

**MINUTES OF DEPARTMENTAL BOARD (DB) MEETING  
WEDNESDAY 25 APRIL 2018  
ROOM G4  
KLONDYKE BUILDING**

**Members:**

Denis McMahon	Permanent Secretary
Colin Lewis	Deputy Secretary, Central Services and Rural Affairs Group
Robert Huey	Deputy Secretary, Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group
David Small	Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group
Norman Fulton	Deputy Secretary, Food and Farming Group
Brian Doherty	Director of Corporate Services
David Reid	Director of Finance
Janine Fullerton	Strategic Business Partner, NICS HR
Sharon McCue	Non-Executive Board Member (NEBM)

**In Attendance:**

John Joe O'Boyle	CEO Forest Service (Item 5 only)
Graeme Wilkinson	Director of Brexit Programme (Item 7 only)
Seamus McErlean	FFG - Chief Agricultural Economist - CAP Reform Branch (Item 9 only)

**Apologies:** None

**Secretariat:**

Barry Yeo  
Ruth Galwey

Item	Description	Action Owner
<b>Opening</b>		
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Secretary's Opening Remarks</b>	
	Secretary welcomed everyone to today's DB meeting, welcoming recent agreed changes to the format of DB papers, agenda, Risk Register etc,  Secretary provided a short update on Brexit noting that it is moving into a critical political period.	
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Declaration Of interests</b>	
	No interests which relate to today's agenda declared.	
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Previous Minutes</b>	
	Minutes from 26 March 2018 were agreed.	
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Matters Arising &amp; Action Points</b>	
	Actions from 26 March 2018 were noted as cleared or as being addressed. Outstanding actions were discussed and agreed as cleared pending agreed work to be undertaken. There were no additional matters arising.	

<b>Strategic Governance</b>		
<b>2.0</b>	<b>People</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Monthly Staffing Update</b>	
	<p>Janine Fullerton presented the paper to the Board. The Board discussed the key statistics and issues.</p> <p>Janine provided members with an update on the People Strategy noting in particular:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To go to NICS Board on Friday 27 April;</li> <li>2. 3 year Strategy;</li> <li>3. Issues for the Department will include; Performance management, Flexible working, Career paths, staff engagement.</li> <li>4. Actions falling to NICSHR include; Guidance reviews, mentoring, knowledge transfer, staff mobility, heads of profession, apprenticeships etc; and</li> <li>5. Janine Fullerton's HR team to take the lead.</li> </ol> <p>The Board discussed the issues being taking forward under the strategy noting that it was moving in the right direction.</p>	
<b>2.2</b>	<p>The Board noted the key staffing figures, discussing a number of issues in detail. i.e.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Long term TP's;</li> <li>2. Work force planning; and</li> <li>3. Compliance statistics.</li> </ol> <p>DB agreed to the recommendation to invite the NICSHR Directors or of Resourcing and Workforce planning to a DB Resource Committee meeting.</p>	
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Resources</b>	
<b>3.1</b>	<b>2017/18 Budget position and 2018/19</b>	
	<p><u>2017/18</u> David Reid provided an update on 2017/18 expenditure, noting that Finance were working through the end of year accounts and anticipate expenditure coming in on target.</p> <p><u>2018/19</u> David advised the Board that June monitoring was ongoing and that the DoF has commissioned a budget information gathering exercise for 2019/21.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the paper.</p>	
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Business Delivery</b>	
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Corporate Risk Register (CRR)</b>	
	<p>David Reid presented the CRR update, detailing previously agreed changes and revised reporting methods.</p> <p>Secretary noted current risk ratings. A number of risk areas were discussed in detail. The Board also discussed general recording of risk reporting and included:</p>	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Risk appetite;</li> <li>2. Management of risks;</li> <li>3. Key controls;</li> <li>4. Impact of having a one year Budget;</li> <li>5. Impact of staffing levels and resilience on risk management: and</li> <li>6. Board visibility and intervention.</li> </ol> <p>Secretary asked that a Risk Management workshop of Top Team members convenes next week. Secretary to chair.</p>	<b>Secretary</b>
4.2	<b>Business Plan 2017/8 and 2018/19</b>	
	David Reid presented the paper to the Board. The Board noted the contents of the papers and agreed with the recommendation to full reporting quarterly.	
5.0	<b>Wider Business Delivery</b>	
5.1	<b>Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) Business Plan 2018/19 and Strategic plan 2018/21</b>	
	<p>Norman Fulton presented the paper and draft plans to the Board.</p> <p>Following discussions the Board noted the contents of the paper and draft plans; agreed in principle with the plans subject to changes suggested by Board today with more detail in a few key areas. Sponsor branch to work in partnership with LMC.</p> <p>LMC Board and joint DB meeting to be arranged where this can be discussed further.</p>	<b>DB Secretariat</b>
5.2	<b>Forest Service (FS) Business Plan 2018/19</b>	
	<p>John Joe O'Boyle presented the paper to the Board. The Board noted that the final plan will require Ministerial approval.</p> <p>The Board further noted the contents including key targets on income generation, expansion, sustainable forest management, impact of Brexit etc. Members discussed the detail of the plan and made a number recommendations, including the need for a specific target around the social and recreational use of forests</p> <p>Subject to today's comments DB agreed to endorse the plan. FS CEO to issue to Board members by correspondence paper.</p>	<b>John Joe O'Boyle</b>
5.3	<b>Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Business Plan 2018/19</b>	
	David Small presented his paper to the Board. The Board noted the contents and discussed the key priorities. The Board made a few recommendations. NIEA CEO to issue to Board members by correspondence paper.	<b>David Small</b>
6.0	<b>Departmental Board Governance</b>	
6.1	<b>DB Forward Agenda 2018/19</b>	
	Brian Doherty presented the paper. The Board noted and	

