

Norfolk and Suffolk Agri-Food Industry Council

Tuesday 13 December 2022 10.30-12.30
Via Teams

Minutes

1	<p>Welcome from the Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corrienne Peasgood, the Chair, welcomed members to the last meeting of the year and introduced the meeting. • Since the last meeting, the Chair and James Allen reported back to the New Anglia LEP Board on the Industry Council's work over the past six months. Pulling this report together showed how well our work is aligned to the delivery of the Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy. We also updated on key reactive work such as Avian Influenza, where we have stood up the Norfolk and Suffolk Poultry Group. • Matters arising – Chair asked for confirmation of the Agri-Food Industry Council's submission to the EFRA Committee Food Security Inquiry. James Allen confirmed this was submitted. • Minutes of the last meeting were approved. • Noted apologies (listed at the bottom of the minutes).
2	<p>Industrial Decarbonisation: Agri-Food – Ellen Goodwin, New Anglia LEP & Emma McKenna, Head of Net Zero at Innovate UK KTN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Road to Net Zero report highlighted three key areas: regional cohesion, demystifying decarbonisation, and business planning (and the importance of decarbonisation within that). • Key observations around agri-food: significant importance placed on personal engagement with peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange and the need to build trust in the sector. • On the back of the Net Zero report, New Anglia LEP has engaged with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) around industrial decarbonisation for dispersed clusters (outside of the industrial clusters) such as Norfolk and Suffolk – identifying agri-food as a key sector to reduce CO2 from point source emitters. • As a follow-up, the LEP has bid into the Norfolk Investment Framework to take forward its thinking around a route map for enabling the agri-food sector to decarbonise. • Innovate UK and Innovate UK KTN are looking at the diffusion of Net Zero innovation to decarbonise the agri-food sector from farm to fork. Taking a place-based and cross-sector approach to driving the transition to Net Zero. • Innovate UK KTN is keen to understand what innovations are being developed within the region and further afield. Want to move towards building communities, networks and clusters with shared challenges around Net Zero to work out what solutions will add real benefits at scale. • Innovate UK KTN has developed a programme with the East of England Local Government Association and is working with local authorities around their Net Zero challenges, such as lowland peat. <p>Corrienne Peasgood:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of building clusters and communities, will Innovate UK KTN be looking to engage with existing groups or new groups? We can facilitate a task and finish group if helpful. • Emma McKenna response: Innovate UK KTN is open to engaging with existing networks to begin with. If there are shared challenges that become obvious, then happy to facilitate further discussions. <p>Jonathan Clarke:</p>

- Attended a session with Innovate UK recently where this was discussed, including the IX platform and case studies which included West Suffolk and Electric Corby. Grant funding has been accessed by Innovate UK to take these forwards. Norfolk has not really engaged with this that well. There are really interesting opportunities to work with Innovate UK around agriculture – keen to pick this up with New Anglia LEP.
- Emma McKenna response: Within Net Zero, there is a whole strand around Net Zero Living, where businesses and local authorities can apply for a share of funding to plan for a place-based demonstration of ways to accelerate progress towards Net Zero. Net Zero Living: Pioneering Places funding call closed on 1st December. The next competition [Net Zero Living: Fast Followers](#) is due to be launched on 21st December.

Martin Collison:

- Peat is a key concern. John Shropshire manages a group in the Fens (Fenland Soil) looking at this issue. 3% of carbon emissions on a national scale come from lowland peat, it would be good to link into this.
- Recently chaired a meeting in Lincolnshire looking at food processing where consultants have come up with heating and cooling statistics for processors. This data showed that processors are using four times as much energy as they should, with worst case figures showing some are using 700% more than they should. Most companies have simply regarded this as an overhead, but there are lots of opportunities for efficiencies to be gained.
- Freight flows across borders. We need to decarbonise the whole supply chain including ports, rail infrastructure, transport infrastructure, etc.
- Corrienne Peasgood response: this all shows the importance of working together across the LEP area, and with our regional partners.
- Emma McKenna response: Fenland Soil are involved in conversations already. These points are all helpful.

