Date: Tuesday 21st March 2017, 12:00 – 15:00

Venue
Room G22, Defra, Nobel House, Smith Square

Attendees
Chair: Julie Fitzpatrick - Scientific Director, Moredun Research Institute
Dale Sanders - independent member
Deborah Keith – independent member
Mike Francis - independent member
Ian Boyd – Defra Chief Scientific Adviser (for part of meeting)
Nicola Spence - Defra Chief Plant Health Officer
Graeme Cooke – Defra Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer (for part of meeting)
Melanie Welham - BBSRC
Chris Lea - Welsh Government
Alistair Carson - Northern Ireland Executive (by phone)
Jackie Hinton - BEIS (representing Jenny Dibden)
Alan Tollervey – DfID, until 1.30pm
Roger Coppock – Forestry Commission
Sylvain Alem – GO-Science (representing Alex Churchill)
Guy Poppy - Food Standards Agency (until 2pm)
Marc Casale – Defra
Rod Anson – Defra
Scott Sellers - Defra
Brian Harris - BBSRC
Sadhana Sharma - BBSRC
Secretariat: Chris Jacobs (BBSRC), Gerald Bright (Defra)

Apologies:-
Nigel Gibbens – Defra Chief Veterinary Officer
Linda Pooley and Louise Heathwaite - Scottish Government
Rachel Lambert - DfID
Jenny Dibden - BEIS
Alex Churchill – GO-Science
Javier Dominguez - Food Standards Agency
Calum Murray - Innovate UK
Dilys Morgan - Public Health England
Summary of actions

**ACTION 3-1**: Secretariat to recirculate the 2014 stakeholder map for review/update by members, and for members to advise secretariat of those priority stakeholders the Partnership should aim to work with/through.

**ACTION 3-2**: Secretariat to recirculate for comment the independent members’ draft response to Innovate UK’s agri-tech questions.

**ACTION 3-3**: Secretariat to seek a volunteer from the Partnership to give a verbal update at the June meeting.

**ACTION 3-4**: Secretariat to develop plans for a future stakeholder event/meeting.

**ACTION 3-5**: Defra to set out the longer-term strategic vision for Weybridge within the wider UK picture (including synergies from coordination across animal and plant health), and then seek the Partnership’s view on that vision and the options being considered.

**ACTION 3-6**: Secretariat to coordinate a mapping exercise whereby partners a) set out what actions they have taken to align their animal and plant health science with the Vision/Strategy and Capability report; b) what benefits/added value that alignment is providing; and c) identify whether there are gaps where we’re not delivering collectively.

**ACTION 3-7**: Secretariat to establish a task and finish group, drawing on members of the Partnership or their representatives, to conduct a futures review addressing what animal and plant health science delivery will look like in 15-25 years’ time (including global links), and what supporting infrastructure and capability will be needed.

**ACTION 3-8**: Secretariat to convene a task and finish group to consider how best to develop a rapid reaction group (perhaps along the lines of Scientific Advisory Groups on Emergencies - SAGE) from across the key public funders, to address new, emerging and re-emerging animal and plant health threats (including internationally).

**ACTION 3-9**: The independent members to draft some initial thoughts on what criteria would trigger a meeting of such a rapid reaction group, its potential terms of reference, and the potential for emergency pump prime funding; for the task and finish group to then review and develop.

**ACTION 3-10**: Scott Sellers to look into what animal/plant health risk information Defra’s CSA wanted future Partnership meetings to have access to, and what can be provided in future.

**ACTION 3-11**: Ensure the task and finish group tasked with the futures review incorporates skills capacity and development.

**ACTION 3-12**: The Partnership to develop a coordinated view of what it thinks are the main implications of EU exit for UK animal and plant health science (Chair to do initial draft); and to comment on Defra’s assessment of such implications, including potential impact on reference laboratory status of UK organisations.

**ACTION 3-13**: The independent members to coordinate a response to the Industrial Strategy consultation which highlights the importance of animal and plant health science, highlighting the economic and wider benefits and the industry links – to then be circulated for rapid comment from the wider Partnership (consultation deadline of 17th April).

**ACTION 3-14**: All members to encourage key stakeholders to submit responses to the Industrial Strategy consultation highlighting the importance of animal and plant health science.

