee to generate interest for SFAC attendance at the cross Party Group on Food meeting on 12 November 2008. SFAC member Charlotte Maltin attended.

10. Members agreed the minute was a true and accurate reflection of the meeting held on 29 October 2008.

ITEM 3

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH UNIT; OUR ROLE AND WORK IN THE FSA

11. Members agreed the minute was a true and accurate reflection of the meeting held on 29 October 2008.
12. The Chair welcomed Jane Barrett, Head of Social Science Research Unit and Robyn Ackerman, Senior Research Officer, FSA Headquarters. The purpose of the Agenda item was for the Committee to note the development of social science research in the FSA.
13. Jane and Robyn gave a joint presentation on the role and work of FSA's Social Science Research Unit. The presentation covered a range of themes including:
 - What is social science?
 - What is social science research?
 - Social science methods
 - Difference between social science and consumer engagement
 - Why is social science important to the FSA
 - Remit of the unit
 - Strategy
 - Cross-cutting research
 - Social science advice and support
 - Social Science Research Committee
 - Future work
14. The Chair thanked Jane and Robyn for the presentation and information paper, and opened the discussion to the Committee.
15. Members of the Committee raised the following questions:-
 - A The Committee queried how the Social Science Research Unit supported the Agency's main aims and objectives, and how it would focus on what the Agency was trying to achieve.
 - B The Committee mentioned that there was a body of information out there, particularly in the hands of retailers, based on the databases created as a result of loyalty cards data. The Committee asked if this was seen as a complication or a resource as retailers often used this type of data to target consumers.

- C The Committee mentioned that there had been a lot of activity in the media encouraging people to grow their own vegetables. The committee commented that it would be interesting to see if social science research could pick up media and community led activities to determine how important such activities were in changing consumer behaviour.
- D The Committee mentioned that a lot of research had been done to explore why people do things and queried whether social science research looks into why people don't do the things they should do, for example consuming five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- E The Committee queried if an individual came up with a research question on hygiene for example, how organisationally would they get support from the Unit in researching it?
- F The Committee recognised there were academics on the Social Science Research Committee and queried whether the Unit was planning to engage with commercial organisations who do similar work to learn about consumers. Was the unit branching out to make some contact to access some of the techniques or data that they use?

16. Jane and Robyn provided the following answers to the member's points:-

- A They informed the Committee that the Unit was there to support the Agency's strategic aims and to help to deliver these. During the first 18 months the Unit had liaised with colleagues in all arms of the Agency to prioritise areas where support was most needed. The Unit had prioritised cross-cutting research and also supported policy focused research particularly in the areas of food labelling and food technology.
- B They informed the Committee that potentially store card data are a useful resource. Tesco have provided data to an organisation called Dunhumby, who have carried out some analysis. However, not all retailers made their data available to other organisations due to commercial sensitivities. Jane and Robyn felt that store card data could serve as a useful complement to other evidence and should be seen as one part of the evidence jigsaw.
- C This would be an area they may be able to pick up with a new Consumer Attitudes and Behaviours survey. It is important not to just map and monitor changes, but to establish why they have happened. A survey can anticipate likely sources or motivations for change and had the potential to capture the impact of media campaigns and what was going on in peoples' locality.
- D They referred the Committee to the final call for the collaborative research with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) which is on the Agency's website. Social Science investigates both why people do and don't do certain things. They hope the ESRC collaboration will help to look into this issue with regard to healthy eating advice.

- E Each year the Unit planned to discuss research requirements with Agency colleagues, and to consider and prioritise ideas with the help of the Social Science Research Committee. The Unit was happy to receive research ideas for consideration. Jane and Robyn stressed the importance of joining up with other government departments and have already established some good links, this minimises duplication of effort.
- F They responded it was vital that they did not restrict themselves to what the academics were doing and one of the things they had been doing in the Unit was putting together a map of different types of organisations which included retailers, pressure groups and charities etc., The next step was to prioritise how best to engage.

17. The Chair opened the debate to observers.

NICK PAUL – SCOTTISH FARMERS MARKETS

Nick Paul queried if research was addressing retailers where food hygiene may be may be an issue. Also, could the research be less biased towards supermarkets and look beyond point of purchase? There was a strong and growing desire in public realm to look for province of food, for example local sourcing. Can research look at the purchasing of foodstuffs and shopping habits and the quality of food which is available from the producers.

