

# Cross-Party Group on Food AGM

21 September 2022 6pm (held virtually)

Minute

Present

MSPs

Rhoda Grant (Chair)

Colin Smyth

Jim Fairlie

Annie Wells

Brian Whittle

Invited guests

Ollie Folyan

John Farley

Association for Black & Min Ethnic Engineers

Sutherlands of Portsoy

Non-MSP Group Members

Alistair Williams

Jon Wilkin

Howell Davies

Mary Lawton

Kirsty Tinsdale

David Thomson

Cat Hay

Moira Stalker

Iain Clunie

Martin Carle

Charlotte Maltin

Gerry McBride

Niall Evans

Ifeyinwa Kanu

Christine Fraser

Tilly Robinson-Miles

Christine Graham

Ylva Haglund

Rachel Mirfattahi

Julie Hesketh-Laird

Gillian Purdon

Ann Packard

NMIS

Abertay Uni

Interface

CPG Food Secretariat

FDF Scotland

FDF Scotand

FDF Scotland

FDF Scotland

FDF Scotland

CFINE

Biomics Ltd

Skills Development Scotland

Lantra

Intellidigest

Food Training Scotland

Food Train

Kettle Produce

Scottish Wholesale Association

Strathclyde University

FSS

FSS

RSA

Phil Thomas  
Lesley Stanley  
Jules Griffin  
Jeff Justice  
College  
Lorna Dawson  
Vivian Maeda  
Liza Gilhooly  
Pat Abel  
Orchid Liu  
Sandra Williamson  
Viv Collie

Artilus  
Consultant  
Aberdeen Uni  
University of Edinburgh & South Texas  
  
SEFARI  
Business in the Community  
Scottish Labour  
Transition Edinburgh South  
UK Chinese Times  
  
Vivid Ideas and Solutions

## 1. Apologies

These were received from Eve Keepax, Archie Gibson, Julia Mitchell, Jackie McCabe, Ewan MacDonald-Russell, Jim Fox, Sarah Millar, Sara Smith, Brenda Black, David Lonsdale, Paul Rooke, Paul Richardson, Wendy Barrie, Bosse Dahlgren, Jess Sparks, John Davidson, Ruth Watson, Finlay Carson MSP, Yvonne Traynor, Kirsten Leask, Martin Meteyard, Antonia Ineson, Ray Lorimer, Wendy Wrieden, Katy Clark MSP, Fiona Dalgetty, Martin Irons, Peter Faassen de Heer.

In addition, Jim Fairlie MSP noted that he would need to leave the meeting early.

## 2. Minutes of the Last Meeting (27 April 2022)

The minutes of the last meeting were approved and noted as a fair reflection of proceedings.

## 3. Matters Arising

David Thomson, CEO of FDF Scotland, noted that the Scottish Government's Short-life Food Security and Supply Taskforce – which was discussed at the last meeting - had now published its [final report of recommendations](#). A food security unit would be set up within the Scottish Government as a result of this report. There will be another meeting of the Food Security and Supply Taskforce to monitor and evaluate activity as result of these recommendations.

## 4. Election of Co-Conveners and Secretariat

The following stood as Co-Conveners:

- Rhoda Grant MSP, Scottish Labour
- Jim Fairlie MSP, Scottish National Party
- Annie Wells MSP, Scottish Conservative

They were proposed by Colin Smyth MSP (CS), seconded by David Thomson and duly elected.

There was an election for the Secretariat. Kirsty Tinsdale (FDF Scotland) was proposed by CS, seconded by Rhoda Grant MSP (RG) and elected.

## 5. Innovation in the Food and Drink Industry –What does it Actually Mean?

RG thanked Mary Lawton for providing the secretariat for many years and Kirsty Tinsdale for taking over the role and introduced the theme and thanked the speakers for joining us.

### **Alistair Williams, Food and Drink Theme Lead, National Manufacturing Institute for Scotland (NIMS) (AW)**

The key points from AW's presentation included:

- Food and drink is important to Scotland and to the United Kingdom. It employs more people than the aerospace and automotive sectors combined.
- It's highly technical, increasingly complicated and relatively well paid.
- It's been hit hard by COVID and again with the energy crisis.
- Costs are increasing and there is a shortage of people and skills at a time when there is more of a focus on innovation and automation.
- Technological solutions and becoming more tech savvy is vital for the future success of the industry.
- From a sustainability perspective there are easy solutions such as LED lighting and freezer technology. But some of the industry's equipment is old, built into the infrastructure and expensive to replace.
- The productivity of our industry is very low compared to other countries in Europe and across the world. With the lack of people, technology is the way to fill the productivity gap – including through the use of Cobots.
- Using the latest gases, the latest technologies and the best insulation, could help significant energy costs.
- The use of technologies such as virtual technical manager and robots can support food safety and traceability more effectively.
- Installing sensors on machines in factories can give management teams real time data to manage those assets and improve their efficiencies.
- NIMS can support businesses to find funding and link state-of-the-art technology that's affordable into making real world solutions to make jobs easier and businesses more profitable.

