

Minutes of Board Meeting – 27th November 2025

Quality Meat Scotland Minutes of the 91st Meeting of the Board 27th November 2025 Norton House Hotel & Spa, Edinburgh

Present:

Kate Rowell (Chair)
A. Irvine
A. McGowan
C. Ruxton (online)
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: A. Ivory

Item No.	Detail	Action
1.0	Welcome & Apologies Kate welcomed everyone to the meeting. There was one apology from Adrian Ivory.	
2.0	Declaration of interests in any agenda item 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">• Emma Buckby• Niall Jeffrey• Jilly Duncan Grant• Ann Irvine• Kate Rowell Andy McGowan declared an interest due to his membership of SAOS and SF&D Boards	
3.0	Minutes of Board meeting on 25th September 2025 Andy McGowan highlighted that he left the previous board meeting for agenda item 7.0 due to a conflict of interest. This has now been updated within the previous minutes. The minutes from the meeting on 25 th September were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.	
4.0	Commercial in Confidence – Update on Action Points	

5.0	<p>Chairs Report</p> <p>Kate Rowell shared a presentation on her trip to the World Meat Congress which took place in Cuiaba in Brazil during October 2025.</p> <p>The following topics were covered during the congress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geopolitics, trade, production chain, GHG emissions, sustainability, animal care, economics, nutrition, animal health and welfare, novel proteins and communication. <p>Kate shared that the session which Carrie Ruxton was involved in was extremely successful and wished to thank both Carrie Ruxton and Iain MacDonald for their contributions in representing QMS at the World Meat Congress.</p> <p>Kate shared key takeaways from the congress which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal disease increasingly concerning around the world • Global lack of protein • Impact of China on everyone else • Sustainability high on agenda in all countries • Need for split gas accounting • Nutritional evidence getting stronger • Potential of Brazil to dominate in beef production • Importance of communication and understanding consumer behaviour (Gen Z). 	
6.0	<p>Chief Executives Report</p> <p>Sarah Millar provided an update on the Chief Executives Report.</p> <p>She shared that the key external and internal risks have not changed since last meeting.</p> <p>The Board had a discussion around the Red Meat Resilience Group.</p> <p>General report</p> <p>Sarah provided an update on external delivery and shared that it had been a busy period for the organisation. She shared that Kate had been attending the strategic engagement meetings with political representatives alongside other members of the SRMRG and these meetings had been well received.</p> <p>Sarah shared that the Cabinet Secretary made an announcement at the NFUS Autumn Conference to fund another Monitor Farm Programme which would be around £2m.</p> <p>Industry Challenges</p> <p>Sarah provided an update to the board in relation to industry challenges.</p> <p>Staffing</p> <p>Sarah highlighted to the Board there were still challenges within the Corporate Services team.</p>	

	<p>Sarah highlighted that Claire Bissett has been appointed as HR Consultant which has been useful for the Corporate Services team support and overall staff support.</p> <p>Sarah shared that the Ceannas work has been positive, and the SMT and Management team have been involved in this.</p> <p>Sarah highlighted to the Board that Craig Dennett was successful in obtaining the position of Communications Manager (Maternity Cover) and would commence employment on 8th December 2025.</p>	
7.0	<p>Financial Report 7 months to 31st October 2025</p> <p>Paul Byrne presented the financial report covering 7 months to 31st October 2025.</p> <p>Paul highlighted he had no concerns with the finances to date.</p> <p>Kate wished to place on record thanks to the team in relation to the travel and subsistence budget work.</p>	
8.0	<p>Review of Reserve's Policy</p> <p>Paul Byrne provided an update on the reserves policy. An updated paper was sent out to the board after the September 2025 meeting.</p> <p>The Board agreed it was content to leave the reserves at the medium risk level at the moment.</p>	
9.0	<p>Levy Organisation Benchmarking Report</p> <p>Kate Rowell thanked Paul Byrne for his work on the Levy Organisation Benchmarking Report.</p> <p>Paul shared that this report was for information only.</p> <p>Kate thanked Paul for his time. Paul left the meeting at this point.</p>	
10.0	<p>QMS Committee Meeting Updates</p> <p>Brands Integrity Update</p> <p>Carrie Ruxton provided an update on the Brands Integrity Advisory Group. Emma Heath joined the meeting for this agenda item.</p> <p>Andy McGowan left the meeting at this point.</p>	
12.0	<p>FIA attend meeting-open discussion on QA Delivery</p> <p>Kate Rowell welcomed Uel Morton and Stephen Sanderson of FIA to the meeting.</p> <p>Stephen provided an update presentation to the QMS Board. This included</p>	

