Date: Friday 5th July 2019, 11:00 – 14:00
Venue: Room 808, Defra, Nobel House, Smith Square, London

Attendees
Chair: Julie Fitzpatrick - Scientific Director, Moredun Research Institute (independent)
Mike Francis (independent)
Christine Middlemiss (Defra)
Melanie Welham and Calum Murray (UK Research and Innovation)
Alistair Carson (DAERA-Northern Ireland)
Liam Kelly (Scottish Government) – dialling in
Neil Roberts (Welsh Government) – dialling in
Alan Tollervey (DfID)
Jane Clark (FSA)
Alex Churchill (GO-Science) – dialling-in
Tom Hinds (Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board) – from approx. 11.45am.
Graeme Cooke (Defra’s deputy Chief Veterinary Officer) – dialling-in.
Martin Jenkins (Defra Future Farming team)
Emma Crowhurst & Nancy Race (dialling in) (Defra Animal and Plant Health Evidence)
Deputy Director and officials (Defra Bovine TB programme)
Scott Sellers (Defra support)
Jef Grainger, Sadhana Sharma, Kirsty Douglas (BBSRC support)

Secretariat: Chris Jacobs

Apologies:–
Deborah Keith and Ian Toth (independent)
Ian Boyd and Nicola Spence (Defra)
Martin Williams (Welsh Government) – Neil Roberts representing Welsh Govt.
Guy Poppy and Rick Mumford (FSA) – Jane Clark representing FSA
Miles Carroll (Public Health England)
Anna Brown (Forestry Commission)
Alexandra Jones (BEIS)
Alison Wallace (Wellcome Trust – observer)

Summary of actions
ACTION 12-1: The Partnership’s thanks should be passed to Defra’s outgoing Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Ian Boyd, for his valuable contribution towards the establishment and work of the Partnership.
ACTION 12-2: Members should continue to consider the actions from previous meetings – notably sharing thinking and drafts as new Areas of Research Interest are developed, and commenting on the AMR research gaps paper.
ACTION 12-3: Professor Jonathan Rushton should be invited to present the latest developments on the work of the Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBAD) programme – either at a future Partnership meeting, or at the proposed endemics workshop (see Action 12-4).
**ACTION 12-4:** The Animal Disease Research Funders Forum (ADRFF) should be invited to develop proposals for a workshop to address the key endemic animal disease challenges, gaps, and tools to address disease control (for both bovine TB, and other endemic animal diseases) – to feed into a potential cross-government funding bid.

**ACTION 12-5:** Members to submit proposed future agenda items to the secretariat for consideration.

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1. Welcome, previous minutes/actions, and members’ update (Papers 12:1 and 12:2) – 11:00 to 11:15

**Welcome and minutes of the March meeting:**

1.1 The Chair welcomed members and their representatives, in particular the guests joining the meeting for the presentations and discussion on endemic animal diseases. The Chair also noted that this would be the last Partnership meeting whilst Ian Boyd remained Defra’s Chief Scientific Adviser (unfortunately unable to attend this meeting). The Chair and members put on record their thanks to him for all his valuable contributions, and wished him well for the future.

**ACTION 12-1:** The Partnership’s thanks should be passed to Defra’s outgoing Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Ian Boyd, for his valuable contribution towards the establishment and work of the Partnership.

1.2 The Chair noted that the March minutes had been previously circulated with no comments received, so these were formally accepted.

**Paper 12:1 - actions from March meeting:**

1.3 The Chair noted there were a number of outstanding actions from the March meeting, and suggested follow-up along the following lines:

1.3.1 **Action 11:2** – members were reminded to share thinking and drafts as new Areas of Research Interest are developed.

1.3.2 **Action 11:3** – a discussion on who should do what to improve the Partnership’s cross-government futures thinking and planning would be scheduled for once there’s more clarity on the Brexit situation.

1.3.3 **Action 11:4** – there is still an opportunity for members to comment on the AMR research gaps paper. Secretariat has been in discussion with the AMR Funders Forum, and we may schedule a follow-up discussion with them on next steps for September’s Partnership meeting.

**ACTION 12-2:** Members should continue to consider the actions from previous meetings – notably sharing thinking and drafts as new Areas of Research Interest are developed, and commenting on the AMR research gaps paper.