Jane Barrett, FSA, informed Nick Paul that part of the role of the Committee was to find out what information is available and what information needed to be collected. They would expect that future research would cover a wider range of places where new data is collected

Robyn Ackerman, FSA informed Nick that previously a lot of their research stopped at point of purchase and did not consider what people do with the food after that. There is a lot of work coming up to address these issues.

JIM WILGOOSE – NEW SFAC MEMBER APPOINTMENT

Did they have a pent up demand for the services they supplied or did they have to go out and search for that. Also, how did they assess their own input regarding the work they did and carried out for people and how did they add value?

Jane Barrett, FSA, answered that there were occasions where people were desperate for information on particular projects, but in other parts of Agency there may not be an overt demand for support from social science. They have been trying to meet the obvious demand, as well as trying to explain to other parts of the Agency

what the social sciences are and what they can do to work out whether or not there was a need for social science support.

They were the only qualified social scientists within the Agency, so the added value they bring was helping to support the identification of what research was needed, so the right questions were being addressed. Their expertise helped to design the right approach, and without their expertise work was not necessarily happening or was not necessarily being designed in the right way. If the question and approach were wrong you would not get the right answers.

Robyn Ackerman, FSA added that often they were trying to bridge the gap between scientists and the general public. Therefore, putting research questions into everyday language was an important part of the unit's role.

LESLEY STANLEY – NEW SFAC MEMBER APPOINTMENT

Lesley queried the interaction between the Social Science Research Unit, the Social Science Research Committee, and other scientific committees. She was aware of cynicism from scientists regarding setting up a social science research committee. Could they expand further on how they could interact with the other scientific committees, and help them with problems like interpreting the results of research, like the Total Diet Survey.

Jane Barrett, FSA, responded she thought there were mixed views as Lesley had pointed out. These views were in relation to whether there was a need for a Social Science Research Committee, and also whether they needed a single committee, or whether each committee should have its own social science representative. It was vital there was a dedicated Committee since social science covers a vast range of subjects, 18 different disciplines had been identified by the Economic and Social Research Council. An individual social scientist could not adequately meet the needs of an individual scientific committee. The critical mass of a range of disciplines in one committee is best for this present time. They have been linking with the General Advisory Committee on Science, to try and be a conduit across all the other committees and join them up.

18. The Chair thanked Jane, Robyn, and the Committee for the detailed discussion. As a FSA Board member for the past four years, he was conscious that social science had not been applied consistently within the Agency in the past. On occasion, they only had questions on impact around the Board table in open session when they were trying to determine policy. He recognised that the unit was beneficial but that there was more work to be done. He praised them for being articulate and that their communication skills were excellent. It was requested for a copy of the overheads to be given to Committee members, and any members of the public who would like a copy.

ACTION – To give a hard copy of the overheads to Committee members. Also, to provide a copy to members of the public on request.

ITEM 4
FOODBORNE DISEASE IN SCOTLAND AND ASSOCIATED
FSAS FUNDED RESEARCH

19. The Chair welcomed John Cowden (SFAC member) in his Health Protection Scotland role, and Anna Whyte, Head of Science Branch, FSAS. At the SFAC retreat in November 2008, it was suggested that a briefing would be useful for the Committee on the 4 main foodborne pathogens and the implications of these in Scotland.
20. John gave a presentation on the surveillance of foodborne disease in Scotland:-
 - What is foodborne disease?
 - Food poisoning
 - How do we measure foodborne disease?
 - Current notifiable diseases
 - Laboratory Reports
 - Systems for measuring foodborne disease
21. Anna gave a presentation on the FSAS Research Programme on the Microbiological Safety of Food –
 - Aims of the research programme
 - FSAS Research Programme on Food Safety
 - Microbiological Safety of Food Research in Scotland
 - Campylobacter MLST project
 - Current research on VTEC
 - Recent UK-wide surveys on pathogens in Food Standards Agency UK Food Surveillance System (UKFSS)
 - UK-wide research on foodborne disease
22. The Chair thanked John and Anna for their presentations and the information paper, and opened the discussion to the Committee.
23. Committee members raised a query to John Cowden regarding norovirus being 90% person to person spread. How did this affect our ability to look at the incidents in terms of foodborne disease, and how would they take this forward if there was so much person to person spread.
24. John informed the Committee that these figures were based on reliable data in some places, and assumption in others. Norovirus was almost exclusively human; however a small percentage was caused by shellfish because they filtered raw sewage around our coasts. Norovirus was person to person spread, and likely person to person spread via foodstuffs. It was a measure of domestic hygiene. The critical control point was not getting it out of foodstuffs, he was unsure how it would be addressed, but it was a factor worth looking at.
25. The Chair opened the debate to observers.

