

University of Leeds, Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Committee

Minutes 24 May 2022

Ten members of the Committee joined the meeting (four for part of the meeting). The Establishment Licence (PEL) holder agreed to chair the meeting since the Chair had given apologies.

Minutes

21/105 The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2022 were received and approved.

Matters Arising

21/106 (Min 21/80) CPD arrangements had been delayed due to the plans for facility restructuring and the additional pressure on staff. Suggestions to progress this included asking staff what they would like CPD to cover and the possibility of taking advantage of external course provision. The general view was that virtual or hybrid sessions would be welcomed and there was a clear preference for CPD relevant to all stakeholders which would help to reinforce relationships. ACTION: Member concerned to look at available external CPD courses and to discuss options with the Named Training and Competence Officer (NTCO).

21/107 Problems connecting to the secure server (min21/81) were still being experienced due to staff having Macs that were not compatible and PCs that could not be upgraded. Discussions between the unit management and IT were ongoing.

21/108 There had been no further updates from the Animals in Science Research Unit (ASRU) (min 21/85). A report following the small number of full systems audits that had already taken place was awaited along with updated advice notes promised by ASRU during 2021. The Committee was told that the reduction in ASRU inspectors had become a very serious concern.

Establishment Licence (PEL) holder and Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS)'s update

(Received paper AWERC/21/25 and Minister's response to PEL holders' Forum MIN 265183 22)

21/109 The NVS reported that the changes to the PEL following the change of Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer (NACWO) had been approved and updated.

21/110 One Standard Condition 18 (SC18) report submitted in November was still outstanding and for another that was submitted in January, no information had been received. Two SC18 reports that were submitted during the present reporting period had been

resolved and the cases closed with no further information or action required.

21/111 Regarding the animal facilities' restructuring a small group had been looking at different scenarios concerning different health status of sites/areas with the aim of finding the best solution for merging facilities. This had required the adoption of a consistent approach to health screening to identify and then to seek to resolve discrepancies.

21/112 There had been no animal welfare issues to report.

21/113 Following receipt of the response from the Minister to correspondence from the Chair of the Laboratory Animal Science Association (LASA) PEL Holders' Forum, this group along with the LASA Home Office Liaison, Training and Information Forum had been engaged in information gathering for the meeting with the Minister.

21/114 The PEL holder reported that steps had been taken to replace recently retired and retiring members. A lay member had agreed to Chair the Committee for two years starting in September 2022 and two Project Licence (PPL) holders had agreed to join the Committee from July 2022. Discussions were ongoing with the Chaplaincy to identify an additional lay member.

21/115 The advertisement for the NVS role had recently been posted as a full-time position to cover the full scope of work of the current NVS. The closing date had not yet arrived but interest in the role appeared encouraging and it was thought that the Committee could look forward to receiving some good news in due course. The NVS advised that there would be flexibility around facilitating a transition as part of the handover.

Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers' (NACWO) Report

(Received paper AWERC/21/26)

21/116 In relation to the unit closure the NACWOs reported that information gathering was ongoing. The NVS advised that this phase was expected to end in July when the next phase would be the decision-making process.

21/117 Two members of staff, one on each site, had been on long term sick leave. One of these had resigned and discussions between HR and the other were ongoing and would hopefully be resolved within a few months.

21/118 An ongoing issue with temperature control in one room was reported. Temperatures were being maintained using thermostatically controlled heaters and the situation was being monitored very closely to ensure animal welfare could be maintained. Various options to resolve the problem were being explored and a decision to move the animals if necessary, would be taken shortly.

21/119 There were no animal welfare issues to report.

PPL review for formal Retrospective Assessment

S5B56

21/120 The Committee received a presentation detailing the work undertaken on the project and its findings. During discussion the Committee considered the severity of the licence, which had been due to the nature of the disease model in the genetically altered animals used for the work rather than in anticipation of the effect of procedures. The limitations applied by the licensee had ensured that animals never experienced adverse effects that reached the severe limit of the protocols.

21/121 Matters discussed included the purchase of animals to avoid unnecessary breeding and minimise animal numbers; the use of more sensitive equipment at another establishment to further reduce numbers; and the randomization of animals within age groups and by coding. The licensee acknowledged that ongoing refinement had been difficult due to good initial planning and that the main reductions had come about from speaking with colleagues. With the findings from this project the licensee would be looking at opportunities to incorporate in-vitro work in future. The Committee noted that the licence had been for basic research which would contribute to the diagnosis of markers for early stage identification of diabetes which would inform patients that damage was already occurring. Future work would look at how these markers could be applied. The Committee was satisfied with the report which could be submitted to the Home Office (HO).

Project licence applications

A383

21/122 The NVS provided some background to the application which was for conservation work involving wild species which would all be carried out at places other than the Establishment Licence (POLES) sites. There was some discussion about the status of the researcher and the Committee was assured by their experience, the mild severity and low risk of the protocols; that all associated licences and controls were in place; and that no problems had been encountered under the previous licence.

21/123 Following a presentation matters discussed included the benefit of having health checks before procedures, to rule out any unsuitable subjects, and following procedures to ensure subjects were healthy and unharmed before release. The application of calming methods; steps to minimise disruption; and alternative sampling methods were all considered and discussed. A few refinements to the application

were suggested and the applicant was asked to incorporate these and tidy up the application. With these changes the Committee was satisfied that the application could be submitted to the HO.

A384

21/124 The Committee was told that the application was to continue work under an existing licence. The presentation included information regarding the moderate severity to take account of cumulative effects of the work; multiple approaches to the three Rs; the use of human in-vitro studies for validation prior to in-vivo work; pilot work to determine animal numbers prior to running therapeutic studies; randomization and blinding; the use of both sexes for the work and the possibility of longitudinal studies which could provide opportunities for refinement.

21/125 Discussions were concerned with the experimental unit, which the applicant agreed to review; the relevant welfare checking in place, along with increased monitoring appropriate to the anticipation of adverse effects; the use of various methods for welfare checks including grimace scoring, animal weight and tumour size.

21/126 A few changes were suggested to refine the application. Both the NVS and NACWO advised that they had no concerns and the Committee was satisfied with the application, which could be submitted to the HO subject to minor changes.

Schedule of business

(Received AWERC/21/27)

21/127 The updated schedule of business was received for information.

Other business

21/128 The NVS advised that in-house licensee training courses, paused during Covid, should remain on hold for the remainder of 2022 due to staffing changes. Students and staff should be encouraged to attend virtual theory courses during this period with the practical training to continue to be delivered by the NVS and NACWOS. This would allow time for the NVS's successor to liaise with the PEL holder and other stakeholders in our establishment to agree on future training provision.

Date of next meeting

21/129 The next meeting would take place at 1400 on Monday 18 July 2022 on MS Teams.