



ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICAL REVIEW BODY (AWERB)

Minutes of the 60th meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body held virtually on-line on Tuesday 21 April 2020 from 10.00am to 12.00pm

PART I – PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1. Present

[REDACTED] (Chair and Establishment Licence Holder), [REDACTED] (Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer), [REDACTED] (Representative of the Project Licence Holders), [REDACTED] (School of Psychology), [REDACTED] (BSMS), [REDACTED] (Representative of the Personal Licence Holders) and [REDACTED] (Named Veterinary Surgeon).

In attendance: [REDACTED] (Research Governance Officer) and [REDACTED] (Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from: [REDACTED] (Representative of the Biomedical Research Facility (BRF) User Group), [REDACTED] (Lay Member), [REDACTED] (Deputy Manager, BRF), and [REDACTED] (Local Home Office Inspector).

2. Minutes

The AWERB **APPROVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2020 (**AWERB/59/M**) as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

The AWERB **NOTED** an update of the current actions outstanding (**AWERB/60/01**). It was noted that the report requested by the AWERB outlining how the £1m spend will address the critical areas of potential failure; chillers, air cooling system and the generator had been incorporated into the NACWO report [minute 5 (**AWERB/60/02**) refers].

PART II – MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

4. Report from the Chair

The AWERB **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the Chair. Of note:

- The Chair outlined the impact of Covid-19 on the BRF. The Campus was largely shutdown although approximately 900 students remained on site. Work in the BRF had been scaled back extensively: existing experiments, breeding colonies and gene lines were being maintained, but there were no new experiments.
- The Chair explained that building works were on-hold due to the Covid-19 situation. The University's capital spending programme had been paused

pending the return to normality and review in the light of the new financial outlook.

- The Chair personally - and on behalf of the University - thanked all staff involved in the running of the BRF for their response to Covid-19, noting the unprecedented demands placed on them in very difficult circumstances. Particular thanks went to the NACWO and his team; to [REDACTED], Chief Technical Officer (Estates and Facilities Management Division); and to the researchers working in the BRF.

5. Report from the Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer (NACWO)

The AWERB **RECEIVED** an update report from the NACWO (**AWERB/60/02**) which included the NTCO report and an overview of the Covid-19 response. Key points:

- In the light of previous issues regarding over-usage, [REDACTED] who was close to reaching the licence numbers, submitted a PPL amendment to reduce usage. This has been reviewed and approved by the ARG for submission to the Home Office.
- A project board is to consider full air handling unit replacement as opposed to refurbishment. In the short-term, replacement chillers and air handling units will be procured to assure temperature control and back-up systems to ensure environmental parameters are maintained. Pre-Covid-19, consideration was being given to shutting one side of the BRF at a time to allow the contractors unrestricted access to facility equipment. This would be re-explored when Covid-19 measures were lifted.
- The generator was currently operating well but electrical load testing is required to ensure that the generator has sufficient capacity to run the facility in the event of a mains failure.
- A new virus has recently been detected in the fish unit [minute 6. refers]. The virus has been reported in animal units nationally and is likely to be present in most fish units. Reports were that it has little impact on animal health other than for immuno-suppressed fish.
- There were no rodent health issues to report.

NTCO report

- [REDACTED] has taken over the role as Named Training and Competency Officer (NTCO).
- The Charles River course for new licence holders and researchers was delivered on-site at the BRF in partnership with the University of Brighton. There were 9 attendees from Brighton and 4 from Sussex. The collaboration was a success and delivered savings as the cost per module was lower and there were no travel or accommodation costs to consider. This model of delivery would therefore be considered for the neuroscience rotation programme.

Covid-19 Response

- Animal numbers have been reduced and research activities suspended, except for longitudinal studies where researchers are accessing the BRF on a weekly or fortnightly basis.
- While Covid-19 measures apply the BRF is being staffed 4 hours per day on weekdays and 2 hours per day at weekends. Full cleans have been replaced with spot cleans but there has been no impact on animal health.
- Colonies have been reduced and no further reductions are required at present. Consideration is being given to sperm-freezing: one researcher has experience

of this through partnership work with the University of Southampton, and training for additional researchers is being explored. This would be a positive development for the BRF as well as supporting Covid-19 mitigation work.

- Supplies of feed and bedding have not been adversely affected. The BRF donated 7000 gloves and 200 masks to local hospitals and currently has adequate amounts of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). PPE is on order, but orders are taking up to six weeks to fulfil.
- [REDACTED] gave an interview to *Nature* on the impact of Covid-19 on animal research which is available as a podcast.
- The Local Home Office Inspector is happy with the Covid-19 measures the BRF has put in place.

6. Report from the Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS)

The AWERB **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS).
Of note:

- There were no issues of significance to report.
- In person visits were on hold due Covid-19 but the NVS would be happy to attend the BRF in the case of an emergency.
- Animal health reports submitted by [REDACTED] showed that sufficient screening was being undertaken.
- With regard to the new zebrafish virus [minute 5. refers], microbacteria had been detected in sludge tanks. The organisms therein were relatively harmless to fish but could cause skin irritation in some instances. None of the fish screened had microbacteria on them.

7. Practicals Involving Animals

The AWERB **RECEIVED** the summary of the use of animals/animal tissue in teaching activities (**AWERB/60/03**). The paper had been commissioned by RGQAC to assure AWERB oversight of non-ASPAs activities in teaching as well as research. In addition, there was a sector-wide push for AWERBs to consider the ethical sourcing of animal materials used for research and teaching. [REDACTED] were members of the Crick Institute working group looking at this.

The summary was **APPROVED** for onward submission to RGQAC.

[ACTION: [REDACTED] to submit the summary of the use of animals/animal tissue in teaching activities to RGQAC]

PART III – MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

8. Actions of the Applications Review Group (ARG)

The AWERB **NOTED** the summary of actions undertaken by the ARG (**AWERB/60/04**) since the last AWERB meeting.

9. UKRIO item on REC reviews of research involving animal use

The AWERB **NOTED** the item from the UKRIO on REC reviews of research involving animal use (**AWERB/60/05**). It was agreed that this would be forwarded to the University Research Governance and Quality Assurance Committee (RGQAC) to

note.

[ACTION: ██████████ to submit the UKRIO paper to RGQAC]

10. Dates of future meetings

02 July 2020 - ██████████ (subject to Covid-19 measures).

11. Any other business

11.1 Engagement with the 3Rs

The importance of full engagement with the 3Rs by PPL holders at mid-term and retrospective review was discussed. It was agreed that licence holder statements that further refinements could not be made should always be queried. The AWERB review involved questioning PPL holders and requesting revisions until satisfied that the 3R principles had been fully considered and queries resolved. To assure this process reviews should always be conducted at a meeting of the AWERB ARG (conducted virtually if required) rather than by e-mail.

11.2 RSPCA resources for AWERB members

The AWERB **NOTED** the RSPCA resources for AWERB members (**AWERB/60/06**). These were endorsed by ██████████ who recommended in particular the guidance on promoting a Culture of Care and Visiting the Animal Unit. Visits to the BRF would be scheduled for AWERB members once the Covid-19 measures were lifted.

[ACTION: ██████████ to schedule AWERB member visits to the BRF]

11.3 AWERB Membership

The AWERB noted the vacancy for a second lay member. ██████████ offered to contact his counterpart at the University of Brighton for possible candidates to approach.

[ACTION: ██████████ to contact Brighton regarding lay member candidates]

██████████
Secretary
April 2020