

POLICY AND CODE OF PRACTICE ON OPERATION & MEMBERSHIP OF SECTOR PANELS

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1 The Role, Structure and Operation of the Panels

1.1 Role and Purpose

The Sector Panels are designed to ensure that all activities funded by [AHDB Horticulture's Sector Board](#) are prioritised, have relevance to, and the support of, the relevant growers and their crop associations. This is particularly important in an industry such as horticulture with so many different crops and size of business.

The functions of the Sector Panels are to:

- Develop, implement and update sector strategies within the framework of that agreed by the Board as detailed in the Sector Corporate Plan.
- Assess funding proposals for scientific merit, value for money and probability of success.
- Make recommendations for funding, with the ability to commission work rapidly in response to urgent needs within the industry.
- Monitor the progress of on-going activities and the success of completed work.
- Review and recommend communications activities undertaken by AHDB Horticulture and others, to ensure that the benefits of R&D and knowledge exchange are effectively communicated and targeted towards levy payers.
- Represent industry views and ensure equitable attention is given to the interests of all growers.

1.2 Relationship to the Board

The Board delegates responsibility to the Panels to ensure that projects recommended for funding are technically and economically sound. Individual Panel Chairs are also Members of the Board and if necessary sponsor the need for particular project proposals to the Board. In finally sanctioning proposals recommended by Panels, the Board would only be expected to review or reject proposals on grounds of overall funding, strategy or programme balance.

1.3 Scope of Individual Panels

1.3.1 Background

The Board, on the advice of executive staff, has reviewed the scope of the Panels and have taken into consideration a wide range of issues including;

- Are growers interests better served with Panels shaped by function or crops, e.g. crop protection, plant nutrition etc vs. conventional crop groups?
- Grouping together specific technical needs e.g. energy for protected crops.
- The need to balance generic considerations and opportunities against addressing the specific needs of individual crops. The Horticulture Division of AHDB serves over 30 crop associations and major crop groups.
- The existence and composition of the various crop associations.
- Workload and levy funds available for individual Panels.
- Cost of servicing Panels and availability of industry representation.

1.3.2 Scope of Individual Panels

Having reviewed the Panel scope, the Board has concluded that the following structure provides the right level and spread of industry interaction and consultation:

- Field Vegetables (FV)
- Hardy Nursery Stock (HNS)
- Protected Ornamentals and Bulbs and Outdoor Flowers (PO/BOF)
- Protected Edibles and Mushrooms (PE/M)
- Soft Fruit (SF)
- Tree Fruit (including stone fruit) (TF)

1.3.3 Cross Panel Issues

The Board is responsible for stimulating and progressing Cross Panel (CP) projects with the assistance of individual Research and Knowledge Exchange Managers, led by the Director of Horticulture (Sector Director).

In many cases, projects will be of relevance to more than one Panel but not all, e.g. energy issues may be relevant not only to the Protected Ornamentals and Protected Edibles Panels but also to the Soft Fruit Panel.

All Panel Members are encouraged to consider the relevance of projects for other Panels but the designated Research and Knowledge Exchange Managers are specifically responsible for encouraging cross-fertilisation and communication to take place wherever relevant, not just within the Horticulture Division but across the whole of AHDB as well.

1.4 Structure and Composition

1.4.1 General

Each Panel is comprised of core Elected Members who directly represent the interest of growers together with a number of Science Advisors who provide scientific and consultancy support to underpin the quality and scope of proposals brought to the Panels for funding. In addition individuals may be invited to specific meetings for their knowledge of a particular crop/issue as required.

1.4.2 Definition of a Quorum

For a Panel Meeting to be quorate, more than 51% of Elected Members (including the Chair) should be present at a meeting. Any votes should be carried by a majority of at least one member, with the Chair having a casting vote.

1.4.3 Panel Composition

1.4.3.1 Panel Chair

The Chair of each Panel is also a member of the Board. This ensures consistency and smooth communications between the various groups recommending and approving projects for funding. It also ensures that the Board represents a broad cross-section of the industry.

