

Minutes of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee meeting held on 20 October 2022

Themed meeting held in Wrexham: The Food Scene - Looking Ahead

Present

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) members attending:

- Peter Price, Chair
- Alan Gardner
- Dr Philip Hollington
- Christopher Brereton OBE
- Helen Taylor
- Georgia Taylor
- Dr John Williams
- Jessica Williams

Food Standards Agency (FSA) officials attending:

- Julie Pierce – Director Wales, Information and Science
- Nathan Barnhouse – Director for Wales
- Sioned Fidler – Head of Communications, Welsh Language and Business Support
- Lucy Edwards – Business Manager
- Sarah Aza - Head of Local Authority Partnerships

Observers:

- Representatives from Flintshire LA
- Representatives from Powys LA
- Representatives from Denbighshire LA
- Representatives from Food Technology Centre
- Representatives from NFU Cymru
- Representatives from North Wales Council
- Representatives from Wrexham LA
- Representatives from Village Dairy
- Representatives from Conwy LA
- Representatives from Mynydd Mostyn Dairy
- Representatives from Sabor de Amor
- Representatives from BASC

Presenters:

- Rebecca Pomeroy - Wrexham County Borough Council
- Robert Preston - Wrexham County Borough Council
- Clive Woolley - Rowan Foods
- Gareth Parry - Farmers Union of Wales
- Dr Robert Elias - Bangor University

- Jason Murphy - Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) Cymru

1. Introductions and apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

2. Declaration of interests

2.1 Phil Hollington declared that he has taken an additional external examiner position at IBERS and that his wife is no longer Chief Executive of Dyfodol I'r Iaith. Alan Gardner declared that he is a member of FUW and a non-executive Director of FUW Ltd.

3. The Food Scene: Looking ahead

3.1 Rebecca Pomeroy and Robert Preston, Wrexham CBC

The presentation gave overview of Wrexham County Borough Councils food safety and trading standards functions. There are approximately 1300 food premises from small caterers to large manufacturers registered with Wrexham as well as 16 approved premises. Robert gave an insight into the Primary Authority Partnership relationships that Wrexham hold with 5 different food businesses, explaining that officers work with the businesses to assist with the development of food safety management systems, traceability, training and review and assessment processes in order to provide assured advice. Robert gave an overview of the Primary Authority user group in Wales which is used to share best practice, conduct peer reviews and coordinate training. The presentation ended with future challenges for Local Authorities, concerns were funding for LAs as a result of cost saving exercises across government and public services as well as changes in the regulatory environment which could lead to additional pressure on resource and workloads.

3.2 Clive Wooley, Rowan Foods - Challenges and opportunities for food businesses

The presentation gave an insight into the business. Rowan Foods operate from 3 sites with over 2500 employees mainly based in North Wales. The company produces over 3million ready meals per week, supplying major retailers such as Morrisons, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Asda. Clive explained that the current challenges for the company are increasing costs of supplies and produce as well as the impact on supply chains due to the war in the Ukraine and Avian Influenza. These factors are leading to further challenges in developing wholesome nutritious food at a reasonable cost. Future challenges are the changing climate impacting crop growth, the continuing economic crisis and consumers seeking lower cost products, changing diet and health with the increase of alternative proteins and the ongoing consequences of EU exit. Clive commended the support and advice that the business received from Wrexham LA.

3.3 Gareth Parry, Farmers Union of Wales (FUW)

The presentation demonstrated the rising costs for the agricultural sector for commodities such as fertiliser and feed while prices received for livestock have now started to plateau. Gareth explained that there are opportunities to be sought by inputting into the Agriculture (Wales) Bill this will give farmers and the farming unions the opportunity to shape and fit the objectives and needs for Welsh farming and agriculture. FUW also sees the opportunity to influence the ability to produce food while looking after the environment and tackling climate change. Gareth informed that proposals for future agricultural support are being reformed and emphasised that in England, farmers have started to see cuts of 25%. The Basic Payment System is currently guaranteed in

Wales until 2023 but from 2024 onwards the situation is not so clear and the FUW are consulting with Welsh Government on the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

3.4 Dr Robert Elias, Bangor University Bio-composites Centre

The presentation detailed the research that is being conducted at the Centre around sustainable food packaging. The centre has a pilot unit where manufacturers can make materials and trial them for use. Dr Elias informed that the food industry is one of the biggest users of plastic materials, with almost 40% of food packaging being made of plastic. The Plastics pact aims to ensure that all plastic used has a 30% recycled content, this is challenging for the food sector as considerations need to be made with contact materials. The centre's Smart Sustainable packaging project is working with project partners Dunbia, BSF and others to develop a new approach to food packaging and develop a high barrier performance product which is easily recyclable.

3.5 Jason Murphy, Advanced Research Manufacturing Centre (AMRC) Cymru

AMRC is a state-of-the-art technology centre based in North Wales, funded by Welsh Government, Airbus and the University of Sheffield. Jason informed of the centre's work with Airbus on their 'Wing of tomorrow' programme, which uses aerospace engineering to help other manufacturers achieve advanced manufacturing ambitions, such as improving food packaging. The presentation also detailed the centre's current work on their Polytag project, focussing on improving the amount of plastic being recycled in Wales. Packaging is tagged to make it simple to identify and sort for recycling using ultrasonic light, which then organises and sorts the items by suppliers or materials. They are also collaborating with food manufacturers to develop cutting-edge technologies that will automate some aspects of food production, potentially reducing food waste.

4. Chair's report (Paper 22/10/02)

4.1 The Chair gave an oral update on his report and informed that due to the National Period of Mourning, the September Board meeting and associated meetings and visits in Belfast were cancelled, with the Business Committee and Board meetings being held virtually on 23 and 26 September respectively.

5. Director's report (Paper 22/10/03)

5.1 The Director gave an oral update on his report and informed of the successful summer engagement events at the Royal Welsh Show and National Eisteddfod as well as upcoming changes to the FSA Directorates.

6. Any other business

6.1 Members noted that the next business meeting would be on the 1 December and the next themed meeting will be held on 8 February 2023 in Cardiff.

6.2 The Chair closed the meeting.