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BUSINESS PLAN

2024-2025

Science with Impact - delivering research and services to support Northern Ireland.



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Introduction from the Chief Executive

I am pleased to present AFBI's Business Plan for 2024-2025, which sets out our key work priorities.

Dr Stanley McDowell, AFBI Chief Executive



The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) is Northern Ireland's largest agri-food science organisation. As a non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), AFBI science plays a crucial role in providing the underpinning statutory and surveillance science, research and development work, emergency response capability and expert scientific advice required to support the various work programmes of our sponsoring department.

In addition to the Grant-in-Aid received from DAERA, AFBI receives additional non-GIA funding and income from DAERA for specific projects (e.g. Soil Nutrient Health Scheme) and also from a range of other public sector and industry sources for research and other scientific work, which we undertake in areas that are complementary and synergistic to our core DAERA funded work.

AFBI's science delivers considerable societal benefit through our work and expertise in areas such as animal and plant health, food safety, animal welfare, agricultural sustainability and increasingly in the areas of the natural and marine environment. Importantly, our work provides vital support to the local agri-food industry which is a key economic driver within Northern Ireland.

We live in an era of considerable global and local challenges, including the threats posed by climate change, new and emerging animal, human and plant diseases, and the increasing requirement to balance economic and environmental sustainability.

As these challenges have increased so too has the importance and the urgency of the science which the Institute undertakes. As an example, AFBI science, much going back over decades, has been critical to the understanding of the drivers of the severe algal blooms experienced on Lough Neagh and which attracted international media attention.

AFBI aims to help address these challenges through our work which centres on our three key themes of:

Leading improvements in the agri-food industry to enhance its sustainability;

Protecting animal, plant and human health;

Enhancing the natural and marine environments;

During the previous financial year, we published a new Corporate Plan for the period 2023-2027. This Plan outlines the high-level objectives which our science aims to achieve across our three core themes alongside our ambition to continually increase the quality and relevance of our science and the enabling investments needed in our systems, estate and people.

This new Corporate Plan provides AFBI with a strong strategic direction for the coming years. This year's Business Plan set out the objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) which we aim to deliver as part of the strategic vision, priorities and initiatives set out in the 2023-2027 Corporate Plan.

Included within this year's KPIs, for example, are objectives relating to our work to improve the environmental sustainability of the agri-food industry and to help NI meet climate change targets. Also included are key targets relating to AFBI's work on the DAERA-funded Soil Nutrient Health Scheme and the development of catchment science proposals needed to help address the challenges of Lough Neagh.

A key part our corporate plan is the investment in and renewal of key estate and IT infrastructural assets by our sponsoring department, DAERA.

Our Vision

Scientific excellence delivering impactful and sustainable outcomes for society, economy and the natural environment.

Our Purpose

To deliver trusted, independent research, statutory & surveillance science, and expert advice that addresses local and global challenges, informs government policy and industry decision making, and underpins a sustainable agri-food industry and the natural and marine environments.

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Taken together these investments represent a major transformation programme for the organisation and are essential to provide the necessary facilities to enable scientific excellence and the delivery of the science needed to meet current and future challenges.



The quality, dedication and expertise of our staff are pivotal to AFBI's future success. Promoting a culture of excellence, commitment, and responsibility within a considerate environment is fundamental to delivering AFBI's objectives. This year's Business Plan includes specific objectives on staff engagement, and recruitment and retention reflecting that our continued success is overwhelmingly dependent on attracting and retaining the best scientists and supporting staff in an increasingly competitive environment.

As a public sector organisation we are acutely aware of the current public sector funding pressures. We have worked hard and been successful in attracting substantial levels of external funding in recent years which complements the core DAERA funding upon which we rely. This Business Plan sets out AFBI's key priorities and targets for the year. However, delivery of these may have to flex depending on the available funding.

I look forward to delivering our 2024-2025 Business Plan in partnership with my Executive and other colleagues, to seeing AFBI continuing to deliver highly relevant and impactful science and to the Institute further develop through the on-going investments in our systems, infrastructure and staff.

I also welcome the new DAERA Minister, Minister Muir and the emphasis which he has placed on the importance of science to the work of DAERA and to address the challenges ahead. I look forward to supporting his Ministerial Priorities through the excellence and impact of the science which AFBI undertakes as DAERA's ALB and science delivery partner.

