

Quality Meat Scotland
Minutes of the 89th Meeting of the Board
26th June 2025
Macdonald Inchyra Hotel & Spa

Present:

Kate Rowell (Chair)
A. Irvine
A. Ivory
A. McGowan
C. Ruxton
E. Buckby
G. Wallace
I. Bentley
J. Duncan Grant
N. Jeffrey
S. Jarron

In Attendance:

S. Millar (Chief Executive)
D. Phillips (Standards Officer)
P. Byrne (Accountant)

Minutes:

Laurie Adam

Apologies:

Item No.	Detail	Action
1.0	<p>Welcome & Apologies</p> <p>Kate Rowell welcomed everyone to the meeting. There was no apologies.</p>	
2.0	<p>Additions to the agenda</p> <p>There were no additions to the agenda.</p>	
3.0	<p>Declaration of interests in any agenda item</p> <p>The following Board members declared an interest as being Quality Assurance members and levy payers however these did not conflict with any agenda item:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Niall Jeffrey▪ Kate Rowell▪ Adrian Ivory▪ Ann Irvine▪ Emma Buckby <p>Ian Bentley declared an interest as being on the Board of Scotbeef Ltd.</p> <p>Andy McGowan declared an interest due to him being a member on the Board of SAOS who established FIA.</p> <p>Scott Jarron declared an interest as a levy payer.</p>	

4.0	<p>Minutes of Board meeting on 24th April 2025</p> <p>The minutes from the meeting on the 24th April were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
5.0	<p><i>Commercial in Confidence - Update on Action Points</i></p> <p>The Board reviewed the actions from the previous meeting and all were completed.</p>	
6.0	<p>Chairs Report</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 April, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meating our Potential Campaign • Discussions on Climate Change Committees within Scottish Government <p>The Board discussed the impact of red meat consumption on climate change and young people, as well as issues around government forestry targets.</p>	
7.0	<p>Chief Executives Report</p> <p>Sarah Millar highlighted key information to the Board from her report updating them on activities since the last meeting in April.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview on Risk • Meating our Potential <p>It was discussed that this campaign has been very well received.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing Update • General <p>Sarah highlighted that it has been an extremely busy time for the team recently due to staffing issues and busy news cycles, globally, whilst planning for the Royal Highland Show.</p> <p>The stand at Highland Sheep won the best indoor trade stand award.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Audit Update • Biannual meeting with Roy Branning <p>The following issues were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitality, alcohol and staff expenses policies • QMS Governance • Objectives of QMS being an NDPB • Salary framework 	

	<p>Kate Rowell wished to place on record a thank you to the whole QMS staff in their hard work and dedication during the Royal Highland show.</p> <p><u>Action: Letter of thanks to QMS staff</u></p> <p>Sarah Millar and Kate Rowell to write a letter of thanks to send out to QMS staff for their efforts during the Royal Highland Show.</p>	<p>Sarah Kate</p>
<p>8.0</p>	<p>Financial Report 1 month to 30th April 2025 To include update on 5 Year Comparison</p> <p>Paul Byrne presented the financial report for the month to 30th April 2025.</p>	
<p>9.0</p>	<p>Approval of Annual Report and Accounts 2025/ 2026</p> <p>Ann Irvine provided an update on the Annual Report and Accounts for 2025/2026. Kate shared that this document was significantly more interesting and readable than previous years' documents. Ian suggested to change the term 'staff' to 'departmental teams' going forward.</p> <p>The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts 2024/ 2025.</p> <p>Debbie confirmed that Sarah Millar will sign the report and accounts electronically at this meeting. Audit Scotland will sign and then send to Scottish government. Scottish Government will send submission to Cabinet Secretary who will agree for it to be laid in parliament. Once laid in parliament, it is in the public domain.</p>	
<p>10.0</p>	<p>Review of Reserve's Policy – <i>Discussion not required</i></p> <p>For information only.</p>	
<p>11.0</p>	<p>Fraud, Theft and Bad Debt Report</p> <p>Paul provided an update on the Fraud, Theft and Bad Debt Report. He shared that there was nothing to report.</p>	
<p>12.0</p>	<p>Legal Costs</p> <p>Sarah Millar highlighted key information to the Board in relation to legal costs.</p>	
<p>14.0</p>	<p>Board Succession</p> <p>Kate Rowell provided an update to the Board on the appointment of new Board members. Kate shared that interviews would potentially commence on the first week in September. She confirmed that the newly appointed Board Members would not be in place for the September Board Meeting but would likely be in position in time for the November Board Meeting.</p> <p>Kate Rowell shared with the Board various changes to various Committee members and Chairs of Committees.</p>	

