



**Minutes of a meeting of the Directors of Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC) held at 10am at Tŷ Rheidol, Aberystwyth on Thursday 9 January 2025**

- Present:** Cath Smith (Chair)  
Gareth Wynn Davies, John T Davies, Jack Evershed, Hugh Hesketh-Evans, Mike Humphreys, Emlyn Roberts, Vicki Spencer-Francis
- By invitation:** Maria Richards (Welsh Government);  
(For Item 4) Zowie Jackson (Welsh Government)
- Executive:** Heather Anstey-Myers, Interim CEO  
Gareth Jones, Head of Finance and Corporate Governance  
Meilyr Ceredig – Head of Promotions and Operations  
John Richards, Producer and Processor Lead;  
Jason Craig, Market Development Lead;  
Pip Gill, Brand Engagement Lead  
Jo Horder, Secretariat  
(For Item 8b) Glesni Phillips, Intelligence, Analysis and Business Insight Executive  
(For Item 8e) Medi Jones-Jackson, Events Executive

1. **Welcome and Chair's Comments**

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Meilyr Ceredig, the newly appointed temporary Head of Promotions and Operations for HCC.

The Chair gave an update on the key events and meetings she had attended since the previous Board meeting:

11 December – Meeting with Deputy First Minister

12 December – Interview panel for HCC CEO

Due to the timing of invitees joining the meeting, it was agreed to change the order in which items were considered. The minutes reflect the order of the meeting.

2. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were noted from Emlyn Roberts; Caroline Sanger-Davies; Russ Thomas (HCC); Siwan Jones (HCC)

The Chair passed on her thoughts to those Board members unable to attend the meeting for personal reasons.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair declared that she was now a Trustee for FairShare Cymru.

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**5. To approve the minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday 5 December 2024**

The above was taken as read and approved by the Board.

**6. Matters arising**

Discussions with Welsh Government regarding future funding and collaboration opportunities

This is ongoing. It was noted that discussions will also include how HCC can support the recommendations and outcomes from the Carbon Sequestration Review Panel.

Paper on key factors affecting beef prices

To be tabled at March Board meeting.

CEO recruitment

The interview panel took place on 12<sup>th</sup> December. Three candidates were interviewed. An offer had been made and it is hoped the process will be concluded very soon. The Chair thanked all those involved on the panel.

Board appointment

The application deadline closed in late 2024. Thirteen applications had been received. A sifting process is taking place on 27<sup>th</sup> January. Interviews will be held in February.

All other matters arising were covered on the agenda.

**7. Presentation on HCC's PGI Welsh Lamb Campaign 2024-25**

The Brand Engagement Lead presented the above and provided an overview of the campaign including the objectives, targeting, timings, media strategy and channels used.

The key campaign results were highlighted. Overall, the objective to maintain the percentage figures against the benchmarks for consumers in Wales was met or exceeded in most cases, including;

- Brand awareness: Name - from 90% in 2023 to 93% in 2024
- Brand perception: High Quality – from 54% in 2023 to 59% in 2024
- Brand perception: Great taste – from 46% in 2023 to 54% in 2024
- Brand perception: Sustainable – from 27% in 2023 to 29% in 2024
- Brand perception: Healthy - from 21% in 2023 to 24% in 2024
- Brand perception: Versatile - from 7% in 2023 to 9% in 2024
- Propensity to purchase – from 69% in 2023 to 76% in 2024

It was noted that the results for consumers in England were also very positive.

In conclusion, it was noted that the Lamb campaign had been very successful. This was a notable achievement as the campaign had been run with a much reduced budget from the previous year (32%). The Board congratulated the team on the excellent results achieved.

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### 4. Welsh Government Presentation: Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023: Introducing the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Framework

Zowie Jackson, Welsh Government Rural Development Division, presented the above and provided an overview of the key points. The Act came into force in October 2023 and sets out the future for how Welsh Government will support the agricultural sector.

The key aim is “To continue supporting farmers to produce food in a sustainable way whilst taking action to respond to the climate emergency and to help reverse the decline in biodiversity”.

The Act sets out four SLM objectives:

- To produce food and other goods in a sustainable manner,
- To mitigate and adapt to climate change,
- To maintain and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide, and
- To conserve and enhance the countryside and cultural resources and promote public access to and engagement with them, and to sustain the Welsh language and promote and facilitate its use.