information on the following:

- Whole Chain Assurance
- Highlights – the working relationship between QMS and FIA
- Engagement between QMS and FIA
- Assessment delivery metrics to 25 November 2025
- Review of annual membership from reconciliation data
- Ratio of assurance investment vs Scotch Beef price
- Non-compliance trends 2023 – 2025

Stephen presented information to the QMS Board on the following:

- Audit Portal and the potential future benefits to QMS. He shared that FIA are currently harnessing opportunities with technology, and how this could be best put into practice with QMS.
- FIA surveys to QMS cattle and sheep members. He provided an overview of how these surveys are carried out, experience of the assessments and assessors, FIA office staff and additional comments.
- Key workstreams for the remainder of 2025-2026.

Kate thanked Stephen and Uel thanked them for their time. Stephen and Uel left the meeting.

Implementation Plans Highlight Report Plans 2025/2026

14.0

Corporate Services team:

Key highlights included:

- Appointment of Veronika Hutterova as Finance and Administration Officer
- Agreement on new timings for the 2025/2026 external audit – this will now take place in August/September, with a view to the accounts being signed off at the November 2026 Board meeting.
- Progressions on the people experience and leadership work

Business Development team:

Key highlights included:

- A successful Anuga show in Cologne.
- Positive 'Discussing the Undiscussabull' succession events in Elgin and Igliston.
- Meat The Market events at Saltcoats and Orkney have taken place and went well.
- A successful AgriScot 2025
- Presented to US Government officials and State Agriculture Directors during their inward mission.
- Gordon Newlands is back to work and catching up on demos and events.

Marketing team:

Key highlights included:

- Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb trademarks now published and working through the Certification mark process.

- Butchers Club social media activity has achieved excellent reach.
- Autumn When You Know You Know campaign ended.
- Winter campaign has gone live.
- Abby Tong led and debriefed the cross-levy body Gen Z research with Worldpanel.
- Certification Body tender has commenced.
- Cattle and Sheep Standards have landed with members and seem to be well received.

Communications and External Affairs team:

Key highlights included:

- QMS Conference
- Positive Meating our Potential updates.
- World Meat Congress – invaluable experience for Iain MacDonald.
- Successful HRH visit at Corskie Farm in Moray.
- Piloting engagement with nursery level children in relation to nutritional education.
- Two new members to the team including Rory Hill as an Economics Graduate and Maria Burton has begun a phased return and has moved into the Communications and External Affairs team.

ACTION: Iain MacDonald to conduct a cut of knowledge session to the wider staff team on World Meat Congress

Iain

15.0	<p>Strategic Indicators Update</p> <p>Sarah provided an update on the Strategic Indicators.</p> <p>Tom Gibson provided an update on Monitor Farm events. There has been a lot of open meetings over the last couple of months.</p> <p>The Board were content with the Strategic Indicators updates.</p>	
16.0	<p>Gamechanger Project Update</p> <p>There were no updates to note from Emma Heath.</p> <p>Tom Gibson provided an update to the QMS Board. This included: Information that consultants will be utilised as part of the Genetics Livestock Policy Working Group.</p> <p>The Board discussed Emma Buckby, Adrian Ivory and Andy McGowan to join a task and finish working group to agree the key scope of the MEQ work as we enter into year 3 of our 5 year strategy.</p>	
17.0	<p>Framework Document Discussion</p>	