The Panel Chair is expected to facilitate the smooth and efficient running of the Panel, ensuring all relevant views are gathered leading to clear and timely decisions on project funding. This is a difficult task, made more complex by the wide array of crops and interest groups. Training in Chairmanship skills is offered to Panel Chairs to help them with this duty.

The Panel Chair's key responsibilities are:

- Chairing both closed and open Panel meetings and ensuring that the business of the meeting is conducted according to the Agenda in a timely manner.
- Appointing a Vice Chair to act as a deputy.
- To hold a casting vote in closed Panel meetings on decisions relating to the funding of projects.
- Ensuring that conflicts of interest are identified and appropriately dealt with within the meeting.
- Liaising with the Panel's Research and Knowledge Exchange Manager to resolve or action any technical issues that arise either within the industry or as a result of the programme of research and communications that falls within the remit of the Panel.
- Liaising with the Research Manager and Knowledge Exchange Manager (and where necessary the Crop Protection Liaison Manager) to ensure that Panel's current and forward commitments to R & D, EAMU (pesticide extensions of

authorisation for minor uses) and Communications spend are managed within the overall budget allocated by the Director of Horticulture.

- The Panel Chair has the discretion, in consultation with the Research and Knowledge Exchange Manager, to move money within the budget from communications spend to R & D/EAMU spend and *vice versa*. The Director of Horticulture should be informed if such re-allocations are made.
- To sit on the Horticulture Sector Board as a representative of the sector represented by the Panel (the responsibilities of Board members are identified in a separate document).
- To sanction minor additional costs to projects. Panel Chairs are authorised by the Sector Board to approve an extension to project funding of up to 10% of the total value of a project provided the amount does not exceed a maximum of £10,000, does not result in the overall Panel budget being exceeded and that the approval is subsequently noted by the Board for information.

1.4.3.2 Vice chair

- The Vice Chair is appointed by the Chair. The Vice Chair's role is to cover the case of sudden non-availability of the Panel Chair. In cases where the absence of the Panel Chair is known well in advance, such as stepping down from the Board, then the Panel Vice Chair will stand-in and chair the relevant Panel meetings (see also Section 1.4.2).
- The Vice Chair cannot deputise for the Panel Chair at Board meetings but may be invited to attend part or all of a meeting, to share the views of the Panel, at the Board's discretion.

1.4.3.3 Research and Knowledge Exchange Manager

The relevant Research and Knowledge Exchange Manager supports the Panel Chair in the smooth operation of the Panels.

Specific duties in this respect include: -

- At least 6 weeks before the meeting, request the submission of the following papers:
 - Communications Paper (from the Knowledge Exchange Manager)
 - Finance Paper (Research Manager to prepare)
 - Crop Protection Paper (from the Crop Protection Manager)
 - Board minutes (from the Panel Chair)
- Facilitate the submission of funding proposals to the AHDB Horticulture, at least 4 weeks before the meeting.
- Collate opinions on funding submissions from relevant crop associations for presentation to the Panel.

- In discussion with the Panel Chair, prepare the Panel agenda, at least 3 weeks before the meeting.
- In discussion with the Panel Chair, invite *ad-hoc* attendees at least 3 weeks before the meeting.
- Prepare and circulate all relevant papers to Panel Members at least 2 weeks before the meeting.
- Assist the Panel Chair to run the Panel meeting efficiently.
- Ensure that concise minutes are taken, clearly highlighting decisions and actions, and circulate draft minutes to the Chair, within 1 week after the meeting.
- Receive approval from Chair within 1 further week (2 weeks after meeting)
- Circulate to attendees 2 weeks after the meeting (or once the Panel Chair has approved them).
- Await further 2 weeks for feedback/alterations from attendees (4 wks after meeting).
- Once signed off at the following meeting, the minutes of the Open meeting should be published to the website. Minutes of the closed meeting should be distributed to elected members only.
- Contact contractors with a short preliminary response on Panel decisions, within 1 week after the meeting.
- Supply contractors with a decision letter with the response from the Panel as minuted. Ensure that the Panel Chair and other relevant Panel Members receive a copy of the decision letter, within 4 weeks after the meeting.
- Ensure all Panel Members are aware of their role and responsibilities and the Code of Practice for Panel Members.
- Assist the Research Administrator with the annual Panel elections process.

