

Minutes

CONFIDENTIAL

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

Date: Wednesday 18 December 2024 **Start:** 14:00 **End:** 16:00
Location: Virtually via Teams
Present: AWERB Chair (CHAIR), Establishment Licence Holder (ELH), Manager of the BRF (BRF), AWERB Administrator/Home Office Liaison Contact/Named Training and Competency Officer/Named Information Officer (NTCO), Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS), Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers (NACWOs): Level G, PCU, FELS, OES and FEPS, PPL/Scientific Representatives: PPL1 and PPL2, Chair of the [REDACTED] Animal Users Group (AUG), Cancer Sciences Representative (CSU), Student Representative (SR1), Expert Independent/Lay Member/Representative (LR), Statistician (STATS), 3Rs Champions Group Leads (3RC2), Minutes Secretary (MS)
Apologies: 3Rs Champions Group Lead (3RC1), Student Representative (SR2)

1. Welcome and Introduction

CHAIR welcomed all attending the AWERB meeting held on Wednesday 18 December 2024.

Apologies from members not in attendance at the meeting were noted by the group (as above).

CHAIR welcomed 3RC2 to the committee who will become the co-lead of the university's 3Rs champions group and with 3RC1 once formalised. CHAIR announced a new student representative (SR2) had joined the committee but could not attend this meeting. They will be formally introduced to all at the next meeting.

2. Disclosure of Interests

The committee noted that the 2 year report received for PPL [REDACTED] was submitted by PPL2.

3. Approve Minutes from the Last Meeting Held Wednesday 18 September 2024 Approve Minutes from the AWERB Away-Day Held Thursday 12 September 2024

The minutes from the previous meeting had been circulated to the committee for approval weeks before this meeting and were approved by the committee. The minutes were redacted and added to the public-facing website. In future, minutes will be reviewed and approved by the committee at the next meeting before they are added to the website.

The minutes from the AWERB Away-Day meeting were approved by the committee. These minutes will not be added to the website.

4. Discuss Matters Arising and Review/Update on Ongoing Actions from Previous Meetings

The list of the AWERB's ongoing actions from previous meetings was reviewed by the committee and updates were provided by members.

The actions overview spreadsheet will be updated following the meeting.

Action: MS to update the actions overview spreadsheet.
Action: MS to work with CHAIR to combine actions where possible to avoid duplications.

Deadline: January 2025
Deadline: January 2025

5. Received Reports from Named Persons

Discussion of Key Points from Tabled Reports:

Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS) Report:

NVS summarised key points from their report.

- NVS discussed the details around the third adverse incident mentioned in their report. This was reported as a breach of Standard Condition 18 to the Home Office. An outcome from this incident has not yet been received from the Home Office. The protocol for this experiment will be amended.

BRF Operations Manager (BRF) Report:

BRF summarised key points from their report.

- The near miss incident featured in BRF's report was discussed with the PPLh who has informed BRF that steps will be put in place to ensure this cannot happen again. BRF was glad this was picked up by vigilant technicians during their daily checks.
- BRF provided an update on the soft refurbishment due to take place in the Level G facility, scheduled to start in February 2025. If additional funding is secured, the BRF will aim to fix the RAAC at the same time. This refurbishment work is expected to be completed by July 2025.
- BAM FM is liaising with the Trust who are currently in the process of changing the lights in the [REDACTED] to LEDs. If the Trust agrees, BAM will fit these new lights in the Level G facility during the refurbishment work. NVS has also inquired about bringing in a reverse to the day/night cycle for lights in the corridors especially if red lights can be put in place in corridors for late evening. BRF is discussing this with the project leads for the refurbishment and determining whether funds are available.
- BRF provided an update on the installation of SMS critical alarms for temperature and humidity (out of hours). After a lot of chasing and holdups this work is scheduled to take place in February 2025. ELH asked BRF to report any further issues directly to them. This was an action from the Home Office and needs to be completed as soon as possible.

Named Training and Competency Officer (NTCO) Report:

NTCO summarised key points from their report.

- The Home Office has provided formal responses/outcomes for 3 out of the 4 potential non-compliance incidents detailed in NTCO's report.

Named Information Officer (NIO) Report:

The NIO (NTCO) summarised key points from their report.

- The NIO would like to create a repository of information, newsletters, links, tools, resources etc. most likely on SharePoint that users can refer back to and as a record of the information the NIO disseminates for auditing purposes. NTCO and MS will work on creating this outside of meetings.

Action: MS and NTCO to create SharePoint repository for NIO information. **Deadline:** June 2025

Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers (NACWOs) Combined Report:

NACWO-Level G summarised key points from the NACWOs combined reports and noted that animal welfare in all facilities remains at a good standard.

- As a follow-up to a previous action – NACWO-Level G reported that the company who provides the animal diet has stated the next batch will be of the bigger kibble size again which will solve previous issues.