Dr Stanley McDowell CEO





About AFBI

AFBI is Northern Ireland's largest provider of agri-food and environmental sciences. It provides vital and unrivalled support to both the agri-food and marine industries, which are important economic drivers, as well as at the main custodians of nature within Northern Ireland and its shores.

AFBI contributes to the achievement of the Northern Ireland Executive's Ministerial and Departmental Priorities by delivering a programme of research, statutory and surveillance science, emergency response capability and expert advice for DAERA.

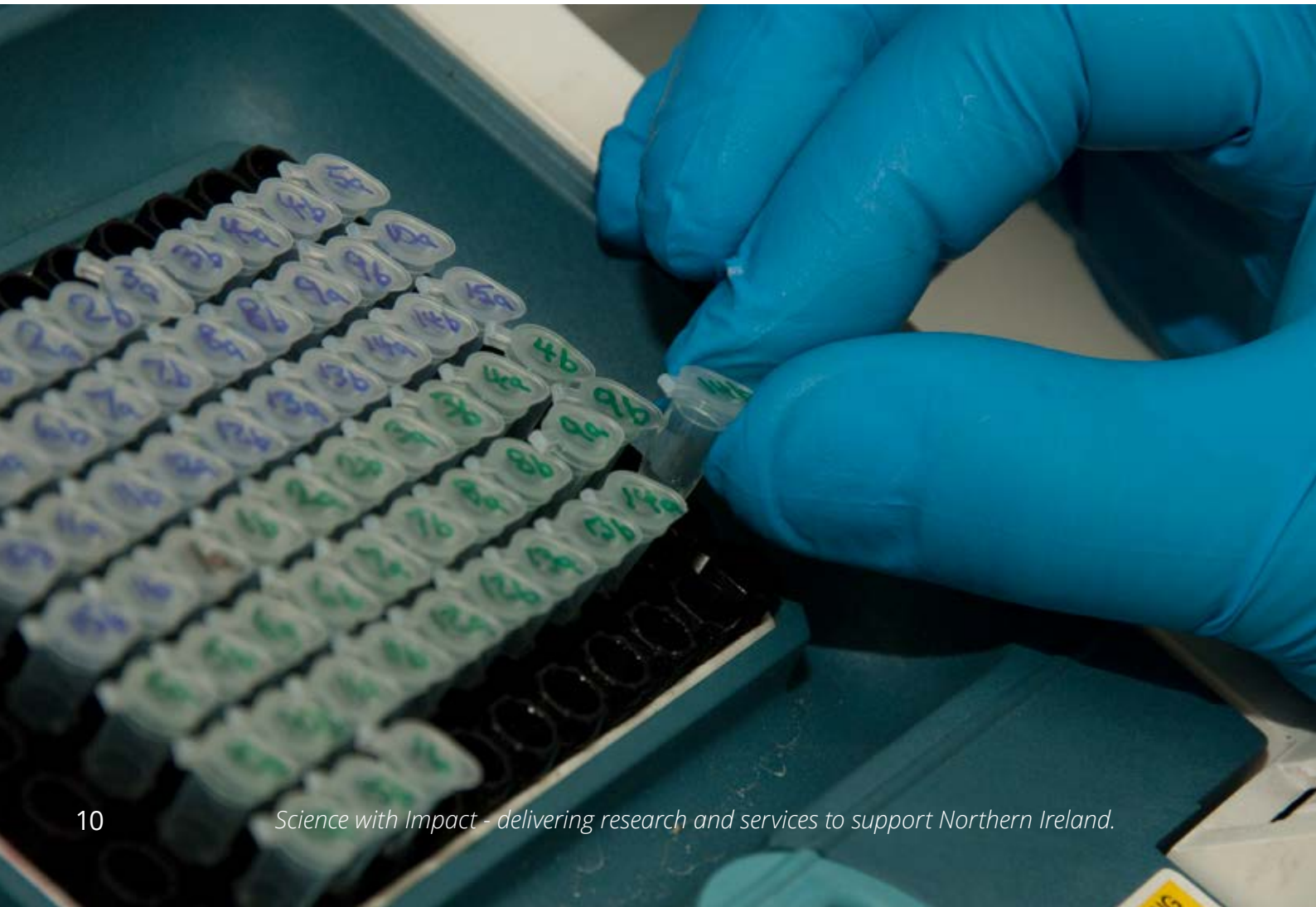
AFBI's science is based on the three key themes of leading improvements in the agri-food industry to enhance its sustainability; protecting animal, plant and human health; and enhancing the natural and marine environment.