1.4.3.4 Panel Members

- All Panel Members are required to abide by the Code of Practice, which is given to all new members (see [Section 2](#) below).
- Often Panel Members are selected to represent and provide insight into the interests of growers of a particular crop type or region. However, it is important that the Panel operates as a cohesive body on a higher plane than just furthering narrow sectional interests. Panel Members are therefore required to take a collective responsibility to ensure that the interests of all growers covered by the Panel are considered. In this regard, it is particularly important that the needs of speciality growers, growers of small volume crops and small-scale growers are serviced. Panel Members serve on an individual basis and deputies are not permitted except with the agreement of the Panel Chair (deputies to elected Panel Members do not have voting rights).
- As Panel Members serve on an individual basis, if during their tenure Members change employment from the position they held at the time of their appointment, they may remain on the Panel until their term expires with the agreement of the Panel Chair.

- Panel Members may send comments on Panel papers to the Chair and Research Manager prior to any meeting that they are unable to attend. Alternatively Panel Members may arrange for a deputy, who will not have any voting rights, to attend the Panel meeting, with the agreement of the Panel Chair.
- Panel Members should take due regard of the views of relevant crop associations, who may well have invested considerable time and effort into reviewing and shaping particular projects which they believe are in the interests of their members (and levy payers).
- Basic contact details of members and their responsibilities will be put on AHDB Horticulture's website to allow communication and collaboration as appropriate.

1.4.3.4.1 *Elected Members*

- Panels should have between 5 and 15 Elected Members (including the Chair) to represent directly the interests of levy payers.
- The composition of each Panel is constructed to ensure that, as far as possible, main crop categories and, where relevant, geographical regions are covered. Specific representation for minor crops may be covered by inviting individual growers or crop associations on an 'as necessary' basis.
- With the complex mix of crops, regions and different combinations of crop knowledge of individual growers, it is inappropriate to design a format for each Panel, irrespective of the profile of individual members. Therefore the composition and number of members of each Panel will be approved by the Board on the advice, as required, of the Panel Chair and Research Managers, in consultation with the Panel. This process will be undertaken as required.
- Having defined the profile of the new Panel Members, the positions will be advertised. Where only sufficient candidates come forward to fill the available positions, the candidates will automatically be appointed to the Panel. Should there be more candidates than available positions, members will be appointed on the basis of a vote by all growers paying a levy relevant to that particular Panel
- To be eligible to stand for election, candidates must either be a current horticultural levy payer or be a payroll employee of a current levy payer. However, those who hold current contracts with AHDB (or who may wish to apply for AHDB contracts during the term of office), should not stand for election (sub-contracts may be permitted on a case-by case basis, e.g. where growers are supplying facilities for experimental work). Where evidence of industry support is required for nominees applying for a position, such support can only be supplied by current levy payers.
- Elected member positions will run for a period of 3 years starting on 1 January following their election the previous autumn. During their term of office, members elected to the Panel must remain either a levy payer (or a payroll employee of a levy payer). Members may stand for a maximum of two consecutive 3 year terms (6 years in total). Individuals who have served either a 3 or 6 year term may stand for election again a minimum of 3 years after the ending of their last term of office. Where no replacement for an elected member whose terms have expired can be found, the incumbent elected member may be allowed to continue at the Panel Chair's discretion on an annual renewable basis until such time as a replacement can be found (active efforts must be made to find a replacement).

