

## Pigmeat Supply Chain Task Force – Improving Pig Herd Health Sub-Group

### Note of Fifth Meeting held on Friday 15 January 2010

#### Present:

Richard Lister, JC Lister (Chair)  
Chris Franklin, Yorkshire Forward  
Zoë Davies, NPA  
Pete Bown, PVS  
Marcus Bates, BPA  
[REDACTED] consultant to BPEX  
[REDACTED] Defra  
[REDACTED] Defra  
[REDACTED] Task Force Secretary

#### Apologies for Absence:

Andrew Thornber, Morrisons  
[REDACTED], VLA  
Digby Scott, Pig World  
Dan Tucker, Cambridge University  
[REDACTED] consultant to BPEX  
Howard Revell, BQP/Tulip  
Jan Anderson, Yorkshire Forward  
Derek Armstrong, BPEX  
Tom Allen, Young NPA  
[REDACTED] consultant to BPEX  
[REDACTED], Defra

#### 1. Introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed those present and noted apologies for absence.

#### 2. Minutes and Matters Arising from Last Meeting

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September were approved and adopted as a true and accurate record. Chris Franklin suggested that it would be difficult for all RDAs to take responsibility for contacting smallholders (para 3.11 of the last meeting note) as they lacked contact information. Marcus Bates explained that the intention was really to involve RDAs in engaging smallholders – for example, by providing funding for regional training meetings. Chris Franklin said that, in principle, it might be possible to access RDPE funding – subject to seeing detailed proposals. There were no other matters arising from the last meeting that were not covered by the meeting agenda. Richard Lister reported that the Task Force was content with the Sub-Group's progress.

#### 3. Workplan and workstreams progress review

##### *WS1: Review BPHS*

3.1 Pete Bown reported that the workstream was on target. The results of the BPHS survey had been passed to BPEX, and the workstream team were now looking at possible improvements to suggest. That work would be completed with a written report to BPEX by 31 January, at which point the BPEX BPHS Steering Group would take the initiative forward. Although the future of BPHS may not look optimistic, the work of the Sub-Group had provided a useful input to the review. **Action: Pete Bown** to prepare written report to BPEX.

##### *WS2: Developing an economic model*

3.2 The Sub-Group noted that this workstream had been completed. The Model was available, and would be rolled-out via the BPEX KT Team and the Allied Industry Team.

##### *WS3: Produce bio-security protocols*

3.3 Although the content of the workstream was progressing, with bio-security tools being developed, the process of adopting biosecurity practice within the Certificates of Competence regime remained slow. However, the recent acceptance of the initiative by vets was a very welcome development. The Sub-Group agreed that the importance of the protocol (eg in being embraced within Assurance) meant that it was more important to secure its robustness than to meet an arbitrary delivery deadline.

3.4 The work on contingency planning was being taken forward within the context of Defra's Core Group on Classical Swine Fever. Despite the Group's name, it did not restrict itself to CSF only – it considered all pig diseases. A draft on-farm contingency plan was with Defra for consideration. **Action:** NPA would assume responsibility for continuing the workstream after the Task Force had ended.

3.5 There had been correspondence between industry and Defra about the approvals process for new disinfectants. It was reported that Defra did not see the need to review the system.

#### *WS4: Review transport washing facilities*

3.6 The Sub-Group noted that all 17 abattoirs had engaged positively in the review survey. A schedule of performance indicators had been developed. It was necessary to review performance scoring methodology, and BPEX would be undertaking visits to all abattoirs to agree bespoke improvement plans for each site. The British Road Haulage Association had been consulted, but it was essentially a matter for individual site managers to achieve the required performance at their sites (albeit working closely with hauliers, and others). **Action:** BPEX to pursue improvement plans with individual abattoirs.

#### *WS5: Address Smallholder Issues*

3.7 Marcus Bates emphasized that engagement with smallholders continued to be hampered by insufficient access to data held by multiple organisations. That had been experienced first-hand earlier that week when he had participated in a Defra CSF preparedness exercise. No single organisation had total data relating to the existence/location of small pig units/breeders. Richard Lister confirmed that he had raised the issue of Animal Health's disinterest in helping to resolve the problem, but still Animal Health appeared to lack the will to engage. On a positive note, the BPEX movements database (AMLS) was showing signs of increased smallholder engagement.

3.8 Another positive step was NPA's approval towards the development of an appropriate assurance scheme, "Assurance Lite", for rare breeds/small scale pig keepers. Such a scaled-down scheme would make it easier for these keepers to register, and in doing so allow the larger, commercial sector to identify and work with them. Here again, Animal Health could play an important role via the data it holds on the Breed at Risk Register. It would be helpful if Animal Health would draw up procedures for accessing their/Defra's database(s). **Action:** [REDACTED] suggested that he and Marcus Bates discussed the matter further, outside the meeting, with a view towards more effective engagement of Animal Health.

3.9 At the very local level, Chris Franklin suggested that the Yorkshire Forward project might offer the opportunity to engage smallholders (eg the YF 'clusters' could be used for joint meetings with smallholders).