**Dr Jon Wilkin, Senior Lecturer in New Product Development, Abertay University  
Transform Net Zero Project (JW)**

The key points from JW's presentation included:

- Abertay University received funding from the Scottish Government and the European Union's Regional Development Fund and Scottish Enterprise for their Transform Net Zero Programme.
- The aim is to stimulate innovation within SME food and drink businesses.
- The project is looking at supply chain and customer demand, market opportunities towards net zero and long-term transformation in the food and drink industry to help manufacturers to be both green and economically sustainable in the future.
- Projects have used the known science of the moment to help SMEs see what they can do on their own and also provide extra support as needed. This has included linking up companies to try and come up with different ideas.
- Projects have included fruit peel waste being used to make cocktails, helping businesses find low impact ways to reduce energy usage and emissions and using gamification for behaviour change and training.
- Abertay are looking for more businesses to take part in the programme and encouraged everyone to pass any contacts that may be interested.
- At the moment the project is due to finish up in May 2023 but it's hoped that it can be kept going longer.

**Dr Ollie Folayan, Co-Founder and Chair, Association of Black and Minority Ethnic Engineers and member of Scottish Government's Equalities and Wellbeing in Manufacturing Working Group (OF)**

The key points from OF's presentation included:

- The Scottish Government's Equalities and Wellbeing in Manufacturing Working Group set out a number of recommendations in its [report](#) published earlier in the year.
- The main focus areas of this report were leadership, mental health and wellbeing and flexible working.
- There is still a greater demand for engineering talent than there is talent available. That is reflected whether looking at gender, ethnicity, disability, and sexuality.
- Engineers or engineering graduates are likely to be working in an area different from what they studied, and representation at leadership level in the top 100 engineering companies in the UK, show black representation is lower than 0.3% and with black and minority ethnic, it goes up to around 3%.
- There is a need to widen participation and look at retention.
- Many of the businesses that are within the industry are SMEs, support is needed to enable them to develop policies that widen participation.

- ‘Blind’ recruitment policies and improving the data on retention to better understand the reasons that people leave the sector could be important and dedicated support specifically for nurturing or female and ethnic minority candidates in leadership could help.
- Support is needed to help employers improve their diversity and working with trade associations and other representative groups is important.
- It is important that the Scottish Government liaises with stakeholder groups and partners to ensure that this report reaches as wide an audience as possible.
- It is important that mental health support and flexible working practices are embedded into organisations.

### **John Farley, Director, Sutherland’s of Portsoy**

JF shared an innovation case study, he noted that:

- Sutherland’s look to try and mitigate waste or utilise whatever they can to make something completely different through innovation.
- They worked with Abertay University on the transform Net Zero programme.
- As the business focuses on the health benefits and the nutritional value of their products they decided that had to be an important part of the project.
- The project used the whole of the fish in the process of making a Cullen skink product.
- Sutherland’s hope to launch it in the early part of next year with the feedback that was received through this project. It is intended to mitigate waste by using the entire fish but creating a nutritious healthy cheap meal.

### **Open debate**

David Thomson noted that he would be keen to meet with OF to discuss how the Food and Drink Federation could support the findings of the Scottish Government’s Equalities and Wellbeing in Manufacturing Working Group report.

David asked about the challenges of engaging academia with businesses. JF said that previously hadn’t appreciated the value of what could be gained by working with academia but that the expertise that he’s received has provided positive results in a couple of different projects.

JW thought that businesses sometimes don’t understand how long academia can take to get a project running which can be challenging. Support from academics can help businesses think beyond the here and now and future proof themselves. He thought the link between businesses and academia is improving with businesses understanding more what can be achieved. He also noted that Interface has been a great help in connecting businesses with them. He noted that funding could be a challenge and that there are few universities that have food and drink manufacturing courses and those that do find it challenging to recruit for the courses.

AW thought that academia needs to be more agile in looking at how they engage.

Howell Davies, Interface, asked OF if there are any sectors that are getting it right in terms of diversity and inclusion that food and drink manufacturing could learn from.

OF thought there was a lot to learn from other parts of the manufacturing sector. He highlighted that BP has gone through a process of restructuring for a greener future and were very mindful of keeping a diverse and inclusive workforce as part of that.

Vivian Maeda, Business in the Community, said they have [the Race at Work Charter](#), which is free for any business to sign up to with resources to achieve good equality and equity standards. If you would like further information, contact [Vivian](#).

RG noted that the presentations and email addresses of the presenters would be shared with the minutes.

## 6. AOB

No other business was raised.

## 7. Date of Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 15 November at 6pm and is expected to be a hybrid meeting: live and on Teams.