DAAN KIEZEBRINK – ABERTAY UNIVERSITY

Daan Kiezebrink raised a query to Anna Whyte regarding the fifth slide of her presentation. Anna had mentioned that some samples taken referred to faecal samples of cattle, sheep and pig, and the other category was retail chicken. Daan asked if any faecal samples of chicken had been taken. It had been pointed out that there had been a substantial drop in cases due to the vaccination. How could it be explained that there was still so many cases through retail chicken and where did the infections come from.

Anna responded that there weren't any faecal samples taken as they were aware that campylobacter was in retail chicken. The reduction was actually in salmonella, rather than campylobacter. The industry had done a huge amount to try to increase bio-security on farms to improve salmonella and campylobacter content. They have been successful in improving salmonella, this was likely to be mainly due to the vaccination, but they still seem to have a problem with campylobacter. Campylobacter was years behind in scientific knowledge compared to salmonella, and they were just beginning to understand more about the complex organism campylobacter. They didn't know how campylobacter entered the food chain at the moment.

26. The Chair suggested that a fuller and further discussion on campylobacter could be pursued at a later date.
27. The Chair thanked John and Anna for the update on the situation, and the Committee for the detailed discussion.

Action – It was suggested by the Chair that a fuller and further discussion on campylobacter could be pursued at a later date.

ITEM 5

FSA SCOTLAND CONSULTATION – PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CHARGING ARRANGEMENTS AND CHARGING LEVELS FOR OFFICIAL MEAT CONTROLS CARRIED OUT IN SCOTLAND

28. The Chair welcomed Elspeth MacDonald, Head of Animal Food Chain and Novel Foods Branch, FSAS to the table.
29. **Charlotte Maltin declared an interest as employee of Quality Meat Scotland.**
30. **The Chair recognised that Charlotte Maltin was an employee of Quality Meat Scotland and informed her that so long as they did not get into specifics, the Committee welcomed her knowledge.**

31. The Chair introduced the paper by informing the audience of the stakeholder event which was held in the same venue the previous evening. SFAC had met with industry stakeholders to hear their views on the FSA Scotland Consultation: Proposed changes to the charging arrangements and charging levels for official meat controls carried out in Scotland.
32. Elspeth introduced the paper and informed the Committee that the consultation exercise would run until the 25 March 2009. The responses to the consultation would provide evidence and information for presenting to Ministers, and the final decision would be taken by Ministers. Elspeth invited the Committee to:
 - Consider points raised by industry representatives at the SFAC stakeholder meeting held the previous night.
 - Indicate how it wished to handle its response to the consultation.
 - Identify relevant stakeholders for further discussion on the impact of the proposals in Scotland.
33. The Chair thanked Elspeth for introducing the consultation. The Chair mentioned that when this had been discussed in May and July 2008, the Committee had been broadly supportive of moving to time based charging and increasing cost recover from the industry. However, the Committee wished to see more detail and the likely impact of the proposals before they were able to take a more informed view, and the Committee was still in this same position. The Chair opened the discussion to the Committee, asking for their observations from the discussions with stakeholders on the previous evening.
34. The Committee queried whether the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) was fit for purpose and value for money.
35. Elspeth responded that in parallel with the FSA Board wishing to increase cost recovery, the MHS was working very hard to reduce costs for carrying out the controls. There had been an extensive transformation programme of the MHS, to deliver a more streamlined and a more efficient official control system. The MHS was slightly ahead of its targets set by the FSA Board in terms of its operating costs. Elspeth mentioned it was important that the Committee was aware that the Agency's Board desire to increase the cost recovery from these controls would be running in parallel with the MHS being expected to make significant reductions of these costs, and the Board having detailed scrutiny of that process.
36. Committee members raised the following points, following the discuss the previous evening with industry stakeholders –
 - Committee members were hesitant about the issue due to lack of knowledge. However, they heard the previous evening that industry would like to work more with the MHS, to identify areas of inflexibility and duplication. If industry felt more confident that MHS was providing a more streamlined, tighter and more flexible service, then perhaps they would feel more comfortable with paying more. Seeing industry more as customers, if they were paying more towards it, then perhaps their views should be taken a bit more into account when streamlining the MHS.

