

# Minutes of Board Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025

## Quality Meat Scotland Minutes of the 90th Meeting of the Board 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 Macdonald Norwood Hall Hotel & Spa

### **Present:**

Kate Rowell (Chair)

A. Irvine

A. Ivory

A. McGowan

C. Ruxton

E. Buckby

G. Wallace

J. Duncan Grant

N. Jeffrey

### **In Attendance:**

S. Millar (Chief Executive)

D. Phillips (Standards Officer)

P. Byrne (Accountant)

### **Minutes:**

Laurie Adam

### **Apologies:**

Item No.	Detail	Action
1.0	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b>  Kate Rowell welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies.	
2.0	<b>Additions to the agenda</b>  There were no additions to the agenda.	
3.0	<b>Declaration of interests in any agenda item</b>  The following Board members declared an interest as being Quality Assurance members and levy payers however these did not conflict with any agenda item: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Niall Jeffrey</li><li>▪ Kate Rowell</li><li>▪ Adrian Ivory</li><li>▪ Ann Irvine</li><li>▪ Emma Buckby</li></ul> Andy McGowan declared an interest due to him being a member on the Board of SAOS who established FIA.	
4.0	<b>Minutes of Board meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b>  The minutes from the meeting on the 26 <sup>th</sup> June were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.	

5.0	<p><b><i>Commercial in Confidence - Update on Action Points</i></b></p> <p>The Board reviewed the actions from the previous meeting and all were completed.</p>	
6.0	<p><b>Chairs Report</b></p> <p>Kate Rowell highlighted key information to the Board from the Chair's Report and updated them on activities since the last meeting in June, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on Board recruitment.</li> <li>• Wash up meeting so see what worked and what could work better in terms of recruitment and application process.</li> </ul> <p><u>Action – Equality Act 2010</u></p> <p>Board members to respond to Kate's email to provide information to ScotGov.</p>	QMS Board
8.0	<p><b>Chief Executives Report</b></p> <p>Sarah Millar provided an update on the Chief Executives Report.</p> <p>Sarah discussed border restrictions and bluetongue restrictions which affected breeding ewes due to the timing. She shared that this could have long term effects on Scottish flock sizes going forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internal Risk – Staff Numbers</li> <li>- SSP Trademark Challenges</li> </ul> <p>Sarah provided an update on new staff members: Laurie Adam, Louise Thompson, Abby Gouldie and Iona Smith.</p> <p>Sarah provided an update on the work QMS are carrying out with Ceannas. She shared this would consist of a 3-workshop programme. This work will incorporate the 2025 staff engagement survey.</p>	
9.0	<p><b>Financial Report 5 months to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2025</b></p> <p>Paul provided commentary on the financial report for 5 months to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2025.</p> <p>The following topics were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cattle sheep scheme</li> <li>- Other schemes</li> <li>- Expenditure</li> </ul> <p>Debbie Phillips will conduct monthly budget meetings with the heads of each department.</p> <p>An update was provided to the Board on balance sheets and redistributed levy.</p>	
10.0	<p><b>Review of Reserve's Policy</b></p> <p>Paul provided an update on the review of the reserves policy.</p>	

	<p><u>Action: Paul to provide an updated review of reserves policy</u></p> <p>The Board discussed the level of risk and agreed to keep this at medium level and also agreed to review this again at the November Board meeting.</p>	Paul
11.0	<p><b>Review of Levy Deposits</b></p> <p>Paul provided an update on the review of Levy Deposits.</p> <p>He shared that he has updated the amounts that have been collected by way of levy by each of the processors during 2024/2025.</p> <p>Kate thanked Paul for his time. Paul left the meeting.</p>	
13.0	<p>QMS Committee Meeting Updates</p> <p><u>Sheep Industry Leadership Group 19<sup>th</sup> August 2025</u></p> <p>Kate Rowell provided a summary to the committee on the most recent meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10 group members attended our online meeting in August. The key focus of the meeting was to have synthesised asks for Scottish Government on their RESAS Strategic Research Programme.</li> <li>- The meeting started with discussing a previous action on skill development. Recently Lantra have been in touch for the group's input as they have secured a workplan from SG to focus on skill development in the Scottish sheep sector. We gathered the group member's views on skill gaps and brainstormed types of courses which would address them. Highlights included a basic entry level beginner course, a follow-on advanced course including nutrition, record keeping, people management. Also, business skills, animal health and welfare, and data management were discussed.</li> <li>- The group moved onto the research asks part of the agenda and using Slido, diseases including surveillance and social change to vaccination, nutrition, and adaptation to climate change were revealed as key priorities. We delved deeper into specific diseases and discussed scab, lameness, and parasites.</li> <li>- Key actions – Kate and Heather had a follow up meeting with Lantra (Thurs 21st Aug), Kate attended a SF&amp;D meeting on research asks (Tues 19th Aug) and Louise is going to utilise this information in QMS's consultation response on the 2027-2032 draft strategy which is due at the end of Oct.</li> <li>- Next meeting will be held on Tues 11th Nov in Perth where we will focus on sheep productivity and profitability.</li> </ul> <p><u>Brands Integrity Advisory Group 20<sup>th</sup> August 2025</u></p> <p>Carrie provided a summary to the committee on the previous meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brands Integrity Advisory Group met on the 20<sup>th</sup> August. This was a hybrid meeting.</li> <li>- The group discussed progress on the UKFAR and Sarah would be uploading all progress to the UKFAR portal.</li> <li>- Kathryn provided an update on where the Brands Integrity Team are with the Cattle &amp; Sheep Standards and a full review about to begin on the Pig Scheme.</li> </ul>	