Ben Turner:

- Ben Burgess wanted to put in charging stations at their depot in Rutland. Wanted 20-25 car parking spaces and 10 charging stations. However, for some reason charging stations are not recognised as a parking space so they have had to put more concrete down to increase the number of car parking spaces.
- The company wants to baseline its carbon footprint. Lots of organisations have been in touch to sell their metrics / assessments but wanted to check whether there is a trustworthy source to benchmark their decarbonisation journey.
- Martin Collison response: there are now c.96 farm carbon tools in the UK!
- Emma McKenna response: There is a UK SME Climate Hub and a Business Climate Hub run by Government which has baseline tools for companies to use. Innovate UK KTN happy to connect with partners they are working with.
- Ellen Goodwin response: The LEP ran some useful events on Net Zero, including on [Carbon Literacy](#) and [wider clean growth events](#).

3 **Avian Influenza – Stuart Catchpole, New Anglia LEP**

- Norfolk and Suffolk Poultry Group was pulled together during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic to see how best we could support them. We have stood the group back up given the impact of Avian Influenza and invited a range of stakeholders to join us from NFU, British Poultry, British Free Range Egg Producers Association, local businesses across the supply chain and local authority colleagues.
- As of 1st October, there were 88 cases across the UK (compared to 25 last year) and those cases had risen to 160+ on 1st December (of which 50% of cases were in East Anglia, which has a poultry sector valued at £557m, employs 14,000 and is responsible for 41% of domestic turkey production).

- The business intelligence provided in meetings informed a letter to Thérèse Coffey MP, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The first letter received no response. At the second meeting of the group, Peter Aldous MP and representatives of other regional MPs joined the meeting. A second letter was sent to the Secretary of State highlighting the urgent nature of support required and the devastating impact on this key sector for our region.
- Those letters mentioned / requested:
 - A retrospective approach to compensation to support farmers.
 - The derogation for defrosting is welcome but is due to end on 31st December 2022. This is a key issue for turkey, duck and goose producers and needs addressing quickly so that farmers can plan for next year.
 - Cleaning, restocking and shut down periods – need to support companies with clear advice on this to streamline processes and protocols, addressing period on shut downs with certain farms closed for 12 months. (In France, seeing chicken farms restocked in 4 weeks and duck farms in 7-8 weeks)
 - More information needed on vaccinations and to speed up vaccination trials – must not be behind the curve on this.
 - Insurance companies are currently reluctant to offer policies which could result in farmers not placing stock for next year.
- This is all having a significant impact on the sector both from an economic perspective, but a mental health and wellbeing impact too.
- The next meeting of the Poultry Group will be in January, and we will feed back any information from the Industry Council.

Charles Hesketh, NFU:

- Thanked New Anglia LEP and partners for working together to raise this key issue at the highest levels in Government.
- There is a lot in the media around vaccinations. Jonathan Clarke (JIC) recently met with the NFU on this issue. There are barriers around legislative approval through Defra amidst concerns around issues such as trade.
- Poultry sector also utilises a huge amount of feed wheat. In addition, seeing the pig sector in decline. Concerned about the combined impact on arable producers. Potential for market disruption.
- Working closely with APHA. They have a huge amount of pressure on them to manage inspections and calls but are doing a good job in the testing circumstances.
- An awful lot of poultry producers are currently looking at the risk factors and uncertainty and deciding to take a bit of a sabbatical at the moment.
- Working with partners in mainland Europe as they face lots of similar challenges.

Ben Turner:

- Does not think that this will impact worldwide market for wheat. Finance and insurance for the poultry and pig sectors is becoming a huge issue. Had an example of a pig producer recently being declined finance from nine different financial institutions.

Jonathan Clarke:

- Defra has funded a programme with academics and government agencies to look at vaccination.
- The biosecurity measures in place will not prevent the spread due to the airborne nature of the virus.
- There is the potential for new breeding stocks that are genome edited which are resistant to the virus, but question marks over whether this will get through legislation.
- Earlham Institute is also developing virus resistant applications.

Martin Collison:

- Recently engaged with a poultry farm that is locked down for 12 months. They are now looking to develop a new use for the site, nothing to do with poultry. East Anglia is firmly in the firing line as you can see in the hotspots.