1.4.3.4.2 *Invited Members*

- *Science Advisors*: invited by the Elected Members to serve the Panel in providing general scientific or business guidance and advice on the scope, relevance and quality of proposals put to the Panel for funding recommendations. Each Panel can have up to four Science Advisors who are invited to serve for an initial period of one year. Science Advisors must recognise that they are invited because of their personal knowledge, not as representatives of their employing organisation. Usually at the last Panel meeting of the year, Elected Members of the Panel will decide who to invite as Science Advisors for the following year according to the projected needs for advice and additional expertise.
- *Courtesy Members*: representation from Defra, RERAD and relevant trade bodies (HTA and NFU) will be invited to attend all open Panel meetings.
- Representatives of crop groups or individuals may be invited to specific meetings for their knowledge of a particular crop/issue as required.

1.4.3.4.3 *AHDB Horticulture staff*

- The Board Chairman and Director of Horticulture are *ex-officio* members of all Panels.
- Other AHDB Horticulture staff are not officially members of the Panel but may attend Panel meetings as and when required.

1.4.3.5 Panel Attendance

The Board may disqualify a Panel Member after three consecutive absences if the Panel recommends this course of action.

1.4.3.6 Election process

- Terms of office for individual members are monitored by the Research Administrator who will advise Research and Knowledge Exchange Managers on which Panel Members are reaching the end of their terms of office.
- Elections to the Sector Panels will take place in the autumn of each year, when vacancies for each Panel will be advertised as appropriate.
- If more than one person is eligible for a particular position then a postal ballot will be held with the candidate receiving the most votes duly elected.
- Levy payers who have allocated 25% or more of their levy to a particular sector will be entitled to vote in any elections for that sector.
- Those elected will serve for 3 years from the following January.

1.5 Dissemination of Information

- The Panel minutes will be prepared by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Manager for review and approval by the Panel Chair within 1 week of the meeting. Following approval by the Chair, minutes will be distributed to Panel Members by email for comment and reference, usually approximately two weeks after the Panel meeting.
- At the following meeting, the Panel minutes will be reviewed as an item on the agenda, amendments noted and then signed off as a true account of the proceedings. Approved minutes of the Open Sessions of panel meetings will subsequently be published on AHDB Horticulture's website.
- Invited members are requested to ensure that the key issues are disseminated throughout their respective organisations.

1.6 Agendas for Panel Meetings

The Sector Panels meet between two and four times annually. It is important that the operation of Panel meetings is planned and targeted such that the Panels function effectively and efficiently. Panel meetings will normally consist of a Closed Session (for Elected Members only) and an Open Session (for all members). Agendas are required for both types of session.

1.6.1 Closed (Elected Members) Panel Meeting Agenda

This should include:

- Feedback and information on relevant Board decisions and strategy.
- Update on Panel finances with detailed project budgets.
- Areas of concern such as late reports, contractors not delivering etc.
- Review of Panel composition as required.

1.6.2 Open Panel Meeting Agenda

This should include:

- Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting (update on actions).
- Crop protection regulatory matters.
- Communications workplan
- Assessment and evaluation of Concept Notes and Full Proposals.
- Report on on-going projects.

- The Research and Knowledge Exchange Managers will prepare a short and focused report on the completed objectives and technical deliverables, potential financial benefits and exploitation of completed projects and submit current Workplans to aid in decisions about information dissemination on individual projects.
- Suggestions from growers and Panel Members for R&D.
- Communications activities (report by exception).

1.6.3 Annual agenda items

At an appropriately timed meeting each year:

- The Research and Knowledge Exchange Managers will prepare and present an overview of the programme, providing guidance to the Panel on the expenditure per crop category, etc. The Panel will be advised on the focus of past expenditure versus future R&D expenditure.
- A summary of the technical and economic assessments of completed projects funded by the Panel in the previous year will be presented.
- Review and evaluation of completed projects with an assessment of the deliverables, potential financial benefits, likely grower uptake and communication activities.
- General discussion with agreement on the updating of the Sector Priorities for the forthcoming year.
- Review and assessment of communications strategy within the context of the overall Sector Strategy with discussion and agreement on specific plans for the forthcoming year.
- Usually at the last Panel meeting of the year, Elected Members of the Panel will decide who to invite as Science Advisors for the following year according to the projected needs for advice and additional expertise.

