

# Minutes of the Technical Committee held on Thursday 12th October 2017 at Neame Lea Nurseries, Spalding.



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## 1. Apologies:

Adlam, John  
Canales-Prati, Pablo  
Gray, Amy (NFU)  
Lloyd, Luke  
Pearson, Simon  
Satterthwaite, Jamie  
Woodcock, Russ

Kitchener, Harry  
Lisher, James  
Mason, Lyndon (Chair)  
McMillan, Ewan  
McPherson, Martin  
Need, Chris  
Opperman, Ollie  
Richardson, Fay  
Shove, Caroline  
Smith, Michael  
Swain, Jon (FEC)

## Present:

Bragg, Neil  
Braime, Howard  
Brough, Wayne (AHDB)  
Edwards, Graham  
England, Jill (ADAS)  
Key, Georgina (AHDB)

Mann, Mike (AHDB Guest)  
Smith, David (Bulrush Ltd- Guest)

Davenport, Simon (Sec)

3. **Approval of the minutes** of the previous meeting (080617) and any matters arising. Jon Swain confirmed that he was happy with the minutes as they contained the correction offered by his colleague, Ed Hardy. As a number of members had not read the minutes distributed earlier, formal approval was held over until this has been rectified. SD agreed to send the minutes out a second time with the papers for the meeting in future. SD noted that DEFRA had sent out guidance regarding the recent findings on GM petunia. It was agreed to circulate this to all the committee.
4. Topics of interest:
- a: **P&D** HB noted that they have been given some Cyclamen mite this year with their chrysanthemum cuttings and have used Dynamec to control it./ It has also been a difficult year for black aphid and this has been helped by Lacewing./ MMc commented that there has been a number of sightings of Broad Mite and that is has been difficult to confirm as the symptoms of bronzing and distortion are often mis-diagnosed. /*Echinothrips americana* is being found in UK and so far in small numbers. It was commented upon during the recent study tour of Ontario and Vineland Research believe that they have a predator which could control it./ MMc noted that a new product containing Copper and a fatty acid should be submitted to the Sceptre+ trialling programme. /Also Fusarium on poinsettia was discussed as it appears to have been found to be the causal agent in some recent plant losses (again seen in Ontario). It is recognised that it is difficult in these cases to be sure that the problem is definitely caused by *F. oxysporum* . LM noted that strains of the disease used to challenge the column stocks at CFC and did not affect any of the Lisianthus planted in the same area which are sensitive to Fusarium.
- b: **Shelf life** AF said that there was nothing new at present for them as a business and they continue to focus on the moisture available to plants and therefore watering and compost conditions prior to marketing especially with herbs.
- c: **Automation** As Simon Pearson was away this time WB commented on the visit to Vineland Research in Ontario and the work that they are doing on Tulip planting in trays, mushroom harvesting and irrigation

## ACTION

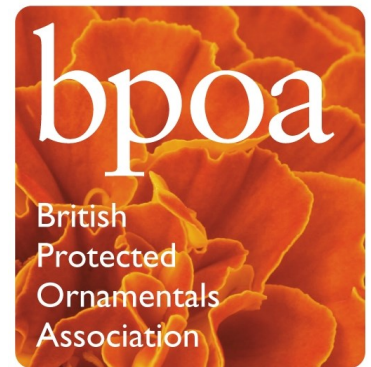
SD to circulate the minutes of the meeting 080617.  
Also, letter from DEFRA.

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management. In this last project they are using cameras to register potential plant stress and irrigate according to plants needs. (Could this approach help with stress disorders such as PMS?)