Our work enables the agri-food industry to trade nationally and internationally while also bringing forward innovations to improve production efficiency and environmental sustainability.

In line with our updated Corporate Vision "Scientific excellence delivering impactful and sustainable outcomes for society, economy and the natural environment", AFBI collaborates extensively with other scientific institutes nationally and internationally to ensure that our science remains visionary while seeking to meet the many local and global challenges that NI faces. These include the major challenge of simultaneously reducing and mitigating the impact of climate change, while enhancing the health of society, animals and the environment and positively impacting the economy.

AFBI's science is outcome-driven and aimed at solving important practical problems for DAERA and a wide range of local, national and international funders in the public and private sectors. Our staff carry out world class research, surveillance, and analytic and diagnostic testing for DAERA and other funders in the fields of animal and plant health, animal welfare, sustainable agricultural systems, plant science, food safety, environmental protection, fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, and agricultural and rural economics.

AFBI's Corporate Plan for 2023-2027 sets out our Strategic Priorities and outlines how we, with the support of our sponsoring Department, plan to invest in our people and infrastructure to sustain and enable efficient and effective service delivery.







Delivering AFBI's Vision, Purpose and Strategic Priorities

AFBI's Corporate Plan for 2023-27 sets out a future which builds on and maximises the potential of AFBI's scientific expertise to deliver key outcomes for DAERA and the local agri-food and marine sectors.

It is focused on addressing shared future challenges across our three key themes of work alongside our ambition to continually increase the quality and relevance of our science and to continue the program of investment in our systems, infrastructure and people.

AFBI's vision, purpose and strategic priorities for the period 2023-27 are set out in Figure 1 overleaf.



Figure 1. AFBI's vision, purpose, and strategic priorities for the period 2023-27

Vision:

Scientific excellence delivering impactful and sustainable outcomes for society, economy and the natural environment

Purpose:

To deliver trusted, independent research, statutory & surveillance science, and expert advice that addresses local and global challenges, informs government policy and industry decision making, and underpins a sustainable agri-food industry and the natural and marine environments

Strategic Priorities:

Our scientific outcomes and knowledge makes AFBI a national and global leader in agri-food science

1: Leading improvements in the agri-food industry to enhance its sustainability

2: Protecting animal, plant and human health

3: Enhancing the natural and marine environment

4: Delivering Quality Outcomes and Impact

5: Enabling World Class Science through Excellence in People, Places & Technology

This annual Business Plan sets out the targets and activities that will be undertaken in 2024/2025, as we work towards the achievement of these strategic priorities.

This Plan also sets out how performance and progress against these targets will be measured and reported through a series of key performance indicators.

AFBI's strategic direction is aligned with the NI Executive's overall Ministerial Priorities, DAERA's four draft Strategic Priorities and delivery of DAERA's Vision of 'Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape, valued by everyone.'

Through its scientific work, AFBI will support the delivery of DAERA's outcomes and the wider needs of society and industry. The work is aligned to the wider Northern Ireland Executive's Ministerial and Departmental Priorities, the NI Economic Strategy and the Executive's 'Green Growth' strategic direction.



1

Strategic Priority 1 - Leading improvements in the agri-food industry to enhance its sustainability

Over the coming years the agri-food industry must reduce its environmental footprint if it is to deliver the long-term sustainability that is needed. A key focus of research in AFBI is therefore to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases (methane and nitrous oxide), as well as the excretion of phosphorus and nitrogen from meat and milk production systems, as well as making better use of organic manures from livestock.

In 2024-25 AFBI will focus on delivering a number of research projects, and securing others, with a focus on reducing the environmental impact of livestock systems. These projects largely focus on nutritional, technological and genetic based interventions to reduce methane emissions as well as the nitrogen and phosphorus excretion from dairy and beef cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry. These nutritional interventions will also represent solutions which do not compete with human edible food. These diets will therefore support an enhanced circular economy in NI through the use of by products from other food and feed supply chains.

Pasture and agronomic research will focus on crops and management practices that maximise soil health and have the ability to eliminate the use of inorganic fertiliser, and in doing so greatly reduce nitrous oxide emissions. A key focus here includes the advancement of new grass varieties with improved nutrient use efficiency and climate resilience, as well as the use of novel sward mixtures.

