

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of
THE SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE
ASSOCIATION held in the ICE RINK,
GLOVER STREET, PERTH at 2.00 p.m. on
Thursday, 17 October, 2002.

PRESENT: Messrs. A. S. Bayne, R. J. S. Doig, D. J. Harley, R. Haynes, V. Lumb, J. Macfarlane, J. R. McArthur, A. B. Pullar and A. J. B. Redpath along with H. B. Edmond, the Secretary.

The Association President, Mr D. J. Harley, occupied the Chair and welcomed those present at the meeting.

(1) APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Messrs A. M. Beattie, T. Halliwell, C. J. Herron, A. D. Lamont, K. A. McKenzie, A. Melrose, J. L. Milne, P. Peebles, D. Y. Stewart and J. M. Swinton.

(2) MINUTES: The Minute of the Meeting of Council of 15 August 2002 was taken as read and approved and thereafter signed by the Chairman.

(3) MATTERS ARISING:

(a) Entertainment Matters: Arising from Item (3)(a), Mr A. Pullar reported that the Annual Dinner and Dance was organised for Friday 6 December at the Huntingtower Hotel. Tickets would be £22 per person and special rates were available for those wishing to stay overnight at the hotel. The Secretary would circulate details before the end of the month. The usual invitations were to be extended to the President of NASPM and to the Chairman of the Potato Working Group of the NFU. Mr A. S. Bayne intimated that he would be accepting the invitation but wished to pay for his tickets.

(b) Association Subscriptions: Arising from Item (3)(b) The Secretary reported that the 3 outstanding subscriptions still had not been paid. It was reported that one had indicated that he would not be continuing his membership and the other two were possibly in the same mind. Two Council Members agreed to contact these members to finally resolve the situation.

(c) Production of Unclassified Seed: Arising from Item (3)(c) the President had prepared a report which was laid on the table. A full discussion on the subject took place and in general Council were in agreement with the content of the report. As far as the farm saved seed exemption was concerned distance of movement required to be looked at to keep within the intended spirit of the legislation. Also it was felt that there required to be a definition of domain in this context as well. The general consensus was that there had to be defined regulations on plant health and variety rights. Without a certification scheme there would not be an export trade. A comparison was made with the Northern Ireland situation where a neglect of regulations has led to wholesale decline in their seed industry. It was agreed that the issue of 'farm saved seed' should be the subject of investigation and study before irretrievable damage is done to the classification system, the plant health status and the plant varieties legislation. The risk to plant health was the most serious concern of Council and it was agreed that this aspect should be strongly pursued with SEERAD.

(d) Seed Industry Disease Concerns: Arising from Item (3)(e). There had been no response from SEERAD on the letter sent on the subject. It was agreed that the subject should be raised at the Seed Consultative Panel meeting in November.

All other matters were on the agenda for today.

- (4) ANNUAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS: The Secretary confirmed that there had only been five nominations for the five vacancies on Council. No election was therefore necessary and accordingly they had all automatically been elected to Council with effect from 1 November 2002. J. M. Swinton had decided not to stand again saying he had enjoyed his time on Council. A. S. Bayne indicated that pressure of time had affected his attendance and as a consequence he was standing down. The Chairman thanked both for their devoted services and wished them all the best for the future. The Secretary was instructed to write to them confirming Council's appreciation for their services. The Secretary explained that Messrs R. J. S. Doig, T. Halliwell and A. Melrose had been re-elected to Council and that M/s H. Hughes and Mr R. MacKay had been elected to Council. The Secretary was instructed to write the usual letters to the re-elected members and to the new member of Council.
- (5) DRAFT ASSOCIATION ACCOUNTS: The Secretary tabled interim unaudited accounts of the Association for the year to 31 October 2002. The Secretary took the meeting through the draft accounts and pointed out that although the accounts showed a deficit of £167.12, the projected expenses to the end of the year had been estimated and the final deficit would be slightly different. A refund on last year's corporation tax would reduce this deficit.
- (6) SEED SECTORAL GROUP: The Secretary had circulated a copy of the Minute of the meeting of the Seed Sectoral Group held on 29 August 2002 with the agenda. The President highlighted some of the main subjects discussed. He indicated that Alasdair MacLennan was leaving the British Potato Council as from 17 October 2002. The Seed Conference was scheduled to take place on 14 and 15 November in the Dewars Centre, Perth. He encouraged members to submit their applications for registration as soon as possible. A discussion on the EU review of PCN controls had taken place and it appeared they had come to the same conclusions as the NFU and SPTA. Under the new proposals, washing which is currently permitted in England and Wales would not be allowed as a method of decontamination. A. MacLennan gave an update on export activities. The Thai Mission was deemed to be a success with their officials being very impressed with the work of GB government in controlling the quality and health of seed production. The export department were appealing for countries to be nominated for next year's plant health inward missions. A report on seed export figures was given. Exports were up but the prospects for prices this season were not good. There was criticism of a report by CUF on recent research in seed production. There was to be a close look onto the relevance of this seed work being done in England. Mr P. Patrick had raised the point that complaints had been reported in respect of blackleg. He indicated that a lot of blackleg had been found in crops after the second inspection and before burning down and wondered if a further inspection was appropriate. It was felt this should be an item for the Consultative Panel meetings in Scotland and England. At this point Mr A. Pullar raised the subject of the suggestion in the previous SSG minute that there should be 'seed potato trails' in a similar format to 'whisky trails'. After an in depth discussion on the subject it was agreed that there could be damage to the recognised normal merchant's trade from this exercise. Council were unanimous that the suggestion should be nipped in the bud and it was agreed that the Association should write to the Seed Sectoral Group expressing their concerns.
- (7) BRITISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION: A copy of the response from NASPM to SPTA's draft constitution had been issued to Council with the agenda. The suggested amendments made by NASPM were looked at individually. A

