
Summary Minutes: AWERB

Status: Chair approved

Meeting held: 29 June 2021 at 2pm via MS Teams

Present:

Attendees: 10, plus 1 in attendance, 1 by invitation and 7 apologies.

1 NEW PROJECT LICENCE APPLICATION REVIEW

The project licence holder applicant was welcomed to the meeting. The applicant was submitting an application to replace an existing project licence that was due to expire.

The project licence involved providing in-vitro diagnostic reagents and animal tissues to other projects to enable them to further fundamental and applied research for the development and application of research projects and new treatments in support of human and animal healthcare.

Requests were screened to make sure that they were in a research area that the College was comfortable being involved in. A study request was then required that described the proposed use of the samples and whether the objectives of the project could be achieved using alternative techniques. These request forms were then reviewed to check the scientific justification and that a good scientific plan was in place. Where possible resources were shared with other researchers, which worked very well.

AWERB were supportive of the application but asked that the applicant reviewed the estimated numbers on the licence and based them on anticipated requirements rather than possible requirements. They also asked for reassurance (which was provided) that checks were done to ensure that any requested studies met the aims and objectives of the licence.

The applicant was thanked for attending. Once the requested adjustments had been done, the project licence would be circulated to AWERB for a final review.

After the applicant had left the licence was discussed further. It was noted that this was an antibody production licence. There had recently been an EURL ECVAM Recommendation on Non-Animal-Derived Antibodies, that had recommended that animals should not be used in procedures where a non-animal alternative existed, which provided the same or higher level of information as obtained from animal procedures. The project licence had therefore been reviewed with this recommendation in mind. However, AWERB members were of the view that for this project licence, the work was well justified and specified the purposes.

A query was raised about what alternative appropriate methods for antibody production were there? The following paper was recommended: [Animal-free alternatives and the antibody iceberg](#). This paper compared the processes in animals and in vitro methods. This project licence however fitted into that space where it indicated that animals were needed.

2 CHANGE OF PROJECT LICENCE HOLDER FOR HOSPITAL PROJECT LICENCE

The Project licence holder for this licence would be leaving the RVC in the autumn so a project licence holder needed to be identified. After discussion, the consensus was that it needed to be someone who was involved in the work done at the hospital. It needed to be someone who understood how the hospitals and clinical research worked together otherwise there was potential for confusion and a lack of clarity.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Item 3.1: New NC3Rs Zebrafish welfare hub (9 June 2021)

The weblink for this hub had been circulated to the zebrafish users group. Discussions about zebrafish swabbing would be raised at the next zebrafish users meeting.

4.2 Item 3.2: Rat playpens for improved welfare (9 June meeting)

A formal sit down with the team was being arranged to discuss the potential options with regards to playpens that could be used for the teaching animals.

4.3 Item 3.3: Blood sampling (9 June meeting)

The information about this updated NC3Rs resource had been posted in the BSU Users News Forum.

4.4 Item 5: ARRIVE compliance report (9 June meeting)

A meeting had been arranged for 7th July to discuss course content ideas for the suggested workshops.

4.5 Item 6: AWERB Terms of Reference (9 June meeting)

A copy of the RSPCA questions for PPL holders in relation to attendance at AWERB had been circulated. AWERB would review and a quick discussion held at the next meeting to see if any changes were needed. This would then be instigated as a new process.

4.6 Item 7: PPL Reviews guidance document (9 June meeting)

A copy of this document had been placed on the intranet to provide advice to new PPL Holders on things to consider when writing project licences.

4.7 Item 5.4: Camden Stables and Anatomy pony (12 March 2021 meeting)

There was now a budget allocated for levelling the driveway outside the front of the stables, so once completed it should be safer when walking in and out of there.

A query was raised about how the anatomy pony had found the boots that had been obtained for her. No behavioural changes had been noted and they had not caused any rubbing. The pony was now back in Hawkshead so she would be monitored there.

5 ASRU: NEW OPERATING MODEL TO DELIVER REGULATORY SERVICES

AWERB were informed that ASRU were bringing in a new operating model to deliver regulatory services from the following Monday (5th July).

- The changes were to ensure that there was an increase in transparency
- Establishments would not have a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) or a dedicated Home Office Inspector (HOI). Instead, regulatory services would be provided via a team structure.

- There would be 3 Teams:
 - Regulatory Advice Team: they would deal with questions that related to the interpretation of ASPA, operational guidance relating to ASPA issued by ASRU or related to interpretation of project licences or licence conditions.
 - Compliance Assurance Team: This team would deliver all activities which provide oversight and assurance to the public of licence holders compliance with ASPA and their licence conditions
 - Licensing team: This team would deliver the processing of applications for licences and licence amendments and consists of all inspectors within ASRU. ASPeL would continue to be used for the management of these licences.
- All initial contact with the teams would need to be done via a dedicated e-mail address (one for each team).
- Project licences would go into a taxi rank queue and be dealt with on a first come first served basis. In exceptional circumstances applications could be prioritised if there were good reasons to do so.
- The Home Office would have a descriptor for each establishment that would include information about the facilities and previous history.
- There was potential for unannounced inspections as well as regular inspections. The aim of these inspections was to focus more on the process and the culture and to do an audit of how operating. It was therefore important to ensure that all the appropriate paperwork was in place.
- There would be no out of hours or weekend cover by the Home Office. Each institute needed to make sure they had processes in place that were robust enough to cope with any emergencies.

A small internal working party would be set up to aid the transition of these changes, review current processes and decide what alterations to processes were needed in conjunction with the new ASRU approaches.

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 14 July at 2pm.

Secretary
1 July 2021