Through involvement in strategic projects such as the 'LUNZ Hub' and the all island co-centres, i.e. Climate + and Sustainable Food Systems, significant model development will be taken forward. A range of models exist in AFBI. Through using these and working with partners, the goal is to design a framework of models which collectively support policy development and climate action planning through scenario planning and testing the efficacy of key interventions at farm and landscape level on the main environmental pressures and the systems they affect i.e. air and water quality and biodiversity, while also understanding the economic impact of the adoption of such scenarios and interventions.



2

Strategic Priority 2 - Protecting animal, plant and human health

The work undertaken by AFBI under this strategic priority is directed towards protecting Northern Ireland society from the threats of animal and plant diseases as well as food contaminants, both chemical and microbiological. The work is fundamental to DAERA and the agri-food industry in order to meet national and international trade requirements in relation to food products, agricultural produce, plants and livestock.

AFBI's work in these spheres is critical to the economy, society and the environment of Northern Ireland. Our ability to trade as a region is critically dependent on demonstrating freedom from transboundary and notifiable diseases and AFBI plays an important role in active surveillance testing programmes providing evidence for DAERA of regional disease status.

Our work under Strategic Priority 2 supports DAERA animal and plant health policy, provides evidence of compliance with European legislation, supports trade guarantees, and supports DAERA and the industry helping to prevent disease incursions and protecting public health through detection of diseases transmissible to humans.

In 2024-25 AFBI will continue to undertake vital active surveillance programmes and expand our portfolio of test methodologies as required by legislation including the Windsor Framework. We will continue to provide and maintain a passive surveillance programme for animal disease, particularly front line scanning surveillance for epizootic diseases but also trending endemic diseases and syndromes. Emergency response to animal and plant diseases plus food safety threats will continue in 2024/25. We will further build on our science networks in this area both nationally and internationally.

Under the Windsor Framework AFBI is required to hold ISO17025 accreditation both with our existing UK authority (United Kingdom Accreditation Service, UKAS) but also with a European authority. AFBI underwent initial assessment in 2023/24 by the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) and achieved accreditation by INAB in September 2024.

AFBI's work on bovine TB underpins DAERA's statutory control program. Our research in this area is internationally recognised providing vital parts of the evidence base to inform current and future control strategies. During 2024/25 we will continue to deliver DAERA's statutory laboratory test requirements and our portfolio of bovine TB R&D.



3

Strategic Priority 3 – Enhancing the Natural and Marine Environment

In 2024-25 AFBI will continue our work covering surveillance, analytical and technical support, and specialist advice in the fields of soil, water quality, air quality, biodiversity, agro-forestry, nutrient management and environmental protection.

The work supports DAERA to meet legislative requirements as well as formulate policy to reduce carbon footprint and meet targets for greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental obligations.

Soil Nutrient Health Scheme

The SNHS is one of the most comprehensive regional soil nutrient sampling schemes to be undertaken anywhere in the world. It will enable Northern Ireland farmers to optimise crop nutrient applications, assess on-farm carbon stocks and build farm resilience. In 2024-25, AFBI will be taking forward delivery of year 3 of the phased roll-out of this critically important project.



The information provided by the Scheme will allow farmers to target the application of crop nutrients to their soils, reduce nutrient waste and help increase farm profitability.

Reductions in excess and better placement of nutrients should, in turn, lead to a decrease in losses to waterbodies and thereby contribute to achieving the targets of the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017.

Lough Neagh

The importance of the evidence base and science from AFBI's soil-to-sea science programme, covering long-term environmental monitoring, catchment monitoring and modelling has become particularly pertinent to support policy decisions to address the ecological crisis in Lough Neagh; becoming visible in 2023 and 2024 through the prolonged summer blue-green algal blooms that also affect coastal bathing water quality. This work will support the agreed NI Executive Lough Neagh Action Plan.

Supporting Green Growth

The draft Green Growth strategy is an ambitious cross departmental programme which will be delivered through a multi-actor approach. AFBI is well positioned to support DAERA in realising its ambitions under the Green Growth agenda and the multibillion-pound value that results from the NI agri-food sector and the ecosystem services it delivers.