2 Code of Practice for Panel Members

2.1 Foreword

This Code of Practice has been developed by the Board to provide a framework to guide Panel Members in the exercise of their responsibilities. This code also takes account of recommendations in the First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) (Cm 2850-I) and subsequent Government responses and consultation papers.

2.2 Public Service Values

Panel Members will at all times:

- observe the highest standards of propriety involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the recommendation for the use of public funds and the management of the Panel;
- maximise value for money through ensuring that services are delivered in the most efficient and economical way, within available resources, and with independent validation of performance achieved wherever practicable;
- be accountable to the Board for the activities of the Panel.

2.3 Relationship with the Board

The Panel is accountable to the Board for the Panel's overall performance including their allocation of resources and the policy framework within which they operate. The respective roles of the Panel and the Board are set out in Section 1.

2.4 Collective Responsibilities of Panel Members

Members of the Panel have joint responsibility for ensuring that the Panel complies with any administrative requirements in making recommendations for the use of public funds. Other important responsibilities of Panel Members include:

- ensuring that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times;
- establishing the overall strategic direction of the Panel within the policy and resources framework agreed with the Board;
- overseeing the delivery of planned results by monitoring performance against agreed strategic objectives and targets;
- ensuring that, in reaching decisions, the Panel has taken into account any guidance issued by the Board.

2.5 Strategic Planning and Control

One of the main tasks of the Panel is the development of sector priorities that align with AHDB Horticulture's Corporate Sector Plan, which itself is linked to AHDB's overall corporate plan. The requirements of this process are likely to evolve as AHDB's overall strategy shifts and additional guidance can be obtained from the Director of Horticulture or the AHDB Horticulture's Business Development Manager.

2.6 Delegation

- Panel Members normally serve on a part-time basis. The responsibility for day-to-day management matters should be delegated to AHDB Horticulture staff as far as is practicable, within a clearly understood framework.
- The Panel may decide to delegate, where it has power to do so, responsibility for specified matters to individual members or committees of the Panel. Decisions taken by individual members or committees under delegated powers will be recorded in written minutes available to the Panel as a whole.

2.7 Responsibilities of Individual Panel Members

Individual members should be aware of their wider responsibilities as members of the Panel. Like others who serve the public, they should follow the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee). The principles are attached in Appendix 1.

Panel Members must

- undertake on appointment to comply at all times with this Code of Practice (or any agreed modification of it) and with the rules relating to the use of public funds;
- act in good faith and in the best interests of the Panel;
- not misuse information gained in the course of their membership of the Panel for personal gain or for political purposes, nor use the opportunity of Panel Membership to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, business or other organisations; and
- ensure that they comply with AHDB's policy on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality (Panel Members may request a copy).

The arrangements for appointing individual Panel Members make it possible to remove them from office if they fail to perform the duties required to the standard expected.

2.8 Handling Conflicts of Interest

The Panel Chair and other Panel Members will declare any personal or business interests which may conflict with their responsibilities as Panel Members.

In the absence of specific statutory provisions, the common law requires:

- that members of the Panel should not participate in the discussion or determination of matters in which they have a direct pecuniary interest; and
- that when an interest is not of a direct pecuniary kind, members should consider whether participation in the discussion or determination of a matter would suggest a real danger of bias. This should be interpreted in the sense that members might unfairly regard with favour, or disfavour, the case of a party to the matter under consideration. In considering whether a real danger of bias exists in relation to a particular decision, members should assess whether they, a close family member, a person living in the same household as the Panel Member, or a firm, business or other organisation with which the Panel Member is connected are likely to be affected more than the generality of those affected by the decision in question. This would cover, for example, a decision to invite tenders for a contract where a firm with which a member was connected was significantly better placed than others to win it.
- Where, in accordance with the above, members do not participate in the discussion or determination of a matter; *they will be asked to withdraw from the meeting*. This is because the continued presence of someone who has declared an interest might be thought likely to influence the judgement of other members present.
- Whether or not Panel Members are able in the light of considerations above to participate in the discussion or determination of a matter, they should declare as soon as practicable after a meeting begins if they have an interest, pecuniary or other, in a matter being considered. They should also disclose any interests in it of which they are aware on the part of close family members and persons living in the same household as the Panel Member. In addition, Panel Members should consider whether they need to disclose relevant interests of other persons or organisations that members of the public might reasonably think could influence the member's judgement.
- Because the Board is required to follow generally accepted accounting practice, Panel Members must facilitate compliance with the need under Financial Reporting Standard 8 for material transactions with related parties to be disclosed in financial statements. "Related parties" in FRS 8 include close members of the family of an individual, who are defined for the purpose of the standard as those family members, or members of the same household, who may be expected to influence, or be influenced by, that person in their dealings with the reporting entity.