- Committee members felt they did not have evidence of a streamlined MHS delivering a good service, irrespective of costs. On the back of that, they were looking at how we should change this costing, and it seemed almost back to front.
- The Committee mentioned that following industry views the previous evening, there was a general feeling of discomfort, within what they understood to be an efficient industry in Scotland. It was the Scottish industry perspective coming through, which was that the MHS should get its own house in order, before they start thinking about increasing charges.
- There needs to be a consideration of concerns on the impact on rural communities with smaller slaughter houses. If there were increased charges, what would this mean for rural slaughter houses?
- The Committee raised the issue of the EU exchange rate mechanism which was set specifically on 1 Sept 2008, and asked if this was taken at the wrong time. In the current exceptional economic circumstances, were there other methodologies of being able to check and spread the Euro rate over more dates over a period of time, to try to produce a sine-wave in the way charges are amended in line with Europe?
- Questions were also raised by stakeholders the previous evening surrounding specified risk material (SRM). If this was a public health measure, then as with other public health measures, should this not be paid for by the government within the public health block?
- Some of the controls were BSE controls, yet we were in a situation where we had moved from 38 months to 48 months for BSE testing. Did we need the same controls as we have currently got?

37. The Chair opened the debate to observers. The Chair clarified that the Committee would be responding to the consultation as an independent Advisory Committee.

- **GEOFF OGLE – BUSINESS DIRECTOR - MEAT HYGIENE SERVICE**

Geoff Ogle mentioned the two key questions that had been raised regarding whether MHS was fit for purpose and value for money. There were issues around the meaning of ‘fit for purpose’ and ‘value for money’. It needed to be recognised that the MHS was an administrative organisation, and that it delivered the law that had been applied and agreed by Parliament. The MHS didn’t devise the law, it just administered it. There was a difficult balance between customer service organisation and being a regulator.

Geoff was extremely pleased with the comments he had heard about working with the MHS. He was very keen that the MHS improve how they work with food business operators and their stakeholders, and felt this was essential in terms of going forward and delivering an efficient and fit for purpose MHS.

Geoff mentioned that the other thing they needed to question was what some of the drivers were around inefficiency, as this was not just around MHS. In relation to charging, throughput was one of those causes of inefficiency, as there was no incentive for food business operators in terms of improving

efficiency on a throughput basis. The MHS were sometimes struggling to get meetings with food business operators to discuss the issues.

- **IAN ANDERSON – SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION OF MEAT WHOLESALERS**

Ian Anderson mentioned that the comments made by the Committee members based on the discussions the previous evening were spot on, the Committee members had picked up the messages they were trying to get across. The food business operators, abattoirs and cutting plants in Scotland were very keen to have a good standard of hygiene, as this helps to sell Scotch meat.

Ian clarified they were in favour of the transformation, and were very keen to work with the FSA and MHS on the various aspects of this. The transformation was crucial to the future of the relationship between the industry and the regulatory authorities. However, he felt if this was not achieved, that they would be in a bad place.

Ian queried how fast the transformation would go ahead. Their view was that the charging increases should be deferred until transformation was completed, and the system was seen to be effective, efficient and working.

The Chair asked Ian to clarify if he was suggesting all proposed charges in the consultation. He asked whether Ian was sympathetic to some of the views last night, to find some other methodologies of achieving the same aim but spreading the load.

Ian clarified he thought the one that was inevitable was the EU minimum charge. The difficulty they had was the disparity between the two dates of when the Euro was set and when it applied to. The MHS had benefited to the expense of the industry. Could there be a way of adjusting the rate accordingly in-year?

