



# Board Minutes

Hybu Cig Cymru  
12/03/2026 10:00GMT  
@ Head Office, Aberystwyth

## Attendance

### Present:

Members: Jack Evershed, Hugh Hesketh-Evans OBE (remote), Dewi Hughes, Emlyn Roberts (remote), Paul Savage, Cath Smith, John T Davies, Mike Humphreys, Caroline Sanger-Davies

By invitation: Karla Price (Welsh Government) (remote)

Executive: Jose Peralta, Meilyr Ceredig, Gareth Jones, Pip Gill, John Richards (remote), Jo Horder

For Item 4: Owain Edwards (Welsh Government) (remote), Chris Moore (Welsh Government) (remote)

### 1. Welcome and Chair's Comments

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. This was the first Board meeting that had been arranged using the OnBoard Board management platform and the Chair thanked members and the Executive for the work that had been done to set up the system and attend the training.

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

- 21 January - FUW Breakfast in Cardiff with CEO
- 27 January - YFC 90th Birthday celebrations, Senedd, Cardiff
- 4 February - NFU Cymru President Farewell Dinner, Cardiff
- 9 February - Sifting process for Non-Executive Director applications
- 12 February - Board update meeting
- 25 February - NFU Conference, Birmingham, including meeting with joint levy Boards Chairs and CEOs
- 26/27 February - Interviews for Non-Executive Directors
- 4 March - CLA pre-conference dinner
- 5 March - CLA conference; chiring Food and Farming session

It was noted that offers of appointment had been sent to four new Non-Executive Directors. Once received back, the new appointments will be announced to the Board and a public announcement made before the end of March. The Chair thanked Welsh Government representatives for their assistance with the recruitment process.

### 2. Declaration of Interest

Jack Evershed declared that his son had been contracted to carry out work for IBERS on the HCC Baseline project.

It was noted that Mike Humphreys and his colleague, David Kopecky, had submitted a paper to the Journal of Food and Energy Security, reporting for the first time on effective drought resistance genes present in the grass variety AberRoot.

### 3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Vicki Spencer-Davies, Gareth Davies, Russ Thomas, Jason Craig and Maria Richards. It was noted that Hugh Hesketh Evans and Emlyn Roberts were only able to attend the first part of the meeting.

#### 4. Multi-Species Wales (EIDCymru) Progress Update

The Chair welcomed Owain Edwards and Chris Moore to the meeting. An update was provided on the project progress to date, including;

- CTS production data is now going into the MSW environment on a daily basis. Data input on CTS will appear in MSW the following day. MSW also holds CTS production data for England and Wales back to the inception of CTS. This stage was now complete.
- Dialogue with the larger abattoirs was continuing and the abattoir build was underway.
- Discussions had started with some small abattoirs using CTS online. They had started testing it out successfully. When a solution is more finalised, dialogue will begin with other small abattoirs.
- An approach had been agreed to share records of deaths in abattoirs in Wales back into CTS, with work in progress to build an interface via CTS web services.
- Dialogue with livestock recording software providers had been taking place.
- A communication will be sent to all livestock keepers later in March to inform them about what is happening with MSW later in the year, and what this means for them.
- The team continued to work to the original plan dates.

A query was raised regarding communication with the EIDCymru team and how they are kept informed and involved in developments. Views will be sought from the EIDCymru leads to ascertain what information is required.

**Action: CEO / Welsh Government**

Work had progressed on a draft SLA for EIDCymru. This requires further discussion. A budget for EIDCymru had been agreed.

The communications strategy and the expectations, capacity and resources required to deliver it were discussed. A draft had been developed and will be shared with the Board when finalised. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for HCC to have early sight of the draft, and have regular meetings with the project team going forward.

**Action: Head of Promotions and Operations / Welsh Government**

A query was raised on whether local authority animal health officers were kept informed about MSW. Although the project team meets bi-monthly with local authorities, and representatives also sit on the LIDAG group, it was not known whether the information is cascaded to those officers regularly visiting farms to keep them aware and informed. This will be followed up by the project team.

**Action: Welsh Government**

An update was provided on the Matters Arising item to clarify the situation with cattle tag suppliers to ensure they provide the correct information to customers. An update will be included in the Spring update booklet regarding bovine BVD. No formal communication is taking place until the situation with CTS switch off and the CAD system is known. The project team will continue to update the Board on this issue.

The Board thanked the project team for the update and progress made to date.

Following the update, the preference for a higher level and wider briefing on the MSW project, was discussed. This will be raised with Welsh Government at the next Governance meeting.

**Action: CEO**

#### 5. Approval of Minutes of Board meetings

##### 5.1. Meeting held on 15 January 2026

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

## 5.2. Meeting held on 12 February 2026

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

## 6. Matters Arising

The report was taken as read. All outstanding matters arising were included on the agenda.

## 7. Presentation on PGI Welsh Beef Campaign 2025-26

The Brand Engagement Lead presented the above, providing a summary of the strategic approach, creative strategy, campaign headlines and channels used.