	<p><u>Action: Brands Integrity Group Invites</u> Debbie Phillips to invite Carrie and Niall to the next Brands Integrity Committee Meeting.</p> <p>All changes to Committee Members and Chairs of Committees were approved by the Board.</p>	Debbie
15.0	<p>Draft Board Meeting & Planning Dates 2026/ 2027</p> <p>A discussion was had on board dates and whether to move the April and June meetings going forward. The Board agreed to keep the meetings dates as they currently stand.</p>	
16.0	<p>Quality Assurance Applications/ Withdrawals Report 2024/ 2025</p> <p>Emma Heath in attendance</p> <p>Emma Heath provided the Board with updated and highlighted specific trends. This included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction of travel is pleasing, and applications have increased overall. • Most withdrawals were caused by those who have ceased trading / have no stock. • Cattle and Sheep Scheme – 65% of total withdrawals were cause by four key areas including cease to trading, change of activity, no stock and unable to contact. • 20% of those withdrew due to no financial benefit. • 75% of members rated the scheme 3/5 or above with 48% likely to recommend the scheme. <p>Emma shared that the Marketing team are already considering how to better communicate with members. This has included considering highlighting the benefits of being a member of the scheme, videos, blogs, social media posts, newsletters and continue with auction mart pop ups.</p> <p><u>Action: New Quality Assurance Applications</u></p> <p>Emma Heath to integrate new contracts and confirm with new Quality Assurance applications their reason for applying.</p>	Emma
17.0	<p>Approval of Cattle & Sheep Standards 2025</p> <p>Emma Heath in attendance</p> <p>Emma Heath provided an update to the Board on the Cattle & Sheep Standards 2025.</p> <p>The Board approved the Cattle and & Sheep Standards for 2025.</p> <p><u>Action: Animal Health and Welfare Plan</u></p> <p>Communicate to vets there is an Animal Health and Welfare Plan template.</p>	Emma

18.0	<p>Strategic Indicators Update</p> <p>SMT in attendance</p> <p>SMT provided the Board with an update on the current stance of ASDA, who confirmed it is going to focus on previous values in relation to everyday low prices.</p> <p>Tom Gibson provided an update to the Board on research QMS and AHDB are conducting in relation to how much consumers are willing to pay for certain products. He shared that most retailers are now on weekly pricing in terms of pricing agreements.</p> <p>Emma Heath highlighted that QMS are planning a webinar for processors in July 2025, and this work would be shared with the QMS Board and SMT.</p>	
19.0	<p>Update Report & Implementation Plans 2025/ 2026</p> <p>SMT in attendance</p> <p>Debbie Phillips provided an update to the Board and SMT on Corporate Services</p> <p>Highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unqualified 2024/2025 audit. • Three new QMS team members. • All staff code of conduct training was well received. <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resource within the team due to long term sickness absence • 2024/2025 external audit was difficult due to the change in external auditors throughout the process. <p>The Board and SMT wished to place on record thanks Debbie Phillips for her hard work during a busy and challenging period.</p> <p>Tom Gibson provided an update to the Board and SMT on Business Development.</p> <p>Highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor of Meatopia, Glasgow. • PR event at Turnberry Resort Scotch Beef Blub. • Successful ABP strategy meeting. • Oliver Ridgewell-Welch (Scottish Young Chef of the Year) placement at the Ritz, Dorchester and Clarridges visits. • Scotch Butchers Club – advisory group strategy in relation expectations from butchers and consumers. • Summer events and demos including nine monitor farm meetings, Beef Tech and Highland Sheep, as well as influencer events. <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imports on supermarket shelves. • Beef price fluctuation to the market – challenges to butchers. 	

Emma Heath provided an update to the Board and SMT on Marketing.

Highlights:

- Royal Highland Show 2025.
- Summer Campaign Activity including STV brand story (almost ready to launch on 14th July 2025).
- Excellent Meatopia and BBQ activation to start during summer 2025.
- Butcher's research focus groups.
- Positive interactions during Beef Industry Leadership Group meetings.
- Cattle and Sheep standards signed off by UKAS.