The Green Growth Framework provides a focus on Climate Action, Green Jobs and a Clean Environment. A large portfolio of policies and strategies are in place or under development within DAERA to deliver against these three areas of focus which have underpinning goals to address climate change, improve resource use efficiency and decarbonise Northern Ireland.

Subject to the approval of the business case and affordability, AFBI is taking forward a series of strategic infrastructure Green Growth capital investments. This will enable AFBI to put in place a state of the art research platform on reducing emissions, understanding carbon fluxes and precision equipment to enable the development of evidence and innovation aligned with sustainability.

4

Strategic Priority 4 - Delivering Quality Outcomes and Impact

As Northern Ireland's main provider of agri-food, veterinary, marine and environmental sciences, AFBI delivers applied locally relevant science which is internationally competitive.

The breadth of work undertaken by AFBI is unique within the UK and Ireland and allows the organisation to take a holistic approach to issues within the agrifood-environmental-health nexus.

Our foundational platforms, expertise across a range of scientific disciplines and partnership working with academics and industry nationally and internationally, are key to the delivery of excellent science.

Alliances & Partnerships

Over the past number of years AFBI has built strong partnerships with a range of stakeholders in order to maximise our impact, expertise and overall value of our science to DAERA. This includes AFBI's strategic alliance with Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and the partnership with the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). These two initiatives represent important foundations to further develop with regard to key strategic alliances and partnerships in AFBI going forward.

Over the past year, AFBI has worked closely with QUB and Ulster University (UU) to successfully secure funding to deliver two SFI Ireland/DAERA/UKRI Co-Centres bids. The Climate+ Co-Centre will be the home of research, innovation, and policy development across the interlinked challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and water degradation on the islands of Ireland and Britain.

The Sustainable Food Systems Co-Centre will bring together world-leading researchers from institutions across Ireland and the UK for the first time, with research expertise in specific areas that are core to food system

transformation including food safety, production, nutrition, plant and animal science, behavioural change, data science, food system governance, and the political process of food system transformation.

During 2024/25 we have set four specific key performance indicators under this strategic priority. These include an intention to establish a Science Advisory Panel to provide external review and advice of our science programmes and the submission of an application to become an eligible organisation for UK Research and Innovation funding.

AFBI Science Strategy

During 2024/25 AFBI's new Science Strategy to 2030 will be launched and a series of Year 1 actions progressed. The new strategy sets out the scientific direction and actions need to deliver our current Corporate Plan and beyond and will underpin many of DAERA's key policy agendas.

Communicating AFBI's Impact

As part of the investment by DAERA and other funders in science, it is important that the outcomes and opportunities for innovation and behavioural change that are identified be communicated to inform and to help drive adoption.

To meet these objectives AFBI produces an annual Impacts publication, a high volume of scientific peer reviewed papers and undertakes numerous knowledge exchange events.



5

Strategic Priority 5 – Enabling World Class Science through Excellence in People, Places & Technology

Investing in & Engaging with our People

The quality, dedication and expertise of staff are pivotal to AFBI’s future success. Promoting a culture of excellence, commitment and responsibility within a considerate environment is fundamental to delivering AFBI’s objectives.

In 2024-25 AFBI will undertake a further staff engagement survey to assess the effectiveness of key actions that have been taken since the previous survey and to inform our future actions.

We will also plan to develop a new and updated People Strategy designed to better attract, empower, and develop our staff to enable them to pursue excellence, embrace technology, innovation and change, and ultimately support great science.

Investing in our Systems & Infrastructure

Investment by DAERA and AFBI in new and replacement estate and IT infrastructure is critical to enable and support current and future science needs.

On the estate side, this includes a number of major DAERA-led projects including a new Animal Health Sciences Building at Stormont; new beef research, education and knowledge transfer facilities at Hillsborough; and a ruminant emissions facility at Hillsborough.



During 2023/24 AFBI received Final Business Case approval for a replacement marine Research Vessel. After a detailed design phase and public procurement exercise, an award of the build contract was also completed with work under the ship build now commencing.

Project and Portfolio Management System

Substantial work was undertaken during 2023/24 to implement a new project and portfolio management (PPM) system to support the efficient and effective delivery of projects. This PPM system represents a substantial change for the organisation and is a key component of the overall corporate management platform. Further work will be undertaken in 2024/25 to embed the system across all work streams.