Other key points covered were the SLM duties, monitoring and reporting, indicator and targets statement, powers to provide support for or in connection with agriculture and ancillary activities, and the reporting framework.

A discussion followed on what the impact on HCC will be in terms of planning and reporting. The remit letter for next year will likely be heavily focused on the SLM. Overall, the remit will not change but HCC will need to consider and demonstrate how its activities contribute to the SLM and reflect this within strategic and operational plans, annual accounts, proposals, projects etc.

It was noted that the SLM provides significant opportunities for HCC in both the short and longer term. This will be followed up in the discussions with Welsh Government regarding opportunities to support the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

### **Action: Policy Development Lead**

### 8. HCC Reports

#### a. Delivery report (HCC 1215)

The above was taken as read and key points highlighted by the Leads;

#### *Market Development –*

- A first meeting had been held with Total Food Marketing to make introductions and better understand the UK Foodservice arena;
- HCC will be attending the Wales Takeover of Tesco HQ in Welwyn Garden City organised by Total Food Marketing on the 26 February 2025;
- The trade fair season is about to start, with HCC signed up to attend Gulfood (February 25) and Foodex (March 25).

China’s recently announced safeguarding investigation into imported beef products was discussed. At this stage it is not thought that this will affect suppliers but the team will keep a watching brief.

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It was noted that the current stand build contract will expire at the end of the financial year. The stand build at future events will require a new contract for which a tender exercise is being prepared.

### *Producers and Processors –*

- In relation to PGI, 3 meetings are being held in January with butchers and small abattoirs to update them on the PGI scheme and highlight the activities of HCC, and discuss how best to support butchers through The Butchers Club.
- The Producer and Processor Lead will be supporting Welsh Government on a short term two-month contract looking at areas of sustainability.

### *Strategic Marketing and Connections –*

- The Welsh Beef campaign results had been received and the Board will be updated in due course.

### *b. HCC Farmers Intentions Survey Results Update*

The Intelligence, Analysis and Business Insight Executive presented the above. This was the third phase of the survey, which began in September 2022. It is focused on sheep and beef farmers across Wales and was initiated to explore farmer intentions, taking into account the significant challenges facing the sector. The surveys have achieved a sample size of 938 across the three phases, and provide an indication of trends over the three years.

Some key results were presented in relation to stocking intentions, agricultural inputs, sustainability and support needs.

Overall, the results indicate the sector is moving away from crisis management to more stabilized, longer-term adaptation and planning. Although there are still challenges in relation to input costs, environmental pressures and policy uncertainty, there are some signs of growing optimism.

It was noted that, although sheep stock numbers are likely to reduce further, the results hint at a change in attitudes, so reductions may slow in coming years. With regards to beef, BCMS data suggests tightening of numbers and external challenges could have a big effect on final decisions.

A discussion was had regarding the modelling of supply and demand going forward, as this will be helpful for planning and future vision work. It was noted that work is already underway to forecast livestock numbers in Wales during the longer term as part of the new Vision.

It was noted that Kantar is currently doing some work on forecasting consumer demand up to 2030 to assist with the Vision. Kantar will be presenting findings at the March Board meeting.

To assist with future planning, the Board requested the following information;

- Additional analysis of the survey results to determine if the changes in stocking rates were related to farm size;
- Analysis of the global picture and whether changes in other countries could potentially impact our domestic and export markets.

**Action: Producer Processor Lead / Intelligence, Analysis and Business**

## **Insight Executive**

c. *Pork Re-evaluation to ensure optimum Return on Investment*

The Brand Engagement Lead presented the above. The Board had previously agreed to change the Pork from Wales KPIs in the HCC 2025-26 Operational Plan, replacing brand measures for Pork with measures relating to support for producers.

The proposal was to speak with pork producers directly to discuss what support would be most helpful to them, thereby utilising the small budget available to most benefit. The intention was to implement this new approach in this financial year, and then carry this forward into 2025-26. The necessary steps to make the changes could be implemented quickly.

The Board was in agreement with the proposal. It was noted that the correct governance steps would need to be taken to inform Welsh Government of any amendments to the Operational Plan.

d. *To receive feedback on HCC's Annual Conference 14 November 2024*

The report was taken as read.

e. *To receive feedback on HCC's presence at the Winter Fair 25-26 November 2024*

The Event Lead presented the above.