Clarke Willis:

- We should all be really concerned about this. Seen major decline in the pig sector over the last 12 months, with many family businesses now out of business. Can see the same happening with the poultry sector. Need all MPs to be aware of this impact.
- At the same time, we need to manage the media as butchers are not short of Turkeys for Christmas despite some of the messages in the media.

Food Enterprise Park & Broadland Food Innovation Centre – Clarke Willis & Alex Larter (Slides attached)

Clarke Willis:

- Putting activity in place for two new sales on the Food Enterprise Park, including one Norwich Research Park spin-out.
- Fischer Farms being handed over as we speak. Production will start in early January and the vertical farm will be at full capacity by April 2023.
- Pretty much filling out Local Development Order 1 which is in Broadland. The land to the south of the main spine road has an exciting inward investment opportunity with a company from India, which the LEP has led engagement with.
- Site has had challenges around power. All the work is now complete for 30MW of grid capacity. Planning permission has been approved for solar power and also looking at battery options. The whole site will be supplied with renewable energy. Just waiting to be connected by pylon in April 2023.
- Local Development Order 2 will go out for planning consultation by South Norfolk Council in early 2023. All sorts of opportunities linked to agri-food and agri-tech.
- Concerns exist (as you can see in slides) around land being dug up right through LDO2 site by Orsted and Equinor.

Alex Larter:

- Broadland Food Innovation Centre's test kitchen is now fully kitted out and available to rent.
- The first tenants have moved in and installed their machinery, with successful production runs completed. The second tenant has been secured and 2 out of the 4 large units have firm commitments.
- Started using the Centre for cluster events e.g., plant-based protein and food tasting events.
- The Conference room is also available for rent, with pricing on the website.
- The target for innovation support (12 hours of support) is 90 food and drink SMEs across Norfolk and Suffolk. Project has supported 24 businesses with 12 hours of support and 71 in progress. Overall, 94 with at least 1 hour of support (with some awaiting qualification).
- Upcoming workshops include How to Start a Food Business (January, March and May) and Grant funding for Food and Drink Businesses (monthly January to June).
- The Dynamic Purchasing System has been really successful with 28 mini competitions. 18 competitions are underway, 5 in tendering process and 5 completed.
- In terms of the Innovation Cluster coordinated by UEA, engaging with 123 food and drink SMEs, 39 researchers, 114 other members (incl. large businesses & public sector) and 35 members outside of Norfolk and Suffolk.
- To date, 4 collaborations (Condimentum, Crumpetorium, Grumpy Panda and Prepking) have been delivered between businesses and researchers, with another 16 scheduled.
- Norwich Business School will be running MBA placements with food and drink businesses which will help increase the number of collaborations in 2023.

- Recent events include the Plant Based Protein Innovation Platform. Upcoming events include the Food Inspire Series.
- Working with Professor Andrew Fearne, UEA has commissioned the creation of Market Insight reports which provide invaluable market data for specific sub-sectors.
- The [Food and Drink Innovation Conference](#) (all-day) will be held on 29 March at Barnham Broom.

Matt Jones:

- Suffolk County Council is working with UEA and Hethel Innovation to promote this great initiative in Suffolk. Working closely with Local Flavours to put on a series of mobile events at various locations across Suffolk.

5 **Agri-Food Skills Group Update – Greg Smith & Natasha Waller (Slides attached)**

Greg Smith:

- The Agri-Food Skills Group has been meeting for a number of years representing the sector as a whole. The LEP has provided the secretariat through Natasha Waller, meeting four times a year ahead of the Industry Council meetings.
- Held a workshop in the autumn to refocus efforts given the work has been guided by a Sector Skills Plan published back in 2017.
- Skills in the sector are demand-led. Bringing people of all ages through to meet the different requirements of the industry. Whilst the work tends to focus on the needs of today, the group has tried to look over the horizon at the needs of tomorrow.
- Facing a shortage in teaching staff and labour supply, which has been caused by various reasons.
- Providers are working on the introduction of T-Levels in 2023.
- Apprenticeships remain stable, but always room for more.

