

## Chief Executives Report

### 1. Covid-19 - Return to Pilgrim House

1.1 Following a review of proposals put forward by the Future Working Arrangements and Pilgrim House Recovery Groups, and a risk assessment carried out with the Scottish Government Council of Unions, ELT has triggered the 28 days' notice period for re-opening Pilgrim House. The office will be made available to staff from Thursday 2 December 2021 on a needs must and priority basis.

1.2 Due to the necessary Covid-19 safety requirements, the office will be opening with very reduced capacity so requests to book meeting rooms, for business critical meetings.

1.3 All staff will be required to carry out mandatory training prior to entering Pilgrim House, or any other Scottish Government building, and a bespoke booking system has been developed which will allow staff to reserve desks, meeting rooms and car park spaces.

### 2. Meetings in Brief

2.1 In mid-October Geoff attended the UK Global Food Safety Incidents and Emergency Response conference, which had worldwide attendance and some great presentations. Geoff and Emily Miles, the Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency presented on the first day. The content can be accessed [here](#). There is also a very good [blog](#) from FSA's Head of Incidents reflecting on the conference.

2.2 Geoff met with the Chief Executive of Zero Waste Scotland and agreed that they should look at some more joint senior public activity post-COP26 to give some more public visibility to the shared agendas around, in particular, food waste.

### 3. Joint FSS / Food Standards Agency COP26 Conference

3.1 Working with FSA, the UK and International Relations team delivered a successful virtual event building on the themes of COP26. The Chair gave the morning key note speech and the morning sessions looked at regulation and sustainability, with roundtable discussions on the role of regulators and improvements in technology, as well as a panel session from businesses. In the afternoon, sessions focussed on diet and climate change – asking what regulators should do to encourage better sustainability in diet and how we might see the effects of climate change play out in our diets and food systems. We also heard from innovative businesses who are taking action to empower consumers to make better environmental choices when buying food. Speakers included representatives from academia, retail, industry, FSA, FSS, SEPA, WRAP, NGOs and public health institutions.

3.2 Feedback on the day was positive with commenters highlighting the quality of the conversation during the sessions and the range of perspectives, including a range of internal voices. Sessions averaged over 100 attendees each, and overall engagement was with over 200 unique delegates. Attendees have been contacted to gather further feedback. The Executive will also be undertaking a review of the conference to inform our thinking further on what our focus will be in terms of sustainability for the Board's consideration and approval.

#### 4. Vitamin D Campaign

4.1 A new TV ad campaign launched with the issue of a news release quoting Alana McDonald and Maree Todd (with accompanying social media) on October 15, shortly after adverts started appearing on on STV which will run for 11 weeks in a mix of peak and day time slots. The ad can be viewed [here](#)

4.2 Vitamin D is really important for keeping our bones and muscles healthy. Sunlight is our main source of vitamin D, but we do not get enough of the right type of sunlight between October and March. Since it is also difficult to get enough vitamin D from food, we encourage everyone to take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D, particularly over these winter months.

4.3 The Press & Journal, and its DC Thomson sister titles The Courier and the Evening Telegraph also ran six 'paid-for' advertorials – packed with key campaign messages to our target audiences – from late October, along with standalone adverts and social media ads. The advertorials appears (print and online), in news, The P&J's weekend supplement 'Prime', and its 'YL' lifestyle magazine.

4.4 To coincide with the news release, we also provided DC Thomson newsdesk with an editorial comment piece by Alana, that appears in those three titles, week starting October 18.

4.5 Off the back of the release, we generated widespread coverage across national news titles – including The Herald, The Scotsman, Daily Record, The Scottish Sun, Daily Express, the 'I', and the Sunday Post – and then spread over the following 2-3 weeks, in most of our priority trade/industry titles. Radio bulletins on Original 106 and Kingdom FM also featured mention of the campaign.

4.6 Our figures suggest the print reach was 288,839 readers; online reach was 19,473,368; and broadcast listenership approximately 128,000.

4.7 Social media stats:

- Facebook ads, 945 page views
- Google organic search, 578 page views
- Twitter ads, 536 page views
- Direct traffic, 397 page views
- Twitter organic, 171 page views
- Google display ads, 130 page views

- Facebook organic, 82 page views
- Bing organic search, 68 page views
- Referral from googlesyndicate.com, 32 page views
- Facebook organic on mobile, 31 page views
- Total Twitter page views, 707

## **5. Scottish Government Shared Services Recruitment**

5.1 In recent months FSS and Scottish Government Shared Services has strengthened their relationship further with the establishment of fortnightly meetings of senior colleagues to prioritise recruitment of business critical posts. This, in recent weeks, has delivered an improved SG HR service to FSS which gives the Executive team a degree of optimism that things will improve in the short to medium term.