2.9 Personal Liability of Panel Members

Since all legal responsibility for the function and operation of AHDB Horticulture lies with the Board individual Panel Members will not ordinarily be liable for actions taken in the execution of their Panel functions. Exceptionally, though, proceedings (civil or, in certain cases, criminal) may be brought against individual Panel Members. For example, a Panel Member may be personally liable if he or she makes a fraudulent or reckless statement that results in loss to a third party. Additionally a Panel Member who misuses information gained by virtue of their position may be liable for breach of confidence under common law or may commit a criminal offence under insider dealing legislation.

However, the Board agrees to indemnify any individual Panel Member, who has acted honestly, reasonably, in good faith and without recklessness in respect of any personal civil liability which he or she has incurred in execution or purported execution of their Panel function.

Panel Members who need further advice should consult the Director of Horticulture.

3 AHDB Horticulture Sector Panels – Summary Role of Elected Members

AHDB Horticulture is part of AHDB, a non-departmental public body (NDPB) and as such is subject to scrutiny by the National Audit Office (NAO). It is therefore important for the organisation to have, and implement, policies that are consistent with good governance in its operation, including the commissioning process. This paper sets out the role and responsibilities of Elected Members to AHDB Horticulture's Sector Panels.

3.1 The Role of the Sector Panels

The functions of the sector panels are to:

- Develop, implement and update sector strategies within the framework of that agreed by the Board as detailed in the Sector Corporate Plan.
- Assess funding proposals for scientific merit, value for money and probability of success.
- Make recommendations for funding to the Board, with the ability to commission work rapidly in response to urgent needs within the industry.
- Monitor the progress of on-going activities and the success of completed work.
- Review and recommend communications activities undertaken by AHDB Horticulture and others, to ensure that the benefits of R&D and knowledge exchange are effectively communicated and targeted towards levy payers.
- Represent industry views and ensure equitable attention is given to the interests of all growers.

3.2 Eligibility for election

- To be eligible to stand for election, candidates must either be a current horticultural levy payer or be a payroll employee of a current levy payer. However, those who hold current contracts with AHDB (or who may wish to apply for AHDB contracts during the term of office), should not stand for election (sub-contracts may be permitted on a case-by case basis, e.g. where growers are supplying facilities for experimental work). Where evidence of industry support is required for nominees applying for a position, such support can only be supplied by current levy payers.
- Levy payers who have allocated 25% or more of their levy to a particular sector are entitled to vote in any election for that sector. Those elected to the Panel, or their employers, must remain Horticulture levy payers throughout their term as an elected Panel member.

3.3 Role of Elected Members

Elected member positions will run for a period of 3 years starting on 1 January following their election the previous autumn. During their term of office, members

elected to the Panel must remain either a levy payer (or a payroll employee of a levy payer).

Members may stand for a maximum of two consecutive 3 year terms (6 years in total). Individuals who have served either a 3 or 6 year term may stand for election again a minimum of 3 years after the ending of their last term of office. Where no replacement for an elected member whose terms have expired can be found, the incumbent elected member may be allowed to continue at the Panel Chair's discretion on an annual renewable basis until such time as a replacement can be found (active efforts must be made to find a replacement).