- d: Growing media** The review has been updated and will be published by AHDB in January. NB stressed that the report was complete in its current form and he was keen that it should not be edited down during publication. It should be circulated to the whole committee. It will be presented as a supplement to the AHDB grower and could be presented to the Minister./ The growing media calculator is now available at <https://growingmedia.co.uk/> with background information and notes. It can be used as a tool for discussion with customers.
- e: Nutrition** NB noted that the poinsettia monitoring scheme has been operating again this year and Phosphate deficiency has not been seen. RB209 is available from AHDB (also as an app) for Narcissus nutrition./ Leaf burn on Primrose has been noted as a problem mainly in the summer crop– is it Ec related or a Ca/Br imbalance?
- f: Energy** JS said that we are in the 4th and 5th years of Grow Save and several events are planned: 231117 Roundstone– Biomass boiler check up and maintenance; Early December –Scotland– RHI (will be on website); 170118 Bordon Hill– Humidity Control (SD noted that this is the day of the BPOA annual conference.)/ Technical updates on heat storage tanks will be published early in the New Year.
- g: Pesticides** No report from RW on this occasion and updates report later in the meeting.
- h: News & views.** CS commented that the HTA publication on Xylella (slide presentation on You Tube) was available to Garden Centres now.
- i: PAMS** FR introduced the subject noting that there have been some more problems with PAMS this year. She has tried using night time minimum pipe to ensure an active plant climate. In a discussion about the problem AF produced some samples and the bleaching of the shoot tips was not generally seen as PAMS. JE commented that, in the problems reported this year, there have been some nurseries not previously involved and others which were reporting previously, no new reports. AF and MS agreed that certain colours eg purple white, have been definite problems.
- j: Propagation** No report.
- k: BPOA Strategy** GK presented her updated report and noted that there was a need for action to be promoted on some of the priorities for research.
- l: Niche & Novel crops** OO reports that they are being asked for some species previously imported eg Kalanchoë and ferns. This is due to the pricing of imported plants against the loss in British currency. They are choosing to take up this challenge./ OO noted the loss of the commercial plant production course at Writtle and urged all to promote this type of education.
- m: PGR** EM said that they have been using their cold stores to hold back some plugs and prevent early stretch. There is a quantity of old research on this topic available in the archives.
- n: Cut Flower Centre** LM reported that the Open Evening had been well attended and the poor weather at the time had possible swollen numbers. He has just submitted the next application for funding to AHDB.
- o: Spectral filters** No report.
- p: Poinsettia** GE reported that the trials are going ahead and after the second application of some of the trial growth regulants, some effects are being observed. Regalis/ Medax are producing some phytotoxic effects. Bumper is being used in Holland extensively.
- q: Research demands** This item appears in the agenda item 9.
- 6. Mike Mann (Chair of the AHDB PO & BOF panel) joined the meeting for a Q&A.**

In his opening remarks, he reminded the committee that the sector was only as strong as the level of grower participation allowed it to be. There are still



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**ACTION**

SD to circulate the Growing Media report. LM to press for its publication in its entirety. The report to be presented to the Minister. (Judith Stuart at DEFRA)

**ACTION**

HK to report on air movement progress to the next meeting.

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some vacancies on the PO panel which would allow members' views to be represented better if they could be filled by committed growers.

- a. The general aims and objectives are well represented by Gary Taylor at the AHDB board.
- b. The board recognised that they have not responded well to the strategy consultation, which included very few replies from individual growers.
- c. He admitted that there has been no re-drafting of the strategy proposals in response to letters etc from consultees.
- d. In relation to a question on panel priorities, he said that there are- annual poinsettia trials- a 5 year programme at the CFC- Thematic research programmes and more responsive or reactive research.
- e. There is a panel that tests the value of research and the investment test works in the early stages of the trial and assesses its ultimate worth.
- f. The panel sits twice a year.
- g. Some delay in reporting trials was attributed to the contractors not performing as agreed.

In answer to a question about the micromanagement of some projects, GK also contributed that the technical managers need to see that there is an adequate progress being made. MMC commented that the STC research facility is now around 70-80% privately funded (and hence confidential) and this work is generally more straightforward to manage due to a simpler administrative burden.