## Outcomes

- Discussion on how QMS can manage data and how this could be managed going forward.
- Kathryn and Emma are creating a document of learnings and how things have evolved over the last few years to aid in writing the tender document.
- FIA to demonstrate their portal to the Brands Integrity Team.
- Meeting to be set up between chair of BIAG and Appeals Panel.

The Board discussed potential implications and how QMS could better hold and access this data going forward, which would be relevant at the time of new tender and if it would be worthwhile creating a bespoke data portal.

## Remuneration Committee 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025

Adrian provided a summary on the most recent meeting:

- The Remuneration Committee met on 22<sup>nd</sup> September. This was a virtual meeting and attended by Adrian Ivory (Chair), Kate Rowell, Jilly Duncan Grant, Sarah Millar, Debbie Phillips and Laurie Adam.
- The committee discussed QMS' Neonatal Care Policy in relation to the current QMS handbook. The committee agreed that the Neonatal Care Policy should be enhanced rather than statutory to minimise any chance of discrimination going forward.

The committee reviewed changes to mileage expenses that took effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

The committee discussed Chair and Board Member Day rates and expense claim rates. Sarah provided an update on the ScotGov Framework Agreement.

## Audit and Risk Committee Debrief with Auditors

Ann provided an update on the meeting with Audit Scotland and the Audit and Risk Committee.

## Action: Debbie Phillips to discuss the plan going forward with Audit Scotland

Debbie Phillips to contact Audit Scotland with a plan going forward and provide preferred timings of the audit.

**Debbie**

## Pig Industry Leadership Group 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025

Andy provided a summary to the board on the most recent meeting:

- 9 group members attended our September meeting at the Dakota Edinburgh where the main focus was gathering feedback on the SSP refresh work led by Marketing team.
- Emma then went through Red Tractor tiered welfare standards and timings with Pig Standards Review. Overall, the group are comfortable integrating into one scheme with an outdoor bred module but have a slight concern on how to differentiate to the customer.
- After lunch, the group discussed adaptive farrowing with NFUS providing an update following a roundtable meeting had with Minister Fairlie.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grace Webster and Jill Thomson provided pig health updates including data from the abattoir pig monitoring, PRRS control programme and wider health and welfare issues such as African Swine Flu and post weaning diarrhoea.</li> <li>- The group will meet again in January in time for the next phase of the brand development.</li> </ul>	
14.0	<p><b>Annual Review of Membership of QMS Committees</b></p> <p>Kate provided an update on the current QMS Committees and asked the Board for suggestions on new members for QMS Committees</p> <p><b>Action: Butchers Marketing Advisory Group</b></p> <p>Board to provide potential suggestions for new members for the Butchers Marketing Advisory Group</p> <p><b>Cattle and Sheep Standards Setting Body</b></p> <p><b>Processors Standard Setting Body</b></p>	QMS Board
16.0	<p><b>Strategic Indicators Update</b></p> <p><b>SMT in attendance</b></p> <p>Sarah provided an update on strategic indicators update. Sarah shared an update on carbon audits.</p>	
17.0	<p><b>Update Report &amp; Implementation Plans 2025/ 2026</b></p> <p><b>SMT in attendance</b></p> <p><b>Corporate Services</b></p> <p>Debbie Phillips provided an update on the Corporate Services highlights and challenges. This included:</p> <p><b>Highlights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2024/25 Annual accounts now laid with Parliament and published</li> <li>- Annual Cyber Essentials Plus Accreditation regained</li> <li>- Further development of our people work and additional resource in place for next 6 months to support delivery</li> <li>- Department restructure to help provide long term resilience</li> <li>- Gained some admin temp cover to support team short term</li> </ul> <p><b>Business Development</b></p> <p>Tom Gibson provided an update on the Business Development highlights and challenges. This included:</p> <p><b>Highlights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RHS – engagement with retailers &amp; processors</li> <li>- Foodservice event in the Netherlands with processor &amp; G&amp;B – surf &amp; turf lunch for one hundred restauranteurs</li> <li>- Introductory meeting with processor &amp; SDI China, following first consignment of eight containers to China in August</li> </ul>	