Natasha Waller:

- [Skills Bootcamps](#):
 - Delivers flexible training programmes lasting from 60 hours and up to 16 weeks based on sector's skills needs.
 - Addresses needs of adults who are full-time and part-time employed, unemployed, returning to work after a break or self-employed
 - Training can be either regulated (i.e., qualification based) or non-regulated (e.g., based on alignment with industry standards).
 - Contract with the Department for Education to deliver 240 starts this financial year. Currently at 202 starts.
 - Much of the training is delivered online.
 - On Green Skills, Suffolk New College is delivering 2 courses:
 - Introduction to Arboriculture – 16 learners
 - Introduction to Farming – 20 learners
 - New Anglia LEP, working with partners, has put in a bid for Wave 4 of the Skills Bootcamps and hoping for an additional £2m to build on this activity.
 - Please do help us promote this opportunity and do get in touch with the LEP if you want more information.
- [The Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture \(TIAH\)](#):
 - Preparing for full launch in 2023 as agriculture and horticulture's professional body.
 - Helping with careers inspiration and upskilling those in the industry.
 - Building CPD and apprenticeships into a professional framework.
 - Has secured charity status but is looking for further funding and membership offering will be live in the coming months.
 - Launched TIAH Cultivator Scheme.
 - Excited by the work that TIAH is doing.

- [Local Skills Improvement Plan](#):
 - Department for Education initiative that will set out the key priorities needed to make technical education and skills provision more responsive to changing needs of employers and the local economy.
 - The local Chambers of Commerce are leading this work, with agri-food already identified as a key sector in their work. Important to join the dots and engage with this work so Chambers have attended Agri-Food Skills Group meetings.
 - Work is well-funded, so we need to work with the Chambers to get the most out of this.

Greg Smith:

- Next steps:
 - Promotion of sector remains key. There are a number of interventions we can make such as Skills and Careers Festivals (March event at Norfolk Showground).
 - We must actively promote exciting opportunities for the future.
 - Would love to see greater participation from industry involved in the Agri-Food Skills Group conversations – welcome any thoughts for new attendees.
 - Refocusing direction to reflect all of this.
- Key to get messaging across to local politicians around the importance of colleges in the skills landscape and the associated funding requirements.

6 **Agri-Tech Innovation Launchpad Bid – James Allen, New Anglia LEP**

- New Anglia LEP submitted an expression of interest to [Innovate UK's Innovation Launchpad Competition](#) for an Agri-Tech Launchpad in Eastern England.
- For each Launchpad, Innovate UK will invest up to £7.5 million for business-led innovation projects and wrap-around support. This will be awarded through competitive opportunities tailored to the needs of the business innovation cluster.
- Our proposal built on the collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Greater Lincolnshire LEP and included the following initial partners: University of East Anglia (all Norwich Research Park partners), University of Lincoln, University of Cambridge, BT, and NIAB.
- The targeted approach will focus on:
 - translating our region's world class portfolio of basic plant science, capitalising on the deregulation of gene editing, to generate and commercialise products that improve the nation's health, deliver sustainable materials, drive sustainable agriculture and deliver sustainable economic growth.
 - emerging and rapidly translating our digital technologies. This includes AI, Machine Learning and Robotics, delivering the National AI Strategy, Innovation Strategy and Automation in Horticulture Strategy.
- Innovate UK has delayed announcing its decision on the next wave of regional innovation launchpads to early 2023.
- Existing pilots include a Net Zero Launchpad (led by Tees Valley Combined Authority) and the Advanced Manufacturing Launchpad (led by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority).

State of the Nation - All

Andrew Francis:

- All aware of cost inflation.
- Water remains a real concern for the East and access to new water licences (which are due for renewal in 2024). The Environment Agency (EA) has not confirmed how much clawback they will look for or the reference period (which is adding to uncertainty and hindering investment in water resilience systems). The EA will not engage or advise on this.
- Using several large businesses as a reference point, root vegetables will be back between 15-35% for 2023 given high input costs, lack of ability to hedge prices and the size of the financial risk.

Ben Turner:

- Root crop producers are cutting down their liabilities.
- Farmers who have already invested / have their water licences are choosing not to refill their reservoirs due to the significant costs involved.
- The East is considerably back compared to the rest of the UK when it comes to ordering farm machinery product. Now sold out of the biggest and second biggest combine harvester ranges. Cannot get any of their largest tractors for the entire of 2023, so looking at deliveries in 2024 for key product portfolio.
- Speaking to contacts in the West and the North, they were more optimistic as they got water when they needed it during the year.