- a. There is a risk that more open 'public good' work could reduce further and this would be detrimental, especially for sectors like ornamentals .
  - b. Around 11% of the gross income is spent on PO at present (£600,000) and when there is an excess, it is held in a reserve fund, currently £19M, which is statutory requirement to ensure the capacity of the organisation for 'self-insurance'. There is a provision for these funds to be re-distributed if not required. Overall, there is a need for more research proposals from the PO sector in order for it to spend the money allotted to it.
  - c. Mike was clear in stating that the members representing BPOA on the panel were entitled to share their knowledge of the financial situation with the committee.
  - d. The board will continue to focus its efforts on the provision of R&D.
  - e. The budget for the ICM projects is not apportioned as shown in the published budget figures.
  - f. Central support budget is in the process of being challenged and some savings have already been made.
  - g. The future of crop sector panels is most important as the thematic work will go ahead; more panel members are needed to ensure that the work on issues important to the sector is promoted.
  - h. LM thanked Mike for coming and sharing the responses of AHDB with the committee.
  - i. Following this discussion it was proposed that BPOA should write to AHDB, making the points raised in the meeting and asking the board for a response to the long term issues with the strategy.
5. **Management Committee feedback** SD reported that the committee was continuing to work on the Action Plan response to the Review 2017 report compiled by John Hall which would be presented to the membership at the AGM in January./ Currently, the bank balances are around £18,000 prior to some old bad debt write off./ The AGM and conference venue for 16th & 17th January 2018 will be the NFU conference centre at Stoneleigh and the hotel is being arranged locally./ A diagrammatic representation of the function of BPOA was presented with a request to all to rank the activities in order.
7. **Study Tour** HK gave a review of the Pot Plant Study Tour in Ontario, the nurseries, Vineland Research and the Greenhouse Growers Conference. The Niagara Peninsula is around the same latitude as the south of France, similar daylength to UK but higher light and greater extremes of temperature./ NB proposed that we consider the 2019 Beijing horticulture conference for our next study tour and undertook



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**ACTION**

SD to draft letter to AHDB.

ALL to write on behalf of their own business.  
ALL to consider writing to the Secretary of State to support a quinquennial review of the AHDB.

**ACTION**

ALL Rank the BPOA function activities- return to SD.

**ACTION**

ALL AGM and Conference are 16 & 17th January, 2108- Stratford

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- to provide more information.
8. **Consultation on Plant Health charges** BPOA has been asked to respond to this consultation. Most members were not aware of the change in charges and SD was requested to distribute the papers from APHA.
  9. **New Research work** CN said that he had three respondents to his call for new research project ideas and around 8 topics: PGR loss of cycocel on pelargonium, poinsettia, osteospermum, dianthus (pirouette drench suggested) and cosmos (crop protocol)/ Phalaenopsis- potworm also Sciarid & shore fly control/ LED programmes for pot roses/ Assessing methods of water treatment (MMc says that there are projects now with molecular diagnostics to differentiate between beneficial and pathogenic strains of fungal organisms eg *Fusarium* spp)/ Air movement- how does it work? (STC are studying air exchange in a warehouse situation./ Sensing technology- measuring plant stress/ *Echinothrips americanus*. CN will gather more information and rank the ideas in terms of grower interest.
  10. **Technical Seminar agenda** various topics were proposed from the meeting: Water treatment (Tim Pettit)/Xylella-APHA/ PGR- Irrigation deficit/ Staff training/ Hydroponics/ LED lighting/ Keynote speaker- Canadian??
  11. **What treatments are young plants receiving before delivery.** HK raised the question and all agreed that it was an important matter. CN recommended that some residue analysis could be beneficial and does not cost a lot at present. (Is this a research project?)
  12. **Research report collation and support.** This was not discussed.
  13. **PO Panel Update** GK presented her report and noted that the Studentship programme was available on request. There is a Fertinnowa (The thematic network is dealing with innovative water management in fertigated crops.) workshop in Holland 13th November 2017. A number of members were proposed to fill the vacant positions on the PO panel.
  14. **BPPC Update** JE gave her update report. [paper attached to meeting]
  15. **Pesticide Update** JE gave an update report. [paper attached to meeting]
  16. **AHDB Communication and crop protection update.** WB gave his update report [paper attached to meeting]
  17. **AOB** There were no items.
  18. **There was no closed session.**

The meeting closed, thanking Andrew Fuller of Neame Lea for looking after us and taking a short tour of the pot plant unit with poinsettia trials in situ.



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**ACTION**  
SD to circulate the papers from APHA on charge increases.

**ACTION**  
CN to rank ideas for research.

**ACTION**  
**ALL to rank ideas for Technical seminar 17th January and propose speakers.**

**ACTION**  
SD to send Doodle poll around to fix dates for 2018 meetings.