- **NICK PAUL – SCOTTISH FARMERS MARKETS**

Nick Paul mentioned the Committee's comment regarding consideration of protection being given to rural businesses because the costs of cutting plants and game dealers would be passed to the consumer. The costs would make it difficult for justifying extra prices and it would have an impact on those producers. Could this be taken into account?

- **NORMAN LEASK – SCOTTISH CROFTING FOUNDATION**

Norman Leask disagreed that costs would come off the consumer, he felt the costs would come off the crofter. He queried whether they would look after the crofters, as the crofters would need substance. Norman recommended that the Committee speak to National Farmers Union Scotland and the crofting organisations, regarding the impact on crofters.

The Chair thanked Norman for his comments. The Chair recognised that if the charges go through, what the paper did not address was whether the charges stay with the reduction in profitability for the processors, did they get passed back to the farmer, pushed to the consumer, or would it be somewhere in the middle.

- **MARY LONGHORN**

Mary Longhorn queried whether the regulations would apply to the approved premises under MHS control, for example the larger butcher shops.

Elspeth MacDonald, FSAS, clarified that the proposals, if they were implemented, would apply to any premises that the MHS was responsible for carrying out official controls in.

Mary Longhorn commented that although it would be a time based system, many inspections in these type of premises would involve some vets coming in for a couple of hours, and other vets coming in for a full day. She would like there be some regulation on this.

The Chair informed Mary of that the discussion the previous evening with stakeholders, where the question was raised of the role of inspectors and vets in any of these environments in terms of what was required and what should be paid for. The Chair informed Mary her point was well made and encouraged her to respond to the consultation with her observations.

- **IAN ANDERSON – SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION OF MEAT WHOLESALERS**

Ian Anderson raised the point on SRM controls as when these were introduced, the processing industry was 100% behind them. They were needed at the time as health was at risk and consumer confidence had collapsed. There were no cases of BSE in Scotland last year, and 62 cases in the UK, declining by 50% each year. However, they were still left with the legacy of controls that were appropriate at the time, which are no longer as appropriate as they once were. Many of BSE controls had outlived their usefulness and they were addressing that as part of the optimisation project which was part of the transformation process. They needed this to be addressed much quicker than it was being done. They were paying for controls which were of questionable use in these times.

- **GEOFF OGLE – BUSINESS DIRECTOR - MEAT HYGIENE SERVICE**

Geoff Ogle reassured Ian Anderson regarding delivery of transformation, that he had been brought into MHS to implement transformation, so he had a personal interest in it. In term of the consultation and issues, it would helpful to try to separate out the issues that the MHS can and cannot control and influence. For example, the Euro rate was not an issue that the MHS controlled or influenced, although he appreciated the impact this had on food business operators.

However, in terms of pay and conditions, this was a big issue the MHS were addressing but it was a complicated and difficult process.

Geoff mentioned that he would be happy to set up a group with Scottish industry to get their concerns on the specific issues for Scotland, and what did they need to do around the Spanish practices.

38. The Chair thanked Geoff Ogle for those reassurances. Both the MHS and industry needed to work closely together and they both had to recognise the need for this and the urgency to do so. There was a separate issue regarding how appropriate the charging mechanism was, as in where they were now and where they may get to.
39. The Chair summed up the discussion on how the Committee would progress and handle the consultation response –
 - A sub group of 3 to 4 members of the Committee was required.
 - The sub group would meet with relevant stakeholders for further information and discussions on the impact of the proposals in Scotland
 - The sub group would decide on a response to the consultation, and the response would be taken to the SFAC meeting on the 17 March for discussion and final agreement from the Committee.

ACTION – A SFAC Charging Sub Group of 3 to 4 members of the Committee was required to be formed.

ACTION – The SFAC Charging Sub Group to speak to relevant stakeholders for further information and discussions on the impact of proposals in Scotland.

ACTION – Secretariat to arrange meetings for SFAC Charging Sub Group members with relevant stakeholders, for further information and discussions on the impact of proposals in Scotland.

ACTION – The SFAC Charging Sub Group to decide on a response to the consultation, and the response would be taken to the SFAC meeting on the 17 March for discussion and final agreement from the Committee.