	<p>Sarah provided an update on the Model Framework Document. She shared that ScotGov have now provided feedback on the comments that QMS made on the Framework Document.</p> <p>The Board reviewed the comments from Sarah, Debbie and ScotGov.</p>	
18.0	<p>QMS Committee Meeting Updates</p> <p><u>Audit and Risk Management Committee</u></p> <p>Niall Jeffrey provided an update on the Audit and Risk Committee meeting which took place on 29th October 2025. This included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee reviewed previous actions. It was agreed that item numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 12 would be carried over to the meeting scheduled for 4th March 2025. • The committee reviewed the risk register and there was an action for Debbie and Sarah to review the wording of risk 1.1 within the Organisation Risk Register (Strategic) and make necessary changes. • The committee reviewed the terms of reference and discussed the best protocol in the absence of the chair. There was an action for Debbie to update the terms of reference to include a protocol if the chair is not present. • There was also an action for all the committee to report to the QMS Board the current TOR in relation to the requirement for a financial expert to sit on the ARC committee. • Next Meeting: 4th March 2025. <p><u>Sheep Industry Leadership Group</u></p> <p>Kate provided an update on the Sheep Industry Leadership Group which took place on 11th November 2025. This included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 group members attended the Nov meeting at the Mercure Hotel Perth which focussed on the 'Sheep Productivity and Profitability' theme. • Liz Barron-Majerik (Lantra Scotland) provided an overview of Lantra's products including the career's toolkit, the careers section of their website, Next Generation Practical Training Fund, and Skills Hub Scotland and noted that two introductory lambing courses have been added following this group's recommendation. • Emma Buckby then spoke on sheep productivity focusing on where the Scottish sheep sector is at with on-farm tech. The group discussed the lack of understanding of how to use data, how abattoir feedback and traceability could encourage uptake, data handling training and preparing a briefing for the Scottish Government on investments in tools like stick readers and livestock management apps. • Bruce McConchie discussed sheep profitability - presenting QMS's benchmarking tool which the group gave feedback on, and he provided an update on MF enterprise costing project. • In the afternoon, the group participated in an objective setting activity thinking of current and potential projects to sit under each of our themes. • The next meeting will take place in Feb next year to focus on the final theme 'Scottish ewe numbers insight and analysis'. <p><u>Beef Industry Leadership Group</u></p> <p>Jilly Duncan Grant provided an update on the Beef Industry Leadership Group, which took place on Wednesday 1st October. This included the following:</p>	

- 20 group members attended the October meeting at the DoubleTree by Hilton Edinburgh Queensferry Crossing which focussed on the ‘When You Know You Know theme’.
- Kathryn Kerr discussed the importance of QA for producers, covering the membership scheme, the role of the certification body with questions from the group on non-compliance rates, membership retention, and assessor consistency.
- Emma Heath highlighted key red meat purchasing factors, target consumers, the importance of provenance, Scotch brand awareness, and the When You Know You Know marketing campaign.
- The role of QA in the wider beef industry was emphasised by Neil Shand (NBA), outlining both the positives and negatives, with the group suggesting extended assessment intervals for compliant members.
- Iain Brown, Sales Director at Campbells Prime Meat noted rising imports due to high farmgate prices and lower cattle numbers and how short supply chains can differentiate Scotch beef while consumer trends like school diets, dining-in growth, and the expanding halal market pose challenges for cost pressured food service businesses.
- Finally, the group participated in an objective setting activity thinking of current and potential projects to sit under each of our themes.
- The next meeting will take place in February next year to focus on the final theme ‘Promoting knowledge exchange amongst Scottish producers to increase productivity and profitability’.

ACTION: The following Chairs to provide an update from the most previous meeting at the next Board meeting:

Andy
Emma
Kate

- Pig Standards Setting Body – Andy McGowan
- Climate and Nature – Emma Buckby
- Scottish Red Meat Resilience Group – Kate Rowell

19.0	Any Other Business	Kate
20.0	Chairs Semi-Closed Session Did not take place.	
21.0	Chairs Closed Session	
22.0	Close	