**ACTION 3-15**: Chris Jacobs to circulate his note summarising deliverables and actions undertaken/planned.

**ACTION 3-16**: The Chair to write to the Wellcome Trust suggesting they be involved in the Partnership through engagement on specific agenda items, and task and finish groups of particular relevance to them.
Welcome, previous minutes/ actions, and members’ update (Papers 3:1 and 3:2) – 12:00 to 12:15

Welcome:
1.1 The Chair welcomed members and their representatives (including Rod Anson, Defra, who would be presenting agenda item 2 – APHA science facilities); and formally recognised the Forestry Commission’s addition to the Partnership.

Minutes of the December meeting:
1.2 These had been circulated for comment, and none received, so they were formally accepted.

Paper 3:1 - actions from December meeting:
1.3 The Chair thanked members for those responses which had enabled many of the actions to be completed, and stressed the importance of all members responding to requests in a timely manner.

ACTION 3-1: Secretariat to recirculate the 2014 stakeholder map for review/update by members, and for members to advise secretariat of those priority stakeholders the Partnership should aim to work with/through.

ACTION 3-2: Secretariat to recirculate for comment the independent members’ draft response to Innovate UK’s agri-tech questions.

Paper 3:2 – members’ update:
1.4 The Chair thanked those who had provided a written update (Defra, Research Councils and the Scottish Government), and encouraged others to contribute to the ‘forward look’ update paper in future, as this provides an important opportunity to flag issues which might not otherwise be discussed by the Partnership. In discussion the following points were made:
1.4.1 In addition to the written update from all members, each quarterly meeting could include a verbal update from one member of the Partnership on a rotating basis.

ACTION 3-3: Secretariat to seek a volunteer to give a verbal update at the June meeting.

1.4.2 There should be consideration of how to build in developments/plans from wider stakeholders including industry, perhaps drawing on previous work conducted by the Implementation Group.

ACTION 3-4: Secretariat to develop plans for a future stakeholder event/meeting.

2. Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) science facilities (Paper 3:3) – 12:15 to 13:00

2.1 Rod Anson (Defra) introduced a presentation (paper 3:3) on the future of APHA’s Weybridge site, and the need to update and improve many of its facilities. In discussion the following points were made:
2.1.1 The investment programme represents an opportunity to properly address the join-up between animal health and plant/tree health. This should be considered as part of the
overall capability for national resilience, with Defra having a separate 5 year plant health arrangement with the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) – currently in its 3rd year.

2.1.2 Consultants have been employed to look at both Weybridge and Pirbright, programme by programme, and bring in policy colleagues to think about future animal/plant health science needs. This will be used to inform the need for wider capability such as infrastructure, skills and staff. It will be important to incorporate Brexit implications e.g. on reference laboratory status.

2.1.3 The investment programme should set out the longer-term strategic vision for Weybridge within the wider UK picture, and this is an area where the Partnership could usefully add value through reviewing that vision.

2.1.4 Whilst there may be scope to build new facilities at Pirbright, the issue of potential integration between Weybridge and Pirbright is firmly on hold until at least after the creation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) in April 2018.

2.1.5 Defra need to present Treasury with an investment business case by March 2018.

**ACTION 3-5**: Defra to set out the longer-term strategic vision for Weybridge within the wider UK picture (including synergies from coordination across animal and plant health), and then seek the Partnership’s view on that vision and the options being considered.

3. **Alignment of future animal/plant health research funding (Papers 3:4 and 3:5) – 13:00 to 13:45**

**Paper 3:4 – Alignment of animal/plant health research funding**

3.1 Chris Jacobs introduced paper 3:4, with the Chair stressing the need to consider animal and plant health together in context. In discussion the following points were made:

3.1.1 The Partnership should consider what is needed in terms of national capability, how that can be supplied – whether by government or by other stakeholders such as universities – and how to ensure governance and funding is in place to deliver that capability over the longer term.

3.1.2 In considering capability needs, the Partnership shouldn’t duplicate work already conducted for the 2014 `Building our science capability’ review.

3.1.3 We already have the 2016 `Vision and High-Level Strategy’, and a useful piece of work would be to capture what partner organisations are doing in terms of aligning with the research deliverables set out in the `Vision’, and how this is delivering benefit. This should then highlight gaps which the Partnership still needs to address.

3.1.4 Stakeholder engagement is important, although it was recognised that stakeholders will invest in areas aligning with their own priorities, and will only contribute to the priorities set out in the `Vision’ where these are consistent with their own priorities.

