

BRITISH CROP PRODUCTION COUNCIL

EXPERT WORKING GROUP – APPLICATION (EWG-A)

Minutes of the **98th meeting** held on **10th March 2009** at Hypro, Longstanton

R Bateman (Chairman)
T Bals
R Glass
P. Miller
J. Tobutt

C Butler Ellis (Acting sec.)
J Fisher
G. Matthews
T. Swan

98.1

98.1.1 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from:
W Basford, H Dobson, R Makepeace, T Robinson

98.1.2 Minutes of the 97th meeting held on 23rd September 2008 at IPARC
Silwood Park, Ascot

These were accepted

The meeting followed on from the Defra-LINK project meeting and CBE kindly agreed to act as secretary. There were no matters arising and the main subject for discussion was the future of the EWG-A.

98.2 Future of the EWG

JF outlined the current status of BCPC, since BCPE has gone into liquidation; BCPC will now operate as a publisher and event organiser. BCPC has been able to buy the assets of BCPE as a preferred creditor for no additional funds.

Cash has been raised through loans from the bank, trustees and directors. The first event will be the Seed Treatment symposium, which is being underwritten by Bayer

BCPE board is now the executive part of BCPC. Each WG will have a link with a member of that board which in the case of the EWG-A will be Tom Bals.

TB: Congress will still go ahead, but actually organised by Farmers Guardian using the BCPC 'brand'. The main purpose of BCPC is therefore publications.

Question about whether corporate membership will continue. If not, then there will be further questions about who we are and who we represent.

The future of BCPC is still uncertain – the demand for publications is likely to decline. The production of publication in the past has relied too heavily on good will and free expertise.

JF: Colin Ruscoe is currently generating new ideas for making money – even if not everyone agrees with them. The Articles of Association for BCPC are currently very flexible, and so it wouldn't be to BCPC's advantage to change them.

There has been one recent success story – BCPC news is increasing in circulation and has already exceeded the predicted response. However, it is largely done by James Gilmour and when he stands down it will be difficult to find a replacement. This leaves BCPC vulnerable.

TB: The Applications EWG has been crucial in coming up with the most ideas for publications. BCPC and its EWGs also have a role as being the voice of scientific reason for the controversial subject of pesticide application.

JF: BCPC's Science Strategy Group has now disappeared because members had no time to put into it, so it was no longer viable.

As secretary to trustees JF said that he should not be taking part further in this debate about the future and would leave other members to continue discussions.

Responding to a question on current state of finances from JT, JF said that income from publications is slightly above budget. No financial reserves but unsecured loans keep things ticking over.

TB: Roughly speaking, publications are profitable, congress and symposium unprofitable.

JF: Chris Todd and all previous employees now supply services as consultants – BCPC has no direct employees

GM: The value in BCPC was in bringing together people from industry, government and universities/research

All agreed that there was value in the BCPC brand

JT: Suggested that BCPC had no way of 're-stocking the coffers'

JF: The reserves BCPC had were spent on losses following 9/11 and then on trying to broaden BCPC's appeal, which ultimately failed.

A debate ensued about how long the BCPC could survive without a clear mechanism to generate money

RB: The Defra-Link project has been one of our most important achievements

TB: publication following completion of the project may be possible

PM: When he first joined EWG, his time on BCPC activities was willingly funded by his employer. This is no longer possible.

TB: Those writing publications will have to be paid by BCPC. Those on EWG could be invited to be involved in reviewing and inputting what expertise we are able to.

RB: Should new classification scheme be under BCPC umbrella?

PM: Yes, but only as far as the project allows, and work will stop at the end of the project.

TB: The EWG needs a focus – we need new ideas for publication, for example. BCPC publications are used by training providers and therefore are a valid way of disseminating new information.

RB: Hans Dobson suggested that we should be reviewing project ideas for PSD
PM: We would be highly unlikely to achieve anything doing this as PSD will take no notice. BCPC used to write a research strategy but it never did any good. BCPC does not have the influence it had in the 70s and 80s because of the chemical industry withdrawing its support. It would be very worthwhile if we could contribute to defining PSD/Defra's research programme, but this would need to be a 2 – way process, so we could see how our views are taken into account by getting feedback from PSD.

JT: should we aim to interact in the same way with other funding bodies?

RB: Read through again the doc defining the applications EWG.
JT strongly disagreed with the word 'promote' since we are not a promotional organisation and it is too vague. We need SMART objectives. We have a role in disseminating information – both upwards to regulators/government and downwards to users.

Discussion about whether or not we should aim to engage with/respond to the press following a comment by GM that we could counter negative press stories.

It was agreed that we were not well placed to do this and that getting involved in such coverage might not serve the cause of good scientific debate well. However, BCPC should respond, and should consult the EWGs as appropriate.

RB agreed to edit the document, SMARTening objectives, making the current focus the LINK project and suggesting a new publication following on from that – for example a new nozzle handbook. The doc will be circulated with a deadline to respond by the end of July [May deadline discussed at meeting].

98.3 Standards development

TB expressed grave concerns about the way standards are going and are being incorporated into the EU thematic strategy and machinery directive. Particular problems will arise with the proposal to include patternation. Representation on standards is biased towards testing organisations, which have a vested interest in making work for themselves. Adrian Dixon and Grant Stark are doing as good a job as is possible representing the views of the UK and have talked to the AEA.

BCPC EWG cannot realistically do anything since more influential bodies have tried and failed.

98.4 Next meeting – 17th Sept, 2pm following on from LINK project meeting.
Venue – around Silsoe; to be confirmed.