- Results published of first two genetics projects: sheep breeding strategies and Essie flocks use of genetics to identify elite breeding stock. Emma was interviewed on STV news & also included in Scottish Farmer
- Iona Smith recruited to replace Maura Wilson as MF Regional Advisor
- Private slaughter - small processors in the process of applying
- Anuga planning progressing well

### **Marketing**

Emma Heath provided an update on the Marketing highlighted and challenges. This included:

#### **Highlights**

##### **CATEGORY DEVELOPMENT**

- Some key pieces of research completed with other levy bodies including Price Elasticity study and Gen Z deep dive
- Butchers Deep Dive Research very insightful

##### **BRANDS INTEGRITY**

- C&S Standards are with the printers and Pig Standards review now underway
- Appeals panel meeting with live test case
- The new QMS traceability checker has been released to Auction Markets and Processors, and feedback so far has been very positive

##### **BRAND TEAM**

- Summer WYKYK campaign performance exceeded plan with further positive impact on brand health tracking measures
- The most successful Royal Highland Show in the history of QMS
- STV Brand Story with the Struthers
- C&S Standards finally away to print after last minute UKAS requests/amends
- Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb trademark clarity at last!
- Getting ahead of ourselves with planning of Xmas and Q4 activity
- Brand architecture work almost complete – new MIS logo

Emma presented examples of the new Make It Scotch Logo which the Board appreciated.

### **Communications and External Affairs**

Holly McLennan provided an update on the Communications and External Affairs highlights and challenges. This included:

#### **Highlights**

##### **Meating Our Potential campaign phase 1**

- Reached 3m
- Front page national and Agri trade media
- 5% organic social media engagement rate
- 28 pledge signatories including ScotGov and UK Government leaders

	<p><u>Meating Our Potential campaign phase 2 development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Industry (producer and career toolkits - Essence Mediacom research) and political engagement (farm tour across parliamentary regions ahead of Holyrood election)</li> </ul> <p><u>Meat Voucher Scheme / Tasty Little Weeks back</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 220 applications</li> <li>- Pre-summer 10k pupils engaged</li> </ul> <p><u>Eat to Compete</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Renewed focus on young women and girls</li> </ul> <p><u>Consultation period</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10 responses in first half of year</li> </ul> <p><u>New starts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Louise Thompson, External Affairs Manager</li> <li>- Abby Goldie, Community Engagement Coordinator</li> </ul> <p>Holly shared that Tracy Martin has developed a reputation strategy and communication strategy.</p> <p>Holly shared that any community or base can access information and lift any relevant info from the eat to compete campaign.</p> <p>Emma Heath shared that Kirsty MacDonald and Tracy Martin have been in discussion with Team Scotland to see if we can get involved in nutrition.</p>	
18.0	<p><b>Game Changer Projects</b></p> <p><b>SMT in attendance</b></p> <p>Tom had good conversations with meat eating quality. Data was shared that was useful. This will contribute to the supply chain work.</p> <p><u>Action: Holly to review Facebook comments on baselining project (Net Zero)</u></p>	Holly
19.0	<p><b>Update on UKGI and Trademarks</b></p> <p><b>SMT in attendance</b></p> <p>Emma Heath provided an update on UKGI and Trademarks.</p> <p><b>UK GI Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specifications were signed off by UKAS at the end of June 2025</li> <li>- Draft versions were submitted as a draft to DEFRA for feedback</li> <li>- During a meeting at the end of August, DEFRA confirmed to Emma that they were still reviewing the spec, and that a meeting between UKAS, DEFRA and QMS would be beneficial</li> </ul>	

20.0	<p><b>Cattle Numbers Update</b></p> <p><b>SMT in attendance</b></p> <p>Iain MacDonald provided an update on cattle supplies and beef market update.</p>	
21.0	<p><b>UK Farm Assurance Review Update</b></p> <p>Sarah provided an update on the UK Farm Assurance Review. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sarah shared that the report is due in 3 weeks' time</li> <li>- Federation of farm assurance schemes meeting due to take place mid-October</li> <li>- Sarah had a discussion around standardising assurance schemes but feedback that this would not be appropriate</li> </ul>	
22.0	<p><b>Proposed New Framework Agreement</b></p> <p>Sarah presented slides on the proposed new framework agreement.</p> <p>She shared what the framework agreement is a formal document that sets out the governance and accountability arrangements between and NDPB and its sponsoring government department in the UK.</p> <p>Sarah shared that ScotGov have reviewed framework agreements and there has been a change with how sponsor teams engage with NDPB's. Sarah also shared that there are now formal monthly meetings that take place.</p> <p><u>Action: Board to review the framework agreement</u></p> <p>Board to review the framework agreement at the Board Planning Day Session 1 and highlight any concerns they have with the framework agreement.</p>	<b>QMS Board</b>
23.0	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	
24.0	<p><b>Chairs Semi-Closed Session</b></p>	
25.0	<p><b>Chairs Closed Session</b></p>	
26.0	<p><b>Close</b></p>	