3.1.5 The `Vision’ is a 5 year forward look, but the Partnership could usefully focus on a longer timeframe, particularly given the type of infrastructure and investment that will be needed. The Partnership should conduct a futures analysis addressing what animal and plant health science delivery will look like in 15-25 years’ time, and what planning is needed in the short-term to facilitate that future delivery.

3.1.6 It is important to consider threats to animal and plant health which could emerge outside the UK. There is currently no mechanism for global plant surveillance, and UK capacity would benefit from being linked to an effective global surveillance network.
3.1.7 The forward look could usefully draw on work conducted by the Global Network for Animal Disease Research - STAR-IDAZ – titled ‘Meeting Future Research Needs on Infectious Diseases of Animals and Zoonoses’.

3.1.8 As the forward look is developed, there would be value in consulting industry, particularly global industry, on the international issues/opportunities.

3.1.9 The forward look will be a longer piece of work which may require a few half day (or longer) meetings; perhaps using a staged approach based on public funders in the first instance, before broadening out to consult others.

**ACTION 3-6:** Secretariat to coordinate a mapping exercise whereby partners a) set out what actions they have taken to align their animal and plant health science with the Vision/Strategy and Capability report; b) what benefits/added value that alignment is providing; and c) identify whether there are gaps where we’re not delivering collectively.

**ACTION 3-7:** Secretariat to establish a task and finish group, drawing on members of the Partnership or their representatives, to conduct a futures review addressing what animal and plant health science delivery will look like in 15-25 years’ time (including global links), and what supporting infrastructure and capability will be needed.

*Paper 3:5 – New and emerging threats to animal and plant health: Emergency resource*

3.2 Dale Sanders introduced paper 3:5, stressing the importance of rapid response to new and emerging/re-emerging threats. In discussion the following points were made:

3.2.1 The Home Office will be publishing a biological security strategy, and has established an associated government working group on assessing emerging threats. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) are represented on that group, and it could be a key stakeholder for the Partnership to engage with (although the strategy does not receive additional funding).

3.2.2 Whilst the UK has a plant health risk register, it would benefit from being better linked with global initiatives such as the global rust initiative; with a route for identifying threats, and some sort of international emergency coordination group.

3.2.3 Defra has a small funding pot for new and emerging diseases which might benefit from better coordination, perhaps through mobilisation of a group of key stakeholders (along the lines of Scientific Advisory Groups on Emergencies) to consider the issue/risk and develop a rapid response to a new and emerging/re-emerging threat.

**ACTION 3-8:** Secretariat to convene a task and finish group to consider how best to develop a rapid reaction group (perhaps along the lines of Scientific Advisory Groups on Emergencies - SAGE) from across the key public funders, to address new, emerging and re-emerging animal and plant health threats (including internationally).

3.2.4 The independent members could consider how such a rapid reaction group might work in practice – what criteria would be needed before convening the group, the opportunities that would arise from its formation, and any potential for emergency pump prime funding. New money might not be needed for such a group since there are related initiatives which might help e.g. Fera leads a future proofing plant health group which identifies where funding could shift to respond to threats, and strategic funding awarded to institutes should be well placed to respond to emerging threats.
**ACTION 3-9:** The independent members to draft some initial thoughts on what criteria would trigger a meeting of such a rapid reaction group, its potential terms of reference, and the potential for emergency pump prime funding; for the task and finish group to then review and develop.

3.2.5 Defra’s Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) has previously suggested giving the Partnership a summary of animal and plant health risks for each Partnership meeting. Scott Sellers agreed to look into what information Defra’s CSA was referring to, and what can be provided in future.

**ACTION 3-10:** Scott Sellers to look into what animal/plant health risk information Defra’s CSA wanted future Partnership meetings to have access to, and what can be provided in future.

4. **Coordination of PhDs (Paper 3:6) – 13:45 to 14:15**

4.1 Chris Jacobs introduced paper 3:6, stressing the need to build on, rather than duplicate, any existing coordination. In discussion the following points were made:

4.1.1 BBSRC have already been involved in analysis on vulnerable skills, and the Agri-Tech Leadership Council have also done work in this area. Whilst BBSRC supports approximately 2000 PhD studentships through Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs), the current DTP programme, DTP2, is now set, so there’ll be no added value from conducting a mapping exercise in this area.

4.1.2 The Forestry Commission supports approximately 40 PhDs through programmes with various universities on an ad hoc basis.

4.1.3 There are some vulnerable skills where there tends to be a lack of demand from the commercial/academic sector and few future career opportunities. Those on the plant health side have been trying to address this by taking an end to end approach, from identifying skills needs and appropriate PhD opportunities, right through to the future application of those skills and potential career opportunities.