5.2 The recent announcement from SG that the launch of the new IT recruitment system in December with the primary outcome hoped to deliver a streamlined end to end recruitment process is very welcomed. This will be monitored by FSS moving into the new year but early indications are this will go a significant way to modernising what is an antiquated recruitment process.

5.3 Following submission of a business case by the Operational Delivery branch in August 2021, in October SG Pay Policy approved a pay supplement for the plant-based meat Official Veterinarian (OV) role at a value of £4000 per annum. This is applicable to all currently employed OVs and any new recruits and will be reviewed before August 2022. Following 3 mostly unsuccessful recruitment campaigns for qualified OVs, the awarding of this pay supplement is already starting to see positive outcomes, with all recently recruited OV's (4 in total) having accepted the salary offers and currently going through their security checks.

## **6. Regulated Products**

6.1 Following the end of the Implementation Period (IP), FSS and the FSA took on responsibility for handling applications for regulated products submitted from businesses wishing to market them in Great Britain.

6.2 The First batch of potential authorisations consisting of 26 applications (which were also submitted to the EU prior to the end of the IP) have now been assessed. This has included review of the European Food Safety Authority opinions, with which we are content, and we are also undertaking our own consultations on the GB scientific opinions during November and December/January. This will begin with the opinions on 9 GM food and feed applications and be followed up with 11 for feed additives and 6 for novel foods.

6.3 Stakeholders will also have the opportunity to highlight other legitimate factors that may be relevant to applications and help inform Scottish Ministers in taking authorisation decisions. The authorisation process involves a GB system and where applications raise significant or Scottish specific issues, these will be highlighted to the Board.

## 7. Compliance Notices for Food Standards - Consultation launched

7.1 On 21 October FSS launched an 8-week public consultation on our proposal to introduce Compliance Notices for Food Standards, to ensure that Enforcement Officers have the option of a more proportionate and graduated approach to enforcement to food standards. Currently they have limited options, such as submitting a report to the Procurator Fiscal, which is often disproportionate to the level of breach. The feedback from the consultation will be used to finalise the draft SSI and to confirm whether the scope of these notices should be food standards only, or expanded to also include food hygiene. The consultation will be open until close of play 16 December 21 and [can be accessed here](#).

## 8. Good Food Nation Bill

8.1 The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 7 October 2021. It requires the Scottish Ministers and certain public bodies, referred to in the Bill as 'relevant authorities', to create Good Food Nation Plans. The relevant authorities identified in the Bill are health boards and local authorities. Other public bodies may be required to produce plans in the future. The Scottish Ministers and relevant authorities need to have regard to these plans when carrying out certain functions. These functions will be set out by the Scottish Ministers in secondary legislation that will be considered by the Parliament.

8.2 Scottish Government are also giving consideration to whether there is a need for a new statutory body or whether an existing body may be given additional functions in relation to the Bill.

8.3 FSS is engaged with Scottish Government as to what it might mean for FSS both in terms of obligations under the Bill and in terms of any possible role for us.

## 9. Local Authority Audits

9.1 We have now re-commenced Local Authority audits following a period of suspension because of the Covid-19 pandemic. One Local Authority (LA) has been audited to date with three further audits planned up until the end of March 2022. These audits will focus on capacity and capability to deliver food law: [Capacity & Capability Audit Brief & Plan](#)

9.2 Stirling Council was the first LA to be audited: this [report](#) records the results of the audit of Stirling Council with regard to their capacity and capability to deliver food enforcement, under relevant sections of Retained Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed or food law. The audit focused on the Authority's arrangements for meeting certain operational criteria, particularly on staffing related issues, registration and approval of food business operators, enforcement actions, interventions, procedures for carrying out official controls and transparency about their enforcement activities.

9.3 The Audit of Stirling Council highlighted a number of serious concerns, in particular the Authority were unable to effectively deliver;

- An appropriate food law intervention programme as required by the Food Law Code of Practice (which allows for Covid flexibilities)
- A post Covid-19 recovery plan (as set out by FSS)
- a comprehensive response to a food related public health incident

9.4 The Authority have responded positively to the audit and have produced an action plan to address the recommendations raised. FSS continue to work with the Authority and review implementation of the action plan.

## **10. EU Exit**

10.1 Since EU Exit, FSS has been working closely with marine Scotland on the development of new procedures for enabling the attestation and certification of consignments of gastropods and fishery products by Local Authorities and export hubs in Scotland.

10.2 This has involved significant input from our science team in producing the comprehensive risk assessments required to inform the necessary sampling plans and facilitating links with laboratory providers to undertake the testing needed to verify compliance as a 3<sup>rd</sup> country exporting to the EU.

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