

**Quality Meat Scotland**  
Minutes of the 84th Meeting of the Board  
6<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
SARDC Boardroom

**Present:**

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

**In Attendance:**

S. Millar (Chief Executive)  
D. Phillips (Standards Officer)  
P. Byrne (Accountant)  
H. Curran (Sponsor Team)

**Minutes:**

K. McCormack

**Apologies:**

P. Brown

| Detail                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Action |
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| <b>Welcome and Apologies</b><br><br>Kate Rowell welcomed everyone to the meeting. There was one apology from Pete Brown.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |        |
| <b>Additions to the Agenda</b><br><br>There were no additions to the agenda.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |        |
| <b>Declaration of interests in any agenda item</b><br><br>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><br>Ian Bentley declared an interest as being on the Board of Scotbeef Ltd. |        |

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| <p>Andy McGowan declared an interest due to him being a member on the Board of SAOS who established FIA and who are part of the ownership board of SARDC who own the rural centre where the QMS office is based.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                        |
| <p><b>Minutes of Board Meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024</b></p> <p>The minutes from the meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> April were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                        |
| <p><b>Commercial in Confidence – Update on Action Points</b></p> <p>The Board reviewed the actions from the previous meeting and the following updates were given:</p> <p><u>Action from 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023</u><br/> <u>Action No.4 – Agenda item 7.0 Review of Reserves Policy</u><br/> Ann Irvine confirmed that final comments have been received from the Audit &amp; Risk Management Committee regarding the risk appetite paper she has produced, and she will get Kirsty McCormack to issue to the Board for final comments. Deadline for comments 19<sup>th</sup> July.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p><b>Kirsty</b></p> <p><b>ALL</b></p> |
| <p><b>Chairs Report</b></p> <p>Kate Rowell highlighted key information to the Board from her Chair’s report and updated them on activities since the last meeting in April which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ QMS Board appraisals</li> <li>▪ Farming roundtable</li> <li>▪ ARIOB</li> <li>▪ Farmers Guardian Column</li> <li>▪ BSI/Scottish Government reception</li> <li>▪ BVA Dinner</li> <li>▪ ABP Open day</li> <li>▪ National Women in Agriculture Awards - Trade Organisation Woman of the Year ‘Sarah Millar’</li> <li>▪ NFU President Tom Bradshaw</li> <li>▪ Media Briefing</li> </ul> <p>Comments were made regarding the BSE case and why it was not as big as a news story as it could have been. It was highlighted that Sheila Voas, Chief Veterinary Officer at Scottish Government handled the comms very well and comms from QMS worked well the last time of a BSE case so we were able to follow what had previously been done.</p> <p>The Board welcomed the written Chairs report and the change in order of having the Chairs report and Chief Executive Report first on the agenda.</p> |                                        |

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| <p><b>Chief Executives Report</b></p> <p>Sarah Millar highlighted key information to the Board from her report updating them on activities since the last meeting in April.</p> <p><u>General</u></p> <p>Successful media briefing – Beth Alexander and Iain Macdonald presented. Good attendance. Plan to go back to having these twice a year.</p> <p><u>Staff Update</u></p> <p>Holly McLennan starts on the 10<sup>th</sup> June as Director of Communications &amp; External Affairs. Sarah will still line manage Lucy Ozanne and Iain Macdonald for the first few months to let Holly focus on Communication and Health &amp; Education areas.</p> <p>Heather Macdonald starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> July as External Affairs Assistant. Heather will be line managed by Lucy Ozanne but will work closely with Iain Macdonald.</p> |  |
| <p><b>Financial Report 1 Months to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024</b><br/><b>Including 5 year comparison</b></p> <p>Paul Byrne presented the financial report for the 2024/ 2025 financial year to the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 which included a 5year comparison.</p> <p><u>Proposed budget 24/25</u></p> <p>Debbie took the board through the headlines from the updated budget which detailed what areas of the budget were proposing to be increased and decreased.</p> <p>The Board reviewed and approved the updated proposed budget for 24/25.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
| <p><b>Approval of Annual Report and Accounts 2023/ 2024</b></p> <p>Debbie Phillips presented the final annual report and accounts 2023/ 2024 and asked for the Boards approval.</p> <p>The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts 2023/ 2024.</p> <p>Debbie confirmed that Sarah Millar will sign the report and accounts electronically at the end of 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>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |

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| <p><b>Review of Reserves Policy</b></p> <p>The Reserves policy will be reviewed and discussed at Board meetings in September and February. It will be on the agenda at the meetings in April, June and November however will only be for discussion if required.</p> <p>The Board agreed there was nothing for discussion/ no changes to be made.</p>                                                  |  |
| <p><b>Fraud, Theft and Bad Debt Report</b></p> <p>Paul Byrne presented the Fraud, Theft &amp; Bad Debt Report which confirmed that there was no fraud, theft or bad debts identified in the 23/ 24 financial year.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                 |  |
| <p><b>FOI Costs</b></p> <p>Debbie Phillips confirmed that there have not been any further costs since the last update was given in April. Last update confirmed £37.5k had been spent on FOI requests, this cost does not include staff costs.</p> <p>This cost relates to one incident but multiple FOI's. Other FOIs did not require outsourcing expertise.</p>                                      |  |
| <p><b>Business Development - Game Changer Projects</b></p> <p>Tom Gibson presented to the Board information on the following 3 game changer projects which Business Development are leading on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Genetic and Data infrastructure Project</li> <li>▪ Feed Efficiency</li> <li>▪ Scotch Verified Meat Eating Quality</li> </ul>                     |  |
| <p><b>Strategic Indicators Update</b></p> <p>Sarah Millar presented the Board with an update to the strategic indicators.</p> <p>The strategic indicators sit under one of our 4 strategic pillars and Sarah confirmed how they each will be measured.</p> <p>Sarah highlighted that Strategic Indicators will be on the agenda for each Board meeting going forward with an update given to each.</p> |  |
| <p><b>Draft Board Meeting &amp; Planning Dates 25/ 26</b></p> <p>Kate Rowell presented the draft Board meeting and planning dates for 25/26 which included one big change that the June Board meeting will take place at the end of the month instead of at the start</p> <p>The Board approved the dates for 25/26.</p>                                                                               |  |

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| Kirsty McCormack will put these dates in the diary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Kirsty</b> |
| <b>QMS Industry Groups</b><br><br>Sarah Millar presented an update of the project plan for the new structure of the QMS Industry groups.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |               |
| <b>QMS Committee Meeting Updates</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |               |
| <b>Remuneration Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> May</b><br><br>Sarah Millar, on behalf of Pete Brown, gave an update from the Remuneration Committee meeting which took place on the 15 <sup>th</sup> May.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |               |
| <b>Scottish Red Meat Industry Resilience Group – 22<sup>nd</sup> May</b><br><br>Kate Rowell gave an update from the Scottish Red Meat Industry Resilience Group meeting which took place on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> May.<br><br>Kate highlighted the key agenda items from the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visit to Roslin Innovation centre to hear from Roslin Technologies.<br/>Presentations were given from researchers and vets covering a range of topics from TB eradication, to impact of colostrum intake in calves and Surrogate Sire Technology as a means to improve sheep production in the UK. Agreed going forward to maintain the link between industry and academic world, with future catch ups to be planned and knowledge transfer</li> <li>▪ Land Reform Bill – access to land proposals are a concern.</li> <li>▪ Border controls – National Audit Office report</li> <li>▪ Climate Control Committee – unofficially has stated that initial reports of emissions from sector are overestimated</li> </ul> |               |
| <b>Audit &amp; Risk Management Committee – 4<sup>th</sup> June</b><br><br>Ann Irvine gave an update from the recent QMS Audit & Risk Management committee meeting which took place on the 4 <sup>th</sup> June.<br><br><u>External Audit</u><br>Audit Scotland presented the auditor's covering report with audit certificate and letter of representation highlighting that an unqualified audit opinion was given with 4 recommendations.<br><br>Audit Scotland presented the Auditors Annual Audit Report for 2023/ 2024 which summarised the findings from the audit.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |               |