6. Discuss and Approve Updated/Amended Outstanding PPL Review – 2 and 4 Year Reports from Previous Meeting

No outstanding 2 and/or 4 year reports were due for review at this meeting.

6. Discuss and Approve PPL Review – 2 Year Reports

PPL: [REDACTED] (Approved)

The committee felt this report was well-considered and written. No research has been carried out under this licence to date and the PPLh has explained the reasons. The PPL holder has requested for this licence to be revoked with the Home Office as no further work is planned.

Addendum: The Home Office formally revoked this PPL on Monday 30 December 2024.

Action: MS to pass this feedback on to the PPL holder. **Deadline:** December 2024

6. Discuss and Approve PPL Review – 4 Year Reports

PPL: [REDACTED] (Not Approved)

The committee felt this report was well-considered and written. Only a small amount of research has been carried out under this licence to date and the PPLh has explained the reasons.

The committee approved this report in principle but noted:

The report included several live links that feature names of researchers etc. which the committee recommends not to include in reports. The committee requested that the PPL holder amend this report to remove links/identifiers.

The committee requested that the PPL holder clarify and amend (if necessary) their answer to question 6 on unexpected health or welfare problems with any animals as this contradicts their answer to question 4c on Refinement.

The committee agreed that this report does not need to come back at the next meeting for review.

This report can be approved outside of the meeting by key people (CHAIR and NTCO) once suggested changes have been made by the PPL holder.

Action: MS to pass this feedback on to the PPL holder.

Deadline: December 2024

7. PPL Applications, Amendments and Approvals

A list of PPL applications and amendments submitted to the Home Office since the last meeting was noted by the committee.

Several PPL applications and amendments are currently in a queue awaiting the Home Office's review/approval.

7. ERGO Applications and Approvals

A list of ERGO (ASPA and non-ASPA) applications that had been submitted and their review outcomes since the last meeting was noted by the committee.

The committee commented that titles for ERGO applications had improved recently by being more descriptive following their feedback regarding uninformative titles.

8. Discussion of the 3Rs at the University of Southampton (Standing Item)

3RC2 highlighted key points from the university's 3Rs champions group report.

The group has been set the task of organising another 3Rs conference/symposium at Southampton for the Summer/Autumn term 2025. The group welcomed suggestions from the AWERB regarding dates/locations to hold this event and any topics or focus areas for the event and/or talks.

LR suggested the topic of animal sentience and suggested getting in touch with one of their colleagues at the RSPCA ([REDACTED]) who can give a talk on this topic.

Action: 3RC1/2 to contact LR regarding a member of the RSPCA team attending the next 3Rs event to give a talk on animal sentience.

Deadline: 19 February 2025

The group has also been set the task of organising and facilitating the annual 3Rs awards competition the AWERB would like to be held in February/March 2025. MS ran this competition in previous years and will help the group by sending through resources the group can adapt and use to advertise and run this.

Action: MS to pass their resources for the previous year's 3Rs awards to 3RC1/2 to adapt and use for the 2025 competition.

Deadline: January 2025

The university hosted a talk with the Nc3Rs on Wednesday 13 November via Teams ('An Introduction to Ethics and the 3Rs') which all users were invited to attend. This was an inaugural webinar with the Nc3Rs which was recorded and made available to all users following the talk. In the future, NTCO hopes to host a talk with Nc3Rs each term with different topics of interest.

9. AWERB Meeting Focus (December 2024) – Training and Competency, Culture of Care

NTCO attended a meeting with the Home Office on Monday 3 December 2024 on ELHs behalf where ASRU gave an update on guidance for training and CPD (Continued Personal Development) under ASPA. A lot of questions were put to the Head of ASRU at this meeting around confusion and misinterpretation of requirements (especially around bolt-on modules for working with different species). The Head of ASRU commented that they would take these questions away and come back to establishments with clearer specifics and guidance.

A clear takeaway from this meeting was ASRU's focus on CPD (especially Named Persons CPD records). NTCO urged Named Persons to ensure they are keeping their CPD records up to date and current. NTCO added that they do not have access to these records. The committee discussed how Named Persons could keep their records and make these accessible for NTCO to view.

ELH raised that the university is in the process of creating a centralised record system where staff can keep their records. ELH encouraged NTCO to liaise with HR regarding the system and also encouraged where possible for NTCO to have access to various Named Persons and users' records to ensure records were kept for auditing purposes. ELH encouraged the use of the university's CPD record system when established.

Action: NTCO to discuss with the BRF academic lead about reminding users/staff that it is their responsibility to ensure CPD records are kept and maintained. This will aim to be raised with PIs, PPLhs and PILhs at future users' meetings.

Deadline: January 2025

NTCO with the help of CHAIR held a local module for new Named Persons and licence holders on Wednesday 23 October 2024 which was well attended. The feedback from attendees was also very positive. The next local module date is scheduled for April 2025. NTCO will investigate whether the module can be moved onto BlackBoard instead so those needing the module can be given access to complete this as and when needed.