Overall the integrated campaign delivered strong reach, engagement and visibility for PGI Welsh Beef. The 'Naturally Local' campaign connected with potential customers across Wales, reaching 1.5 million people during the three-month period. Digital activity delivered excellent results, with online activity alone providing over 5.5 million opportunities to see the campaign. A combination of targeted digital advertising ensured that promotional content was delivered directly to consumers most likely to purchase Welsh Beef, maximising campaign efficiency and value. Consumer perceptions of PGI Welsh were largely maintained.

The Board noted the presentation and congratulated HCC on the campaign.

## 8. Corporate

### 8.1. Draft Operational Plan 2026-27

The CEO and Producer and Processor Lead presented the above. The Plan sets out HCC's strategic direction for the next four years to deliver the priorities and objectives set out in HCC's Red Meat Industry Vision for Wales and achieve the outcomes defined in the organisations draft Business Plan.

A discussion was had on proposed delivery and potential KPIs.

Overall, the Board was content with the draft Plan. Formal approval of the final Plan will be recommended in the May 2026 Board, prior to presenting to Welsh Government for sign-off.

### 8.2. Budget Forecast 2026-27

The Head of Finance and Corporate Governance presented the above. Key highlights were;

- Total income for the year projected at £5.2m, an uplift on the prior year, primarily due to Welsh Government grant funding for the 3-year Sheep Genetics Programme (£1m per annum), and the levy rate increase approved for April 2026.
- Key cost pressures include energy price increases, increases in National Insurance and pay inflation, and necessary investments in digital, and cyber security.
- Work is ongoing to embed efficiency measures through reviews, procurement improvements, and the development of long-term strategies for estates, digital infrastructure, and IT support.
- Cash flow continues to be managed closely with enhanced forecasting, reflecting risks around levy timing, pension and HMRC liabilities, repatriation income, and the introduction of grant-funded programmes.
- Cash reserves long-term will be managed within the 10% Framework Document threshold, subject to engagement with Welsh Government where necessary.
- The forecast for 2026–27 achieves a break-even position with contingencies identified to mitigate against any potential income shortfall.

The likely position on the 10% cash reserves threshold was discussed. The Board was reassured that the Executive Team is actively managing this position through enhanced cashflow forecasting to 31 March 2026, regular monitoring of levy receipts and timing-sensitive liabilities,

and ongoing engagement with Welsh Government officials regarding potential year-end cash positions.

Overall, the Budget Forecast for 2026–27 presents a balanced financial plan aligned to the strategic priorities set out in the Business Plan 2026–30.

The Board noted the above and approved the budget forecast for 2026-27.

The Board thanked the Head of Finance and Corporate Governance for providing a robust and comprehensive report.

### 8.3. Review of Governance

The Head of Finance and Corporate Governance provided an overview of three governance documents presented to the Board:

8.3.1. Board Terms of Reference

8.3.2. Standing Orders of the Board

8.3.3. Schedule of Matters Reserved for the Board

These documents had been developed following the review of organisational governance, which was undertaken to ensure full alignment with statutory requirements, Welsh Government frameworks, and recognised best practice in public sector governance.

The documents were noted by the Board and approved subject to the following;

- Clarification of Company Secretary/Board Secretary definitions in the Terms of Reference
- Consideration and clarification of role of the Board and sub-committees in relation to the review, approval and ratification of company policies.

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

## 9. HCC Reports

### 9.1. Delivery Report

The report was taken as read and noted by the Board.

## 10. Information Sharing

### 10.1. Vision 2030

The final version of the Vision had been shared with the Board.

The Head of Promotions and Operations provided a summary of the communication activities undertaken for the launch of the Vision and work ongoing. It was noted that consideration is being given to face-to-face events to communicate the Vision to stakeholders.

### 10.2. Business Plan 2026-30

The Head of Finance and Corporate Governance advised that confirmation had been received that the HCC Business Plan 2026-30 had been approved by the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs.

The Plan was taken as read and noted by the Board.

### 10.3. WG Self-Assessment Model (SAM)

The Head of Finance and Corporate Governance presented the above.

The Self-Assessment Model for Wales (SAMW) consists of a set of questions for partnership teams and public bodies to use as a desk-based 'health check' of the body and to review the relationship with the Welsh Government. The assessment had been completed jointly with the partnership team. The findings were very positive overall. The completed assessment had been

submitted to the Welsh Government's Public Bodies Leadership and Governance Team and will be considered by the Public Bodies Reference Group as part of wider oversight arrangements. The report was noted by the Board.

It was noted that within the Framework Agreement, reference is made to the UK Corporate Governance Code which states that best practice is for Board to be evaluated annually, with an independent assessment being carried out every three years. Consideration will be given to how best to carry out meaningful assessments on a VFM basis.