The design of the stand was kept the same as the previous year. The breakfast was well attended with 110 invitees present. Activities had been well received, in particular the cooking slots, with 8 cooking demonstrations delivered. There were also 5 partner activities on the stand. The number of newsletter sign ups and recipes cards given out were a bit lower than previously, probably reflecting the fact that no merchandise was given out on the stand. Ten schoolchildren groups visited the stand as part of a wider showground activity.

Staff and Board members had been asked for their feedback on how they thought it went. Overall, the consensus was that it had worked very well in terms of stand design, demonstrations and the HCC breakfast. Team working had been excellent and contributed immensely to the overall success. The presence of a number of Board members on each day to assist with enquiries had been very well received and the Board were thanked for their support. Staff considered that press and media and partnership working could have been improved. For the next show it was felt that a better balance of cooking demonstrations and other stand events, such as Q and A sessions, would be beneficial.

The Board commended all staff on a successful event, including the EIDCymru staff.

f. *Financial – Management Accounts to 30 November 2024*

The above was taken as read. Key points were considered in Item 12c.

## **9. To Consider the Welsh Red Meat Levy Rates 2025-26**

The report was taken as read. The proposal set out the recommended increase for the Welsh Red Meat Levy Rate from 1 April 2025, in line with the CPIH index.

Following discussion, it was agreed to include further detail and context to support the recommendation. A revised and updated levy increase paper will be shared with the

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Board once the 2024 CPIH is confirmed, and tabled at the Board Teams update in February for approval.

**Action: Producer and Processor Lead**

10. **To receive Exports into Europe Briefing - WG Trade Policy Advisory Group (TPAG)**

The report was taken as read.

12. **Corporate**

*a. Stakeholder Engagement KPI Proposal*

The paper was taken as read.

The Board agreed that continual monitoring throughout the year is a more sensible and productive approach and approved the change proposed.

It was noted that the Impact KPIs included in the 2024/25 Operational Plan regarding awareness and perception of HCC were intended to be measured at the end of the programme of Government, within the 2025/26 Operational Plan. This will be amended.

A paper will be prepared for Welsh Government to explain and propose potential amendments to HCC's Operational Plan KPI's, specifically relating to Stakeholder Engagement and Pork from Wales Campaigns.

**ACTION: Producer and Processor Lead**

*b. Financial Outturn Forecast 2024-25 and Budget Forecast 2025-26*

The Head of Finance and Corporate Governance presented the above. The report and presentation provided a summary of the projected out-turn for 2024-25 and the proposed 2025-26 budget forecast for approval.

The total projected income was £4.47m, primarily derived from core levy income collection. The total projected expenditure was £4.47m, inclusive of operational costs, programme delivery and staff expenses. An achievable break-even position was projected, subject to adjustments based on updated income and expenditure figures.

Key assumptions underpinning the forecast were highlighted.

In terms of the Budget Forecast for 2025-26, detailed information in terms of the draft Budget for 2025-26, key assumptions, summary Income and Expenditure and financials, Sensitivity of Analysis and Risk Management were presented to the Board within the paper.

The final draft will be tabled at the March Board meeting.

*c. Draft Operational Plan 2025 – 26*

The paper was provided for information to support the draft budget. The final draft, including Key Performance Indicators, will be presented to the Board for approval in March 2025.

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d. Draft Board / Committee Meeting Dates & Board Programme for 2025-26

The draft programme was presented for consideration.

The Chair requested to change the date of the March 2025 meeting to 13 March. This was agreed.

Consideration was requested to the possibility of moving the scheduled date for the HCC Conference and November Board meeting as it clashes with another key industry event.

A revised programme will be tabled at the February Board Update meeting.

**Action: Head of Finance and Corporate Governance**

**11. Review and Approval of Key Documents**

Sexual Harassment Policy

The Interim CEO presented the above. The first draft of the policy had been considered at the October 2024 Board meeting. Comments and observations provided had been incorporated into the revised version for approval. Guidance for investigators will be developed and will be used to assist training for all managers.

The Board approved the revised policy.

**Action: Head of Finance and Corporate Governance**

**13. Any other business**

The CEO recruitment update was covered in Item 6 above.

The revised date for March 2025 Board Meeting was covered Items 12 above.

**14. Dates of forthcoming meetings**

Board Teams update - Thursday 6 February 2025 at 9.30am

Board Meeting – Thursday 13 March 2025 at 10.00am

**HCC Board Closed Session**

A separate and confidential meeting of the Board followed.

**Signed..... Chair of HCC**