Challenges:

- Red Tractor Tiered Welfare Proposals and scoping what it means for QMS going forward.
- Potential capacity issues in BI team on several large projects this year.

Holly McLennan provided an update to the Board and SMT on Communication and External Affairs.

Highlights:

'Meating Our Potential' partnership campaign with the SRMRG

- Positive stakeholder response to holistic comms plan – rooted in evidence from beef sector economic modelling.
- Very successful publicity launch of 'a couple more cows per herd to realise our potential' as part of QMS media forum – front page TSF and national TV and reaching 37.5k on socials.
- Censuswide consumer perception of imports survey for citizen news
- Digital support hub for industry – launched at Beeftech (currently working on 'producer toolkit').

Climate Change Committee's carbon budget Scottish advice – Chair's statement

- Two new starts including Louise Thompson (External Affairs Manager) and Abby Forsyth (Community Engagement Coordinator) due to start in July 2025.

Community engagement events

- Reached around 3,300 school pupils between April-May, which included Border Union Countryside Day and two Eat to Complete sessions at Murrayfield and Bell Baxter.
- Team planning day in Glasgow.

Challenges:

- Lots going on proactively and reactively from peak events season, Meating Our Potential, reacting to changing political and global trade landscape, recruiting for new starts and upcoming Red Meat Industry Profile, ahead of summer leave.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Craigie Media (JCM) has been brought in to support Meating Our Potential. <p>The QMS Board wished to place on record a thanks to Holly and her team for its work on the Meating Our Potential campaign.</p> <p><u>Action: Holyrood Sources Podcast</u> Holly to consider the Holyrood Sources Podcast with Louise Thompson (External Affairs Manager.</p>	Holly
20.0	<p>Game Changer Projects SMT in attendance</p> <p>Tom Gibson provided an update to the Board and SMT on the National Performance and Genetics Infrastructure plan.</p> <p>Tom Gibson provided an update to the Board and SMT on the new Monitor Farm Programme.</p>	
21.0	<p>Update on UKGI and Trademarks SMT in attendance</p> <p>Emma Heath provided an update to the Board and SMT on UKGI and Trademarks.</p> <p>Kate Rowell thanked Tom and Emma for their work on the trademarks and UKGI.</p>	
22.0	<p>Cattle Numbers Update SMT in attendance</p> <p>Sarah Millar provided an update to the Board and SMT on current cattle numbers. This included an update on current awareness campaigns, information on retailers and consumers.</p> <p>Holly McLennan shared that press releases were due to be put out, in relation to the pledge signing and the producer toolkit.</p> <p>Kate thanked SMT for their time. Emma Heath, Tom Gibson and Holly McLennan left the meeting.</p>	
23.0	<p>QMS Committee Meeting Updates:</p> <p>Beef Industry Leadership Group Meeting – 5th June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling that there has been a shift in public mood on GHG emissions, with a general feeling of not being too concerned. Particularly when put against importance of getting good nutrition in diet. • Disparity between Defra and SG in going with low/high frequency tags. 	

- Kate Rowell gave an update on the Meating our Potential campaign, given the importance of getting this group's buy-in.
- Presentations on 'From upstream to downstream and back: the power of data and information' were given by Ian Niven, Gloagburn Farm, John McMaster, ABP and Gordon King, Scottish Craft Butchers.
- These presentations looked at clarity of requirements (who wants what) and the impact of actions in one area of the supply chain on another.
- Meeting dates for year ahead finalised: Weds 1 October 2025, Weds 25/Thurs 26 Feb 2026.

Pig Industry Leadership Group – 30th April

- First meeting in current membership format held on 30 April. Attendance = 70%.
- The group discussed the effectiveness of benchmarking (Agrovision) and how accuracy could be improved, as well as additional information of value such as antibiotic usage.
- It was agreed that regarding freedom farrowing, it was important to proactively engage with Scot Gov, before they go out to consultation. There would also need to be a different approach from planning regulators, to enable easy adoption of freedom farrowing.
- There could be a tailored approach for everyone if the operational cost for farmers vs incentive cost from retailers was calculated (cost of investment vs conversion).
- Could turn it into a positive by saying "we are able to convert everyone in X number of years".