4.1.4 Any work on PhDs should be linked to the futures review, should draw in what’s happening across the UK, and should ensure that the UK plans for the right skills to cope with EU exit. The futures review could then potentially influence what BBSRC’s next DTP programme looks like and prompt earlier engagement from BBSRC with partners and stakeholders.

**ACTION 3-11:** Ensure the task and finish group tasked with the futures review incorporates skills capacity and development.

5. **Brexit analysis – 14:15 to 14:30 (verbal update)**

5.1 The Chair repeated previous advice to the Partnership that Defra’s CSA had requested an account of the major issues arising from EU exit that would affect UK animal and plant health science, but that little information was forthcoming from partners. In discussion the following comments were made:

5.1.1 Many organisations are conducting analyses of EU exit, and the Partnership should not be side-tracked by wider EU exit issues. It could, however, usefully address the
implications for reference laboratory status and other key areas of importance to animal and plant health specifically.

5.1.2 Defra’s Secretary of State has laid out 5 principles following EU exit around trade, productivity and competitiveness, environmental sustainability, animal health and welfare, and resilience. These could perhaps form the basis of any Partnership thinking around EU exit.

5.1.3 Defra would welcome the Partnership’s views on the key implications of EU exit for animal/plant health science, notably on reference laboratory status – to be led by the Chair. Defra would also welcome the Partnership’s views on Defra’s analyses, and Marc Casale would liaise with Chris Jacobs about the best way to share that information with the Partnership.

ACTION 3-12: The Partnership to develop a coordinated view of what it thinks are the main implications of EU exit for UK animal and plant health science (based on the Chair’s first thoughts); and to comment on Defra’s assessment of such implications, including potential impact on reference laboratory status of UK organisations.

6. Industrial Strategy (Paper 3:7) – 14:30 to 14:45

6.1 Chris Jacobs introduced paper 3-7 and noted that Research Councils UK (RCUK) is writing its own response to the Industrial Strategy, although it’s not clear how much, if at all, that will touch on animal and plant health. In discussion the following points were made:

6.1.1 The Partnership should only be responding to the Industrial Strategy consultation if it has new points which need to be made, or feels that value would be added by reinforcing points made by others.

6.1.2 Defra and other government departments have been working closely with BEIS on the content of the Industrial Strategy, but not specifically on animal/plant health issues, so there is potential for the Partnership to add value by highlighting the importance of animal/plant health to the UK economy (drawing on Rob Fraser’s economic analysis, and Deborah Keith’s subsequent summary of that work).

6.1.3 Any Partnership contribution would need to be led by the independent members, given the involvement the government representatives on the Partnership have already had in the Industrial Strategy process.

6.1.4 Members could usefully highlight the Industrial Strategy consultation to key stakeholders and encourage them to submit responses which stress the importance of animal and plant health.

ACTION 3-13: The independent members to coordinate a response to the Industrial Strategy consultation which highlights the importance of animal and plant health science, highlighting the economic and wider benefits and the industry links – to then be circulated for rapid comment from the wider Partnership (consultation deadline of 17th April).

ACTION 3-14: All members to encourage key stakeholders to submit responses to the Industrial Strategy consultation highlighting the importance of animal and plant health science.
7. Any other business

7.1 It was suggested that there would be value from having a summary of actions undertaken and planned. Chris Jacobs commented that this had already been done in a short paper which also highlighted progress and deliverables – this would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

ACTION 3-15: Chris Jacobs to circulate his note summarising deliverables and actions undertaken/planned.

7.2 There was discussion about potentially widening the membership of the Partnership e.g. to include the Wellcome Trust, but it was felt that more value would come from involving them in particular agenda items, and task and finish groups such as the one conducting a futures review. The Chair agreed to write to The Wellcome Trust suggesting this approach.

ACTION 3-16: The Chair to write to The Wellcome Trust suggesting they be involved in the Partnership through engagement on specific agenda items, and task and finish groups of particular relevance to them.

8. Next meeting:

8.1 The next quarterly meeting will be on Wednesday 14th June at 12:00 – 15:00 in Defra’s Nobel House office. Likely agenda items include reports back from proposed task and finish groups, and discussions on the Global Challenges Research Fund and the Internet of Agri-Things.

8.2 The December 2017 meeting is being switched from 13th December to 14th December as a number of members are unable to attend on 13th December.