**Paper 12:2 – members’ update:**

1.4 The Chair thanked those who had provided a written update (UKRI, Food Standards Agency, DfID, Scottish Government, DAERA – Northern Ireland, and Defra’s plant and animal health teams), and reiterated the importance of other partners contributing to the update paper in future.
2. Agenda Items 3-8: Endemic Animal Diseases (Paper 12:3)

2.1 The Chair noted that this topic had been included as a core agenda item at the special request of both Defra and UKRI, and advised members that we would welcome such future suggestions for agenda items.

2.2 There then followed a number of presentations (listed in the agenda) setting out various positions regarding research and research gaps associated with endemic animal diseases. The Chair noted that these were supported by written updates from some member organisations – set out in Paper 12:3. In discussion the following points were made:

2.2.1 Ministers want the UK to be seen as a world leader in animal health and welfare, and having a coherent strategy to deal with endemic diseases will be increasingly important as the UK progresses through EU exit.

2.2.2 It would be helpful for research funders to know if the research they are funding is addressing the highest priority non-statutory diseases.

2.2.3 Defra’s new Endemics Evidence Group will need to build links with the various UK (and Republic of Ireland) partnerships which already seek to tackle endemic diseases.

2.2.4 EU exit provides the opportunity to target animal disease funding in a better/more effective way, since the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was very prescriptive in what could be funded. In a ‘post-CAP’ world, the UK is moving towards using public money for public goods, with 4 big wins to come from addressing endemic diseases: i) a better life for animals; ii) increased productivity; iii) benefits in anti-microbial resistance (AMR); and iv) benefits in mitigating against climate change. These have close links to the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan and 5 Year AMR Strategy.

2.2.5 Policies could be designed to better aid professionalism in the industry e.g. through accreditation; noting that the key is what is done/achieved by the industry rather than what it looks like.

2.2.6 Availability and use of data is increasingly important. A lot of data is owned by farms, abattoirs, industry, and quality assurance schemes – trying to get hold of that data for meta-analysis and “food-chain approaches” would be valuable. There is a line in the agriculture bill about facilitating data sharing which would support this. However, communication could be an issue in terms of government accessing data, when previous ‘messaging’ has suggested that endemic diseases are primarily an industry problem. Data feedback will be important in helping understand the effectiveness of disease control mechanisms, and subsequently building that data/knowledge into future delivery and control programmes.

2.2.7 R&D institutions need to know there will be a market down the line for their R&D, with greater collaboration between government, industry and academia. Significant economic opportunities could stem from this.

2.2.8 The industry’s profitability and return on capital are very low, so there will be a challenge to get the industry to engage; particularly when many farmers do not fully understand actual losses from disease.

2.2.9 There could be benefits from greater benchmarking, although this wouldn’t be industry-wide for many years. As any programme was developed, funding could perhaps be conditional on benchmarking.

2.2.10 The recent policy context has changed, with various UKRI/STAR-IDA2/ZELS programmes coming to an end. This explains why endemic disease concern is increasing.

2.2.11 Farmer behavioural aspects are key, and lessons could perhaps be drawn from the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) Transforming Food Production programme which is looking at innovative ways to engage primary food producers to drive adoption/behaviour change.
2.2.12 Linked to the above point, communication with farmers is important. Moredun is able to reach a broad farmer base, and share information, through its Foundation. Other communication routes should be considered.

2.2.13 Government is pushing greater industry engagement through the Small Business Research Initiative, so as to support industry in driving the development of solutions that wouldn’t otherwise take place e.g. helping farm businesses to monitor/report on various aspects of endemic diseases.

2.2.14 Profit is far from the main motivator for farmers, who value their time, ease of approach, quality of life, and ability to leave a legacy just as much, if not more. Any endemics programme would benefit from developing tools that make it easier for people to engage and achieve benefits.

2.2.15 Whilst endemic animal diseases are not core to the Food Standards Agency’s work, there are close links, especially with food-borne illnesses such as Salmonella, Campylobacter, and E. coli O157 etc. There are also links with Defra’s independent review into the need for a national food strategy. Food borne pathogens should therefore be included in any workshop/funding programme.