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

## 11. Review and Approval of Key Documents

The Head of Finance and Corporate Governance presented the above. Six organisational policies required Board approval. These documents have been produced or updated as part of HCC's scheduled governance review cycle and legislative compliance programme.

### 11.1. Travel and Subsistence Policy

The policy had been refreshed in line with HMRC legislation and WG guidelines, providing clearer guidance to staff.

The policy was approved by the Board.

### 11.2. Welsh Language Scheme

The Welsh Language Scheme sets out HCC's commitment to providing services and communications in Welsh and English and had been updated, working closely with the Welsh Commissioners Office.

The Scheme was approved by the Board.

### 11.3. Staff Code of Conduct

The policy sets out HCC's code of conduct for staff or those working for HCC. The policy supersedes the Business Conduct Policy.

The policy was approved by the Board.

### 11.4. Flexible Working Policy

The policy had been updated to reflect legislative reforms introduced through the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 and the Flexible Working (Amendment) Regulations 2023.

The policy was approved by the Board.

### 11.5. Maternity, Paternity and Shared Parental Leave Policy, including Adoption Leave and Pay

The policy had been revised to reflect recent legislative changes to adoption entitlement and to ensure continued compliance.

The policy was approved by the Board.

### 11.6. Parental Leave Policy

The policy had been revised to reflect recent legislative changes and to ensure continued compliance.

The policy was approved by the Board subject to clarification of paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3.

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

## 12. HCC Committees

## 12.1. Audit & Risk Committee

### 12.1.1. To adopt the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2025

The minutes were adopted by the Board.

### 12.1.2. To receive a verbal report of the meeting held on 26 February 2026

The Committee Chair provided a verbal report and highlighted the key points;

- GIAA ARAC Self-Assessment Tool - this had been completed by the Committee, following which a number of actions on areas requiring improvement had been completed. Further actions to enhance governance, assurance, and committee effectiveness were ongoing. One action was for the Committee to meet with the auditors without HCC officers present, and the first such meeting had taken place at the end of the Committee meeting. Nothing of significance was raised.
- 2026-27 Auditor Fee Consultation - following the consultation, the Auditor General had issued a generic letter explaining the increase and the reasons for it. The fee rate increase was reduced from 5.5% to 5.3% (weighted average). The Committee felt that this did not reflect costs for small organisations. It was noted that the Board Chair had raised the issue at the Welsh Government Public Chairs Forum in December, and an action was raised for the Director to discuss the issue with the Wales Auditor General. This will be followed up at the next meeting.
- Internal audit progress - Azets was on schedule to deliver two internal audits planned for 2025/26. The Data Protection audit had been completed, with two minor recommendations actioned. The Procurement audit will be reported to the Committee in June.
- Internal audit follow-up - good progress had been made on implementing previous audit recommendations. A long-term outstanding action relating to succession planning was referred for discussion by the Remuneration Committee.
- Internal audit Action Plan 2026-27 - the plan proposed focusing on key areas including Payroll, HR and People Management, and Corporate Governance. Two additional audit days had been agreed for the Corporate Governance audit to ensure a broad review in order to provide assurance across the organisation.
- Policies - the Data Protection Policy and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy were approved for ratification by the Board.
- Information Governance - A formal response has been received from the Welsh Government Senior Information Risk Owner to HCC's 2024-25 Security Questionnaire. This acknowledged HCC's current Cyber Essentials Plus certification and progress toward IASME Cyber Assurance Level 2. The Board will receive Cyber Security training during 2026.
- Risk Management - an overview of the Strategic Risk Register as at February 2026 was provided, including a detailed analysis of the Financial risk. The Board will be receive risk management training at a later date.

#### 12.1.2.1. Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference have been reviewed and updated to incorporate membership changes and align with the revised Audit Committee Handbook. They were approved by the Audit and Risk Committee on 26 February 2026. The Terms of Reference were ratified by the Board.

#### 12.1.2.2. Data Protection Policy

The policy had been updated following the recent Internal Audit review to reflect all of the UK GDPR principles and was approved by the Audit and Risk Committee on 26 February 2026.

The policy was ratified by the Board.

#### 12.1.2.3. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy

The DBS policy had been developed to provide a clear framework of when and how criminal record checks are undertaken across the HCC Group, and was approved by the Audit and Risk Committee on 26 February 2026.

The policy was ratified by the Board.

### 13. Any Other Business

The Chair reminded members to exercise caution during the Senedd pre-election period.

The Chair formally noted the four members, John T Davies, Gareth Davies, Caroline Sanger-Davies and Mike Humphreys, who will be leaving the HCC Board at the end of March, and thanked them all very much for their immense contributions to the Board during their tenures.

The members present expressed their thanks for the opportunity and privilege to sit on the Board and thanked the Chair, members and HCC for their support.

The Chair looked forward to welcoming the new Board members at the next meeting.

### 14. Dates of forthcoming Meetings

Board meeting - Thursday 14 May 2026 10:00am

Board Training and Development - Thursday 18 June 2026 10:00 (Teams)