number of the minor changes noted by NASPM were accepted. Some major items which had been removed or amended were at variance with what our representatives had felt was agreed at the meeting at York. These alterations were not acceptable to Council. Council were somewhat puzzled at the changes made by NASPM but felt that outright rejection of further discussion was not appropriate at this point. A letter was to be sent to NASPM asking them to clarify their position before another meeting could be considered.

- (8) SPTA's INVESTMENTS: The Secretary indicated that the £4,000 redeemed from a gilt security in November was still in the current account and realizing only 2.7%. The bank's adviser had suggested a one or two year bond paying 3.9% or 4.1% respectively would be appropriate and would not tie the money up too long. Council agreed that one of these would now be appropriate as it was unlikely there would be a new body set up in the near future requiring the need to realise the asset. The Secretary was instructed to go ahead and invest in a one-year bond on behalf of the Association.

- (9) DEFRA POLICY ON RE-INSTANTMENT OF THE GRADE OF VOLUNTARY DOWNGRADED STOCKS OF SEED POTATOES: Copies of correspondence with DEFRA on the subject had either been sent to members or laid on the table. This included:

- (a) DEFRA's original letter detailing their policy on the subject. (sent)
- (b) SPTA's letter questioning DEFRA's possible change of policy. (sent)
- (c) DEFRA's response to (b). (laid on the table)

The Chairman gave an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the correspondence. It appeared that DEFRA did not follow the policy outlined in their original letter in every case. Some variety owners had as a consequence removed their varieties from the seed register as a safeguard for the future. Council were disappointed that the seed register was now incomplete but understood the reasons for the withdrawals. Council were of the opinion that the current situation was a deplorable state of affairs and was not good for the industry. Strong representation should be made to DEFRA and the matter was to be strongly pursued at the Seed Consultative Panel meeting in November.

- (7) CORRESPONDENCE: The Secretary reported that the following correspondence had been received:

Letters from the Scottish Executive headed:

- (a) "Consultation Paper- The Draft Environmental Impact Assessment Water Abstraction (Scotland) Regulation 2002". (Response by 1 November 2002)
- (b) "British Potato Council: Request for Nominations to Fill a Forthcoming Vacancy".
- (c) "Proposed Changes to the National List Written Representations and Hearings Procedures". (Response by 16 December 2002)
- (d) "Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002: Circular Guidance Note".

Letters from SASA headed

- (a) "Seed Potato Statistics". (Area Classified in Scotland in 2002 – Issued to all Members).
- (b) "Marketing of Seed Potatoes–2002/2003" (Sent by SASA to all Seed Potato Producers).
- (c) "Scottish Seed Potato Consultative Panel Meeting; East Craigs Friday 22 November" (Requiring names of Representatives attending)

Letter from DEFRA headed

- (a) "Voluntary Downgrading of Seed Stocks"
(Response to SPTA letter of 26 September 2002).

Letters from British Potato Council.

- (a) "Minute of the Seed Sectoral Group Meeting of 29 August 2002".
(b) "BPC World Service" (October Publication).
(c) "SAC/BPC Potato Newsletter" (September Publication).

Letters from Food Standards Agency.

- (a) "Consultation: Draft Regulations to Implement in Scotland EC Directive 2002/17/EC on Plastic Materials and Articles in Contact with Food".
(b) "Review of Food Assurance Schemes – Stakeholders Meeting".
(c) "Voluntary Withdrawal of Foods Containing or Consisting of Kava-kava (piper methysticum)".
(d) "Food Standards Agency Open Board Meeting - Invitation."
(e) "Food Standards Agency - News". (September 2002 Edition).
(f) "Draft Amendment to the Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling (at step 6) and Draft Guidelines for Use of Health and Nutrition Claims (at step 6) – CL 2002/37-FI-July 2002".
(g) "Food Standards Agency - News". (October 2002 Edition).
(h) "Food Standards Agency, Board Meeting, Brussels, November 2002".

Letter from Pesticides Safety Directorate

- (a) "Vacancies on the Advisory Committee on Pesticides".

Letter from Scottish Food and Drink

- (a) "Invitation to Meeting Titled – Growing Together".

Letter from WCF- Phoenix

- (a) "Notifying that J. M. Swinton would not be standing for Re-election to Council".

Letter from the National Association of Seed Potato Merchants

- (a) "Response to SPTA's Draft Constitution and Rules". (On Agenda)

- (8) DATE OF NEXT MEETING: It was confirmed that the next meeting of Council would be held on Thursday 21 November 2002 in Perth.

- (9) ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- (b) Packaging Waste Legislation: Mr R. McArthur who had agreed to read through the legislation gave a report on his findings. He said the Act was long and very involved but believed most traders would not be liable to register. He felt the conclusion made at the August meeting to leave it to individual companies to make their own decisions on their liability was correct.

There being no further business the meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