2.2.16 There is potential for greater UK-wide collaboration in this area, with the development of collaborative funding opportunities to address well scoped-out evidence and innovation needs. Partners would benefit from co-designing/delivering a workshop to address the key science/research challenges associated with endemic diseases. The outcome of such a workshop could be a cross-govt/devolved administration funding programme. Any workshop should include industry (e.g. Chairs of Health and Welfare Groups), so as to learn what diseases they want addressed and the important knowledge gaps they face.

2.2.17 Any research funding programme could be targeted at specific priority endemic diseases, or at a specific issue which spans a range of different diseases e.g. quicker and more precise diagnosis leading to better targeting of treatments, better modelling and epidemiology, or technological innovation.

2.2.18 Members considered that the proposed workshop would benefit from having underlying information such which endemic disease research partners currently undertake, and the view of industry. Defra has looked at this in the policy context, but less so in the science context. This will be one task for Defra’s Endemics Evidence Group to address; but the Partnership’s proposed workshop could help to address the key questions/research needs, and link these to delivery, diagnostics and the implementation of solutions. Any workshop will need separate discussions on TB and other endemic diseases, and should initially focus on ruminants and monogastrics. Aquatic species could perhaps be considered at a later workshop.

2.2.19 DAERA-NI has achieved good levels of leverage through collaboration for relatively small amounts of money. Drawing on this, partners should discuss possible mechanisms for joint funding – using government funding to leverage other funding. This could be the subject of a separate discussion, or could be part of the same endemics workshop.

2.2.20 Any UK research on endemics could also have potential value internationally. The Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBAD) programme is aiming to identify the globally most significant animal diseases, including food-borne zoonotic diseases, to help target future funding. The programme seeks to create a comprehensive dataset of diseases, injuries, and risk factors that can be used to measure epidemiological levels and trends worldwide. The University of Liverpool and the N8 Agrifood Resilience Programme have been coordinating this work, led by Professor Jonathan Rushton, and it was suggested that he be asked to give a presentation at a future Partnership meeting, or at the proposed workshop.

2.3 In summary it was agreed that a workshop should be planned, which would seek to both align research funders’ thinking on bovine TB, and also focus on underlying research needs for other endemic animal diseases (e.g. developing diagnostic and vaccinology platform technologies,
understanding of immune pathways, pathogen biology, host biology, epidemiology, modelling, data, surveillance methodology and underpinning research - including economic analysis if/as needed). The proposed outcome for the workshop would be a funding bid which would allow us to tackle current endemic animal diseases and be prepared for the future.

2.4 In subsequent discussion after the meeting, representatives from Defra, UKRI and DAERA-Northern Ireland agreed that a meeting of the cross-government Animal Disease Research Funders Forum should be convened to consider the recommendations from this Partnership meeting, and plan the proposed workshop. If it was felt that the workshop should also seek to identify priority diseases on a national/regional basis from the livestock sector, then such discussion should focus on i) the need to identify the knowledge/evidence/capability gap to achieving disease control; ii) the most effective tools to enable control (e.g. vaccine/diagnostics); and iii) if the tools are there, then why they are not being utilised (e.g. social science/behavioural insight).

**ACTION 12-3**: Professor Jonathan Rushton should be invited to present the latest developments on the work of the Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBAD) programme – either at a future Partnership meeting, or at the proposed endemics workshop (see Action 12-4).

**ACTION 12-4**: The Animal Disease Research Funders Forum (ADRFF) should be invited to develop proposals for a workshop to address the key endemic animal disease challenges, gaps, and tools to address disease control (for both bovine TB, and other endemic animal diseases) – to feed into a potential cross-government funding bid.

3. AoB / next meeting:

3.1 The next meeting of the UK Science Partnership for Animal and Plant Health is scheduled for Thursday 19th September 2019. Possible agenda items include: how to take forward previous AMR thinking in collaboration with the AMR Funders Forum; wider Partnership interest in a proposed plant health innovation fund (collaborative with industry); what next on the proposed endemic animal disease workshop/funding bid (with a possible update on global work); and perhaps a general stock-take on the work of the Partnership and/or an update on African Swine Fever and the UK’s readiness. Members were reminded to submit any proposed agenda items to the secretariat for consideration.

**ACTION 12-5**: Members to submit proposed future agenda items to the secretariat for consideration.