NTCO will also investigate whether the PIL refresher course (which licence holders are required to sit every 5 years) could be developed by them and run via BlackBoard as well. Currently, PILhs are being signed up on to UBS's course.

Action: NTCO to investigate if the local module could be run on BlackBoard and if a PIL refresher course can be developed and be run on BlackBoard as well.

Deadline: 19 February 2025

The committee discussed the need to hold another Culture of Care event in 2025 following on from the successful event in Summer 2023. The committee agreed it would be best to hold this in late June/early July 2025. The committee discussed ideas for the event and the audience/attendees the committee would like to invite for this event.

LR offered their help with planning and coordinating the event again.

Action: CHAIR and LR to discuss the planning of this event further and liaise with MS regarding booking rooms and inviting attendees, etc.

Deadline: 19 February 2025

10. Update on AWERB Sub-Committees and their Work

NTCO highlighted key points of the reports from the AWERBs sub-committees and working groups.

It has been a busy period for the chairs of the AWERB sub-committees and BRF's admin team to get the various sub-committee ToRs updated and approved for use in the academic year ahead.

The Animal Committee is now being co-chaired to help spread some of NTCO's workload but, ERGO applications are still taking up a lot of NTCO's time. The committee hopes to bring additional reviewers (NTCO has made progress with recruiting a reviewer for FMED) from various schools/faculties who can help with reviewing applications. All will need training and access to the ERGO system as a reviewer.

Currently, NTCO is the only reviewer able to look at these applications once revision has been requested and access back records in the system etc. being the only one with this level of access (apart from some in the RIG team). NTCO had to investigate and chase seven applications where revision had been requested but hadn't been actioned. This took NTCO a considerable amount of time.

Unfortunately, this level of access can no longer be given to members of staff until the system is replaced.

The Scientific and Ethical Review Group (SERG) has approved in principle a PPL (already granted at another establishment) that sought secondary availability at Southampton to continue their work, on the condition that suggested amendments by UoS SERG are made to the PPL at the primary establishment before secondary availability is requested and approved at Southampton.

11. ASRU Audit Preparations (Standing Item)

The committee read and discussed the BRF management group's report on progress towards an ASRU audit. The BRF facilities have made good progress to ensure that outstanding documentation required for an audit has been put in place. The BRF management group intends to begin holding monthly meetings again starting in 2025 to review documents and processes.

BRF announced that they and the deputy BRF Operations Manager will be holding mock audits at undecided dates in early 2025 of all BRF facilities. BRF will report to AWERB the outcomes of these mock audits.

The committee welcomed this plan and suggested the BRF consider recruiting a lay person (perhaps the FMED Faculty Technical Manager) to give a different perspective during a mock audit. BRF welcomed this idea.

Action: BRF to contact the FMED Faculty Technical Manager to invite them to future mock audit visits if available. **Deadline:** January 2025

ASRU has promised further guidance at some point in 2025 around audits (both facilities and full systems audits). The BRF does expect an audit - most likely a facilities audit in 2025.

ELH urged all facilities to ensure all outstanding documentation is in place as early as possible in 2025.

12. Discuss Invertebrates in ERGO Review

The previous AWERB Chair had requested that all work that may (directly and indirectly) feature invertebrates should be logged on the ERGO II system and this application approved before any work is carried out.

The committee discussed whether this should be reviewed and changed if appropriate. Queries around whether, for example, soil samples that may contain insects or other invertebrates need ERGO approval have come to the committee recently. More clear guidance is needed.

LR suggested where there is known intent to cause some level of harm/disturbance to an animal/insect, this should go through the ethical review process (if ASPA-regulated or not). NTCO and CHAIR suggested where there is no intent, this would not need to be logged on ERGO II.

NACWO-FELS added that a discussion around the importing of soil, water, faecal etc. samples from other counties is needed, which the committee agreed with. This falls under the remit of the Biological Safety Committee and not the AWERB or Animal Committee.

A meeting has been scheduled for Monday 13 January 2025 for NTCO, CHAIR, NACWO-OES and the other co-chair of the Animal Committee to meet to discuss this further and write some guidelines for when an ERGO application needs to be submitted.

Action: NTCO, CHAIR, NACWOs OES and FELS and the co-chair of the Animal Committee to meet to discuss this further and write some guidelines for when an ERGO application needs to be submitted. **Deadline:** 13/01/2024

Action: NTCO to forward NACWO FELS the invite for this meeting. **Deadline:** 13/01/2024

Any Other Business

CHAIR reminded members to respond to MS's email regarding upcoming tours of the facilities with ELH at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. If members are interested in joining these tours, please contact MS as the number of spaces is limited.

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 19 February 2025 – 14:00 – 16:00 – [REDACTED] and
Virtually via Teams (Hybrid)