3.10 It was clear that the 'smallholder workstream' would run well beyond the life of the Task Force. **Action: the British Pig Association** would assume ongoing responsibility for driving it – not least in their role as contractor for the Breeds at Risk Register. BPA would work closely with others, including NPA, BPEX and assurance schemes.

#### *WS6: Adopting EU wide best practice*

3.11 Richard Lister up-dated the Sub-Group on this workstream. Some specific lessons from mainland Europe had been identified (eg in the area of abattoir washing facilities), which had been fed into other relevant workstreams. But there were two principle observations worth stressing about drawing conclusions from practice in mainland Europe. The first was that the structure of the supply chain in Europe was such that all parties to it played a more prominent role in herd health issues than was the case in the UK. It was not therefore a straightforward matter of transferring continental practice to the UK. Second, and more importantly, it was not to be assumed that continental practice was superior to UK practice – even if on first sight the findings suggested otherwise. An example here might be the larger litter rates achieved on the continent, which may not necessarily lead to better cost/quality effectiveness. Further work would be required in assessing different practices before rushing to adopt them in the UK. Richard Lister thought that the developing structure of the pig industry across Europe – with the likes of Tulip and Vion becoming pan European in their operations – would provide the main vehicle for identifying best practice suitable for transferring between different countries/regions of Europe.

#### *WS7: Facilitate Efficient Roll Out of Regional Pig Health Incentive*

3.12 The Sub-Group noted that this workstream had been completed. The hurdles identified at the start of the Task Force had been overcome, and roll-out was now progressing. Yorkshire Forward was keen to progress Phase 2, though RDA funding had become an issue. Chris Franklin stressed that "making the collaboration work" would be a key phrase going forward; and roll-out was now largely in the hands of pig producers (coordinated by BPEX).

#### *WS8: R&D Herd Health Priorities*

3.13 It had been reported at the last meeting that this workstream was complete. No further action was required by the Sub-Group.

### 4. Driving Work Beyond the Life of the Task Force

4.1 The Sub-Group noted that in each case where further work was required to complete the outputs and outcomes of its workplan, owners had been identified and had agreed to maintain progress towards delivery. It was not considered necessary, therefore, to continue with the Sub-Group structure after the end of the Task Force initiative. That said, it would be helpful to have a mechanism for providing an overview of ongoing progress as well as identifying synergies across the board. Derek Armstrong, though absent from the meeting, had suggested the Pig Health and Welfare Council might offer a useful mechanism – even if it had to be evolved with revised membership and terms of reference. The Sub-Group noted that the PH&WC was now a number of years old, and that it may be helpful – in any event – to review its role going forward. The Sub-Group agreed to invite Derek Armstrong to prepare a short review paper with possible options for future operation of PH&WC. Such a paper should be considered by the Sub-Group and, if adopted, offered with recommendations to

BPEX (as Chair and manager of the Council). **Action: Derek Armstrong** to prepare review paper for consideration by the Sub-Group.

## 5. Final Task Force Report

5.1 It was anticipated that the Task Force would meet for the last time on 1 February, and that the initiative would close with a short report. Each Sub-Group Chairman had been asked to provide a short (ie 1 to 2 pages) written contribution on the work of his Sub-Group: essentially recording main achievements, their benefits/rationale, and how any ongoing work would be managed. The Sub-Group agreed that there were no points to inject into that contribution that had not been covered during the meeting. Richard Lister said he planned to draft some text and circulate it to the Sub-Group for comment by 22 January. **Action: Richard Lister** to circulate draft text and **Sub-Group members** to comment by return.

## 6. Communications and Publicity

6.1 Duncan Prior explained that the last meeting of the Task Force had considered a 'core script' for use in handling media and disseminating key messages about its work and achievements. It was anticipated that the next meeting of the Task Force on 1 February would adopt a final 'core script' that all participants in the work of the Task Force initiative could use to ensure consistent messages when handling any enquiries from the media or elsewhere. **Action: Task Force Secretary** to circulate final 'core script' to Sub-Group when available.

## 7. Issues Log and Risk register

7.1 The Sub-Group agreed that the single issue logged remained relevant and open, noting that the Government had recently taken action to help address the matter of rural broadband access. It would probably take some time (years) to see the issue fully resolved, but the outcome was outside the control of the Task Force. The two risks cited on the Risk Register were related to the work of the Sub-Group itself. Neither had materialized, and with the ending of the Task Force/Sub-Group, could now be closed.

## 8. Next Steps/Conclusion

8.1 The Sub-Group agreed that it did not need to meet again physically, but wished to have a final conference-call discussion after the 1 February Task Force meeting. That would provide the opportunity for the Chair to give feedback from the Task Force, and also to consider the paper that had been commissioned from Derek Armstrong on the future of the Pig Health and Welfare Council. **Action: Task Force Secretary** to arrange for final telephone conference to be set up before the end of February.

Task Force Secretariat  
January 2010