ITEM 6 AOCB/PUBLIC SESSION

40. Following the former Deputy Chair of SFAC's departure, Professor Bill Reilly, the Chair introduced the discussion to the Committee for nominations and agreement on who should become the new Deputy Chair. It was agreed by the Committee that Dr David Cameron should be appointed as Deputy Chair with immediate effect.
41. The Chair introduced Peter Midgley, Head of the Local Authority Food Law Enforcement branch, FSAS to the table. Peter provided the Committee with a brief verbal update on the Agency's Scores on the Doors initiative, following the outcome of the open FSA Board meeting on the 10 December 2008.
42. Peter mentioned that the Committee had provided advice to the Agency in response to the consultation. On the 10 December, the FSA Board recommended continuation of the two tier scheme in Scotland and adoption of a six tier scheme in England,

Wales and Northern Ireland. The Board recommended that the schemes should apply to the catering and retail sectors, should be voluntary, and should incorporate mechanisms for rescoring and appeals. There would be a local authority support package to include training, IT and guidance, as well as a UK website to support both the scheme in Scotland, and the scheme elsewhere. There would also be a UK Steering Group to provide advice to the Agency. A letter was sent to the local authorities and other interested parties communicating this information in December.

Looking forward at a UK level, the most important priority was to establish a Steering Group and the Agency was progressing with invitations to prospective members of the group. The proposed structure would have 12 members including an independent Chair. There would one representative from Scotland and Peter reported that Jim Dixon had accepted an invitation to fulfil that role on the UK Steering Group.

There was recognition throughout the Agency that, for various structural reasons, Scotland would be likely to move faster than other parts of the UK.

The Scottish pilot project Steering Group had met on the 19 January. They considered the future of the Group, given that there would be a UK group, and the need for local authority guidance. The Steering Group was in favour of future liaison over the scheme taking place under the auspices of the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC) and had recommended that SFELC be approached with a proposal that the current steering group become a working group of that Committee. The Steering Group had also subsequently produced recommended guidance for local authorities for the operation of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme and Peter undertook to forward a copy to Secretariat for distribution to the Committee.

43. Moyra Burns publicly thanked the Steering Group for doing what they were asked to do within the proposed timescales, and producing the guidance document. Moyra agreed that a working group should be formed from the current Scottish steering group as they still had a lot to say.
44. The Chair thanked Peter and Moyra for the update. The Chair thanked the Committee for the work they had done and Moyra for chairing the Steering Group, which had achieved a good end result. The Chair asked for reports of progress to be given to the Committee every 6 months over the next two years.

ACTION – Peter Midgley to send the ‘Local Authority guidance on the operation of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme’ document to Secretariat electronically, for distribution to the Committee.

ACTION – Peter Midgley to give a report on progress to the Committee for the Food Hygiene Information Scheme, approximately every 6 months over the next two years.

45. The Committee was asked to note the information paper on FSA Scotland Proposed Communications Plan for 2009/10. This had been an action from the SFAC annual retreat in November.

46. The next meeting will be held on the 17 March 2009 at Apex Hotel City Quay in Dundee.

47. The meeting closed at 12:30.

ACTION – Provide a hard copy of the overheads for the Social Science Research Unit presentation to Committee members. Also, provide a copy of the overheads to the public on request.

Action – Following the Foodborne Disease in Scotland and associated FSAS Funded Research Agenda discussion, it was suggested by the Chair that a fuller and further discussion on campylobacter could be pursued at a later date.

ACTION – A SFAC Charging Sub Group of 3 to 4 members of the Committee was required to be formed.

ACTION – The SFAC Charging Sub Group to speak to relevant stakeholders for further information and discussions on the impact of proposals in Scotland.

ACTION – Secretariat to arrange meetings for SFAC Charging Sub Group members with relevant stakeholders, for further information and discussions on the impact of proposals in Scotland.

ACTION – The SFAC Charging Sub Group to decide on a response to the consultation, and the response would be taken to the SFAC meeting on the 17 March for discussion and final agreement from the Committee.

ACTION – Peter Midgley to send the ‘Local Authority guidance on the operation of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme’ document to Secretariat electronically, for distribution to the Committee.

ACTION – Peter Midgley to give a report on progress to the Committee for the Food Hygiene Information Scheme, approximately every 6 months over the next couple of years.