Panels assess new project proposals (research and communications) and monitor progress of those already underway to check they are meeting their objectives. Panels often also hear presentations from leading researchers on topics likely to become important in their sector in the future. Panel Members are sometimes also asked to act as Industry Representatives for individual projects within their particular field of interest. This helps members of the AHDB Horticulture team in managing the research programme. Elected members also have the right to vote on which proposals should be funded.

Elected Panel Members must recognise that:

- their role on the Panel is to represent the views of their industry sector; they do not represent their employing organisation;
- they **must** be prepared to set aside vested interests and give impartial advice for the benefit of the horticultural industry at large.

To satisfy the legal obligations of the AHDB as a NDPB, all Panel Members including invited experts are expected to respect the confidentiality of the meetings and associated papers. In addition, if Elected Members have personal interests (pecuniary or non-pecuniary) in any proposals these **MUST** be declared and they **MUST** leave the room when their proposals are being discussed by the Panel. It is the responsibility of the Panel Chair to enforce this.

4 AHDB Horticulture Sector Panels – Summary Role of Science Advisors

AHDB Horticulture is part of AHDB, a non-departmental public body (NDPB) and as such is subject to scrutiny by the National Audit Office (NAO). It is therefore important for the organisation to have, and implement, policies that are consistent with good governance in its operation, including the commissioning process. This paper sets out the role and responsibilities of Science Advisors to AHDB Horticulture's Sector Panels.

4.1 The Role of the Horticulture Sector Panels

The functions of the sector panels are to:

- Develop, implement and update a Sector Strategy within the framework of that agreed by the Board.
- Make recommendations for R&D funding to the Board, with the ability to commission work rapidly in response to urgent needs within the industry.
- Monitor the progress of on-going projects and the success of completed R&D.
- Review and recommend communications activities undertaken by AHDB Horticulture and others, to ensure that the benefits of R&D and knowledge exchange are effectively communicated and targeted towards levy payers.
- Ensure equitable attention is given to the interests of all growers.

4.2 Role of Invited Science Advisors

Invited Science Advisors to the Sector Panels are generally scientists, consultants or experts with experience and knowledge relevant to the main area(s) of interest to each particular sector.

Following an annual review held at an appropriately timed Panel meeting, Elected Members of the Panel will decide who to invite for the following year according to the projected needs for advice and additional expertise. Usually the invited individuals will be asked to attend all meetings of the Panel (3 or at most 4 per year) for the forthcoming year. In the interests of continuity the Panel is likely to invite the identified individuals for several successive years. Occasionally the Panel may call for someone to attend on a one-off basis to advise on a specific topic.

All Panel advisors and members must recognise that:

- they are invited because of their personal knowledge not as a representative of their employing organisation;
- they **must** be prepared to set aside vested interests and give impartial advice for the benefit of the horticultural industry at large.

The primary roles of the sector Panels are to identify research priorities for the sector and to recommend proposals to the Board for funding. The decision making process is generally two-stage, 1) Concept Notes and 2) Full Proposals derived from concepts most likely to benefit the industry. All Panel Members are sent papers at

least two weeks before the meetings and are asked for comments at the meetings to aid the collective decision making process. Science advisors are non-voting members of the Panels and therefore cannot vote on which proposals should be funded.

In addition, invited Science Advisors with the appropriate scientific expertise will be asked to advise the Panel on more detailed aspects of the underlying scientific principles and the work programme for prospective projects which fall within their area of expertise. Occasionally the Science Advisors may be asked to comment in writing.

To satisfy the legal obligations of the AHDB as a NDPB, all Panel Members including invited experts are expected to respect the confidentiality of the meetings and associated papers. In addition, Science Advisors cannot vote on decisions on which projects can be funded, and if they have personal interests (pecuniary or non-pecuniary) in any proposals these **MUST** be declared and they **MUST** leave the room when their proposals are being discussed by the Panel. It is the responsibility of the Panel Chair to enforce this.

5 Appendix 1: 'Nolan' Principles of Public Life

The Seven Principals of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.