	agreed the forward agenda for 2018/19.	
<b>Strategic Issues</b>		
<b>7.0</b>	<b>BREXIT</b>	
7.1	<p>Graeme Wilkinson attended and presented his paper to the Board. He provided Members with an update on a number of key issues i.e.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Devolved Assembly discussions;</li> <li>2. Political engagement;</li> <li>3. Frameworks;</li> <li>4. Legislative amendments;</li> <li>5. Operational readiness;</li> <li>6. Project Governance, staffing and Funding;</li> </ol> <p>Secretary congratulated project team for their work in this area.</p>	
<b>8.0</b>	<b>NIFAIS Update</b>	
8.1	Robert Huey presented his paper to the Board. He provided an update on progress to date. The Board noted the contents and endorsed the approach being taken.	
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Review of Higher Education Tuition Fees</b>	
9.1	<p>Norman Fulton presented his paper to the Board. Seamus McErlean was in attendance and provided background to the paper.</p> <p>The Board discussed the paper at length, noted the emerging findings of the review of Higher Education Tuition Fees and agreed to commencement of a two stage consultation process.</p>	
<b>Closing Issues</b>		
<b>10</b>	<b>DB May Forward Agenda</b>	
10.1	Agenda for May was agreed.	
<b>11</b>	<b>Internal Communication messages for Team Brief</b>	
11.1	<p>Items agreed for inclusion in next available team brief were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exercise Blackthorn;</li> <li>2. Risk Appetite;</li> <li>3. Tuition Fees;</li> <li>4. Brexit; and</li> <li>5. People Strategy.</li> </ol>	
<b>12.0</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
12.1	<p><u>Health and Safety:</u> David Small referred to the need to appoint a Health and Safety advisor for Food and Farming and Central Services Groups. This role has been vacant now for several months. Since the key risks would be within the Food and Farming area, it was suggested that this should be led by that Group. Secretary commented that this is a top priority and asked Norman Fulton to take forward as a matter of urgency.</p>	<b>Norman Fulton</b>

**Date of next meeting: Wednesday 30 May 2018**