Remuneration Committee – 14th May

Report on yearend PDR's

- All Yearend PDRs were completed by the deadline of 30th April, with the exception of one, who has been off ill.
- Received positive feedback on the process which was more streamlined.
- New form which had input from external trainer who provided a session with managers on how to approach review meetings.
- New to this year was calibration sessions with SMT for the rest of the organisation and with Remco for SMT.

Gift and Hospitality Register activity 24/25

Chair and Board Member Day rate & expense Claim Rates 2025/ 2026 rate

Remco Annual Report

Reviewed report, nothing to report. It is in the board papers later in the agenda for information and if Board having any comments.

Additional Meeting

Additional virtual meeting planned for September to look at succession planning matrix.

Sheep Industry Leadership Group – 27th May

- Following inaugural meeting, three key themes identified: sheep benchmarking/enterprise costing; animal health & welfare; stabilising sheep numbers.
- Second meeting held on 27 May – theme: animal health and welfare.
- There were updates on the work of Livestock Health Scotland and The Ruminant Health and Welfare Steering Group.
- The group heard from Dr Emma McGowan, QMS who gave a presentation on genomics and production traits.
- This prompted a comprehensive discussion around the benefits of focusing on improving conditions associated with simple versus complex traits, and which would have the widest benefit to the industry (economically and in terms of number of flocks affected).
- This highlighted that genetic data for commercial sheep sector is currently unavailable.
- The discussion focused on what the value would be to have data collected on given indicator traits, and what the logistics would be of doing so. The group considered the ROI in economic and administrative terms.
- The group then heard from the Roslin Institute and the Royal Dick School of Veterinary Studies on current areas of research, e.g. survival ability of lambs, mastitis in sheep etc.

Climate & Nature Industry Leadership Group – 29th May

- Following inaugural meeting, three key themes identified: the importance of a strong evidence base; right messaging to the right person at the right time; thinking holistically and harmonising practices between farming & nature.
- The group heard updates from Prof John Gilliland on the Food Data Transparency Partnership and Bruce McConachie and Holly McLennan on the baselining project and supporting comms plan.
- Mo Mands, Gleneagles and Gill Higgins, Dawnmeats, presented to the group on 'What carbon footprints mean downstream'.
- This was an eye-opening talk which highlighted how crucial it is that industry consider and respond to what the private sector is requesting, not just the public and government audiences.
- This led to a discussion on the opportunity to streamline and profile emissions data, and the inadequate formulae that have been used to calculate the carbon footprint of meat products to date (e.g. using economic value of product to inform size of carbon footprint).
- The group was asked by the chair to consider the previous SWOT analysis put together after the first meeting, to see if any amendments need to be made to

	<p>accommodate issues raised in this meeting's discussion. This will then help to identify a key objective to take forward under this theme.</p> <p>Audit & Risk Management Committee – 24th June</p> <p>Ann Irvine provided the QMS Board with an update on the Audit & Risk Management Committee meeting, which took place on 24th June. This included updated on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal audit – Annual Report 2024/2025 – very positive – each had substantial assurance. Ann placed on record a thanks to everyone on the team for their work on this. • Performance measure of reviews was 100% • Audit plan for 2025 / 2026 – Q2 focussed on Core Financial Controls and Q3 focussed on Consumer Assurance Schemes • Additional audit areas to be considered by QMS going forward • External audit – wash up meeting and an additional meeting between the Audit & Risk Committee / Audit Scotland to be arranged • Expenses and alcohol policy still under review • Reviewed self-evaluation questionnaire – very positive 	
24.0	<p>Review of Audit & Risk Management Committee Annual Report and Formal Feedback to Audit & Risk Management Committee Members</p> <p>For information only.</p> <p>Ann Irvine shared that she liked the layout of the Annual Report, which was well laid out and modern.</p>	
25.0	<p>Review of Remuneration Annual Report and Formal Feedback to Remuneration Committee members</p> <p>For information only.</p>	
26.0	<p>UK Farm Assurance Review Update</p> <p>Sarah Millar provided the Board with an update on UK Farm Assurance review. She shared that AHDB have arranged for further meetings to take place during September 2025, which will be held online. Sarah highlighted that AHDB have invited QMS onto the FAR leadership group.</p>	
27.0	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Chair of QMS wished to place on record thanks to Ian, Pete and Scott for all their contributions on the Board.</p>	

	Chairs Closed Session	
	Close	