Charles Hesketh:

- Assured that we will be having some big announcement on Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) standards in January (covering nutrient management, pest management and hedgerows).
- Appetite towards the SFI has been poor to date, mainly due to poor communications from Defra.

Clarke Willis:

- Taking over as the Executive Director at Norfolk FWAG. Working with the Broads Authority on a peat initiative in the Broads National Park. Have a contract with Norfolk County Council to deliver 1 million trees for Norfolk. We should look to cover more on the environment in these Industry Council meetings.

Jonathan Clarke:

- Main challenge is around recruitment and retention. Brexit challenges are still impacting and Horizon Europe announcements having a significant effect.
- Receiving levelled investment for the 2023-27 period from the BBSRC internal framework programme (which is at 2017 levels), which will not enable them to put up salaries to be more competitive.
- Received investment for redeveloping glasshouse infrastructure and hoping for additional Government funding for further infrastructure.

Mark Nicholas (slides to be shared):

- RNAA has reorganised itself with a more targeted strategy and focused interventions moving forward with detail in the slides:
 - Food and Farming Forum – cross-industry and intelligence-led to solve problems at a local level.
 - Food and Farming Discovery Trust – focused on education and learning
 - RNAA Public Events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RNAA Opportunities Fund – fundraising to award scholarships, grants and bursaries to younger people to take advantages of professional development opportunities both within this region and further afield. ● The Norfolk Farming Conference had 405 delegates in attendance. <p>Martin Collison:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When the migration statistics were published recently, there was a knee jerk reaction to say that we should not have more overseas students. Any move towards this would be fundamentally damaging to the Higher Education sector and could significantly impact the agri-food sector and the globally-leading research base we have in this region.
8	<p>Any Other Business (Chair)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dates confirmed for 2023 and these have been circulated by James Allen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday 14th March – 10am-12pm ○ Tuesday 13th June – 10am-12pm ○ Tuesday 12th September – 10am-12pm ○ Tuesday 12th December – 10am-12pm <p>James Allen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New Anglia LEP has published the Space Sector Plan for Norfolk and Suffolk and has been successful with our bid to the UK Space Agency to fully establish the Space Cluster for Norfolk and Suffolk. We are working closely with the Satellite Apps Catapult, European Space Agency and UK Space Agency to explore opportunities for our region, with agriculture, marine science, and Net Zero all high on this agenda. In partnership with Agri-TechE, we have an event focused on Space-Tech meets Agri-Tech on 26th January at Easton College (2-5pm). ● The LEP has got the green light to procure consultancy services to deliver an agri-food insight report. The report will provide key data, insights, and recommendations on where we should be focussing our efforts to deliver inward investment and business support activities to harness the new opportunities being presented. The invitation to tender will be circulated to the Industry Council.

In Attendance

Corrienne Peasgood (Chair); **Alexander Larter**, Broadland Food Innovation Centre; **Andrew Francis**, Team Ag(UK); **Ben Turner**, Ben Burgess and Co Ltd; **Martin Collison**, Collison and Associates; **Greg Smith**, Agri-Food Skills Group; **Jonathan Clarke**, JIC; **Toby Matthews (substituting Jo Middleton)**, Norfolk County Council; **Mark Nicholas**, Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association; **Nicola Webster**, REAF; **Charles Hesketh**, NFU; **Viv Gillespie**, Suffolk New College; **Matt Jones**, Suffolk County Council; **Clarke Willis**, Food Enterprise Park, **James Allen**, **Ellen Goodwin**, **Natasha Waller & Stuart Catchpole**, New Anglia LEP; and Emma McKenna, Innovate UK KTN.

Apologies for absence

Adrian Dyter, Muntons; **Andrew Fearne**, UEA; **Belinda Clarke**, Agri-TechE; **Cath Crowther**, CLA; **Sam Fairs**, Hillfairs Farming Ltd; **Emily Norton**, Savills; **James Allen**, New Anglia LEP; **Mike Edwards**; Albanwise; **Peter Mason**, Uphouse Farm Ltd; **Philip Ainsworth**, Suffolk Agricultural Association; **Robert Gooch**, The Wild Meat Co; **Rosie Begg**, Gorgate Ltd; and **Tim Place**, Place UK.