

Summary of the Minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Panel (AAP) Meeting 9 – 24 April 2018

Review of Agricultural Wages Orders – learning from the experience of the Agricultural Wages Board in Scotland

Lantra Building – Radnorshire Suite, Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells

Attendance

Lionel Walford – Chair
Peter Rees – Independent Member
Steve Hughson – Independent Member
Bryan Godsell – UNITE
Ivan Monckton – UNITE
Darren Williams – FUW
Will Prichard – NFU

Paula Whitfield – Welsh Government
Ryan Davies – Welsh Government (by phone)
Karla Price – Welsh Government

Guests

Ken Gray – Scottish Executive (by phone) (Item 1 – 3 only)
Louise Stewart – Scottish Executive (by phone) (Item 1 – 3 only)

Item 1 – Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and the guests from the Scottish Executive.

Item 2 – Background

The Chair provided some background on the planned review of the Agricultural Wages Orders in Wales. The Panel wanted to simplify the Order wherever possible so it was considering a suggestion to base orders on one standard minimum hourly rate for all workers, regardless of their age, which could be topped up by an additional rate per hour based on skills acquired.

Item 3 – The Scottish Perspective

The Orders have changed gradually in Scotland over a period of years and was achieved as a result of many extensive Board discussions. The agricultural sector

was very different in Scotland with many temporary workers especially in the soft fruit sector.

The move towards a universal standard rate had happened back in 2007 and there was now a suggestion to move towards a “Scottish Living Wage” which would be pitched above National Minimum Wage Levels. This would be a gradual movement over several years.

Simpler Orders were easier for employers, employees and administrators alike although there was a debate as to whether an age related, rather than a skills related, approach was easier. However, in their experience of enforcement the provisions were appropriate in most cases.

This overview was followed by a question and answer session which covered the following areas:

- Apprenticeships
- Overtime provision
- Disputes between employee and employer / enforcement cases
- The skills and qualifications uplift
- Additional allowances / provisions

The Chair thanked everyone for an informative debate. Any further questions were to be relayed through the Panel Manager.

Item 4 – Consideration of the Way Forward

The Panel reaffirmed that in general they were in favour of simplifying orders to have a basic standard minimum rate with uplifts for various skills levels – with the individual rates to be considered and negotiated once the structure for the Order was finalised.

The Farming Unions presented a paper which proposed re-banding of the agricultural wages grades. It was similar to the approach of the Scottish Government but with four levels of skills enhancement included. This was welcomed by the Panel and all members were asked to consider it in depth before the next meeting.

The Chair confirmed that the purpose of the June meeting was to decide on the structure – with the rates to be negotiated in September.

The Chair then closed the meeting.