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| <p><u>Discussed other items including:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of report on fraud, theft and bad debt to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.</li> <li>• Review of 23/24 Audit &amp; Risk Management committee annual report</li> <li>• Review of results from Audit &amp; Risk Management committee self evaluation questionnaire.</li> <li>• Internal audit plan – Dates tbc for audits (Market Intelligence, Payroll, Marketing)</li> </ul> <p>The Board thanked Debbie and the team for all of their hard work on the external audit and for receiving an unqualified audit result.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                          |
| <p><b>Review of Audit &amp; Risk Management Committee Annual Report and Formal Feedback to Audit &amp; Risk Management Committee Members</b></p> <p>The Board reviewed the Audit &amp; Risk Management committee annual report for 2023/2024 which confirmed the numbers of meetings, what agenda items were covered and result from internal audit.</p> <p>This report was for information purposes only, no questions asked.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                          |
| <p><b>Review of Remuneration Annual Report and Formal Feedback to Remuneration Committee members</b></p> <p>The Board reviewed the Remuneration committee annual report for 2023/2024 which confirmed the numbers of meetings and what agenda items were covered.</p> <p>This report was for information purposes only, no questions asked.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                          |
| <p><b>Baselining Project Update</b></p> <p>Sarah Millar gave an update on the baselining project which QMS have been working on with AHDB and Bruce McConachie is project managing.</p> <p>Sarah highlighted the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working with UK levy bodies &amp; Scottish scientific and research institutes</li> <li>▪ Gathering expressions of interest</li> <li>▪ 46 Scottish farms have expressed interest as of 31/05/24</li> <li>▪ Two NetZero open days in July &amp; August</li> </ul> <p>Sarah confirmed the milestones/ timelines and budgets including funding and budget per farm.</p> <p>Sarah advised that the project will be announced by Kate Rowell at the Friday industry breakfast at The Royal Highland Show.</p> <p>There was an action for Board that when Sarah confirms cohorts, the Board are to suggest names of farmers to approach. Further info to be announced.</p> | <p><b>Sarah/ ALL</b></p> |

## Update Report & Implementation Plans 2024/ 2025

The Strategic Management Team highlighted some of their key activities since the 1<sup>st</sup> April which included:

### Corporate Services

- Maria Burton has started her new role as Project and CRM Coordinator.
- Interviews taking place for new office assistant which have come through QA modern apprentices. Maria will still take on administrator duties till office assistant position is filled.

### Business Development

- Successful Scotch Beef Club Launch at Highland Coast Hotel in Inverness which Kate Rowell attended.
- Successful Monitor Farm meetings taken place which have all been well attended.
- New links into Ireland Butcher shops – good feedback from Scotch Butcher Club female members learning journey.

A comment was made regarding the good news story around females in butchery and to make sure that strong comms go out on this.

### Marketing

- The RHS working group has worked extremely well. We are in the final planning/ implementing stage now.
- Comms Strategy workshop is complete with the 1<sup>st</sup> look new creative being shared tomorrow with a planned launch in September.
- Cattle and sheep assurance renewals – we are on track for this time of year.

### Communications & External Affairs

- Health & Education have been extremely busy with Tracy our coordinator haven spoken to over 1000 school kids in April.
- New ambassador programme launched to recruit more boots on the ground to support outreach work. Info can be found [here](#)

**Debbie**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community funding – 50k pot to help fund local agri shows, meat for dinner. 10 applications received so far. To receive funding they need to follow the brands and state aid. Application can be found on the website.</li> <li>▪ Successful FAST Parliamentary reception on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                          |                     |
| <p><b>RHS 2024</b></p> <p>Emma Heath presented the plans for The Royal Highland Show 2024.</p> <p>Industry breakfast speakers confirmed for Thursday are Cabinet Secretary and First minister along with Sarah Millar. Speakers for Friday are John Gilliland and Kate Rowell.</p> <p>Emma highlighted that the stand is open for levy payers, stakeholders and friends and asked the Board to invite their contacts onto the stand to use for meetings or just to come along to say hello.</p> <p>Final info on RHS will be issued to Board.</p> | <p><b>Sarah</b></p> |
| <p>There being no further business, the meeting was closed.</p> <p>The next two Board meeting dates are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September (Away Day/ Overnight)</li> <li>▪ Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                     |