ISLAND Project

Replacement of AFBI’s laboratory information management systems (LIMS) is being taken forward through a DAERA-led project (the ISLAND project) which will provide a single LIMS solution across DAERA, AFBI and NIEA. The project is designed to deliver a specialised software solution to improve the operational environment and the management of laboratory science data across the DAERA science environment.



Finance and Business Management System

During the previous financial year, AFBI undertook an assessment and options analysis of its finance system requirements. The preferred option is now the subject of an Outline Business Case being submitted for approval to the DAERA and the Department of Finance with first phase implementation planned for 2025 subject to business case approval and funding availability.



Digital & Data

AFBI is committed to harnessing innovative technologies and analytical approaches that both enable and optimise the delivery of key scientific research, in the most cost-effective way.

To ensure delivery of Strategic Priority 5, AFBI is focused on having a sound data framework in place that maximises the value from data in support of key research and statutory priorities.



To accelerate AFBI's Digital, Data and Technology transformation, strategic support was commissioned from the Strategic Investment Board in early 2024, with a remit to review AFBI's Digital, Data and Technology position and to develop a DDAT Transformation roadmap and action plan with prioritised outcomes and delivery programmes.

These will be designed and implemented to enable, support and enhance the impressive ambitions at the heart of AFBI's Science, underpinned by robust cybersecurity and data integrity practices.

Sustainability

In addition to providing the vital science and evidence to support DAERA's commitments in relation to sustainability and climate change, AFBI is also committed to playing its part in delivering the Net Zero commitments. AFBI will develop its Sustainability Strategy to ensure that we meet our legislative obligations under the NI Climate Act 2022.



AFBI Business Targets for 2024/2025

Good business planning is at the heart of strong governance, effective management and financial viability and requires understanding and ownership by all staff across AFBI.

As such, AFBI's Strategic Outcomes and business targets are effectively cascaded down through the organisation. Cascading represents translating and aligning AFBI's Outcomes and key performance indicators (KPIs) from the corporate level down to divisional and branch level and finally, to the individual level through the performance management and appraisal Process.

Good plans in turn need to be supported by effective monitoring and reporting of performance at each level of the organisation

and this is assisting in the development of a strong performance culture where everyone understands where they fit into helping to achieve AFBI's objectives.

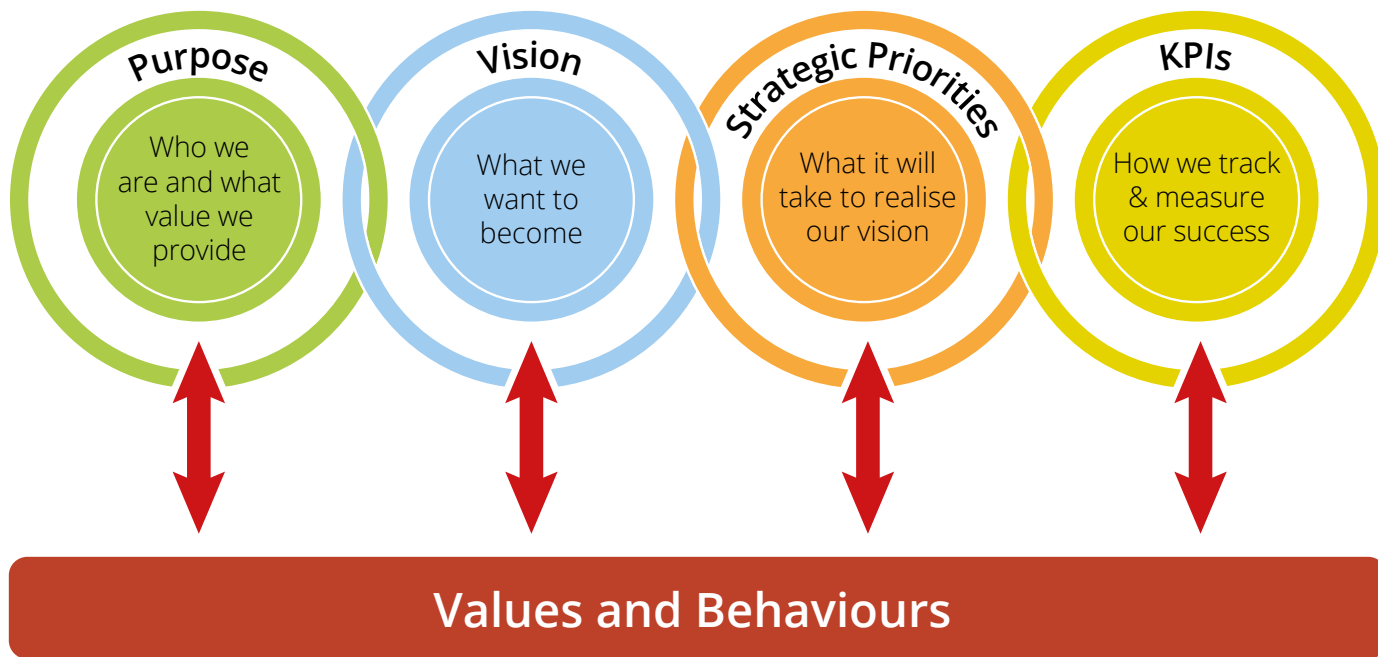
To deliver AFBI's strategic outcomes, annual business plans are produced setting out in detail the business targets for each year of the delivery period and in turn the key performance indicators to measure AFBI's progress towards these goals, as illustrated below:

Figure 2 - Linking Strategic Priorities in the Corporate Plan to Annual KPIs



The following sections set out the key business targets and KPIs for 2024/2025 and how these are aligned to DAERA's Strategic Outcomes. AFBI will continue to review delivery of the AWP in light of the available budget and prioritise if necessary in conjunction with DAERA.

Delivering the Corporate Plan



Delivering AFBI's Strategic Priorities and Alignment to DAERA's Priorities:

Strategic Priority	Strategic Initiative	KPI for 2024-25	Aligned to DAERA Priority
<p>Strategic Priority 1</p> <p>Leading Improvements in the Agri-Food Industry to enhance its sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will develop holistic solutions, which decarbonise and reduce the overall environmental impact of livestock farming whilst optimising productivity, animal health and welfare. Using data driven analytics, economic and other modelling platforms as well as digitalised farm landscapes we will deliver research outcomes, which inform policy development and support industry decision-making to promote productivity, stimulate innovation and enhance agri-food competitiveness and sustainability. We will identify and explore opportunities for new land management and alternative food production systems, which optimise the economic value of the NI food system and promote a circular bioeconomy within it. We will explore and harness opportunities for industry aligned with climate change adaptation while managing the risks from climate change. 	<p>KPI 1 - Deliver solutions to reduce the environmental impact of farming systems, address climate adaptation and optimise the economic value of the NI food system through the completion of 10 research projects.</p> <p>KPI 2 Advance scientific knowledge which will lead improvements in the agri-food industry to enhance its sustainability through securing 8 research projects.</p>	<p>DAERA Priority - Economic Growth</p> <p>To enhance our food, forestry, fishery and farming sectors using efficient and environmentally sustainable models which support economic growth.</p>

Strategic Priority	Strategic Initiative	KPI for 2024-25	Aligned to DAERA Priority
<p>Strategic Priority 2</p> <p>Protecting Animal, Plant and Human Health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will anticipate and respond to emerging and transboundary (epizootic) animal diseases providing effective surveillance for trade compliance. We will support DAERA in the control of statutory endemic diseases (such as bTB). We will improve the control and reduce the impact of endemic non-statutory disease. We will deliver effective surveillance, diagnostics and research to protect NI's plant health status. This will include anticipating and responding to emerging plant disease. We will ensure the chemical and microbiological safety of food in line with government and trade requirements. 	<p>KPI 3 - We will deliver the agreed animal and plant health, food safety and fishery emergency response requirements to DAERA.</p> <p>KPI 4 – We will deliver a programme of statutory testing, and risk analysis, as required by DAERA and legislation, to protect animal health and food safety in NI.</p> <p>KPI 5 – We will deliver a programme of statutory testing, and risk analysis, as required by DAERA and legislation, to protect plant health in NI.</p>	<p>DAERA Priority - Economic Growth</p> <p>To enhance our food, forestry, fishery and farming sectors using efficient and environmentally sustainable models which support economic growth.</p>

Strategic Priority	Strategic Initiative	KPI for 2024-25	Aligned to DAERA Priority
<p>Strategic Priority 3</p> <p>Enhancing the Natural and Marine Environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will develop holistic solutions to underpin sustainable, healthy and productive environments to support food systems, including the transition toward a circular bioeconomy in NI. We will develop solutions in support of long-term resilient terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems and sustainable natural resource management (green/blue growth). We will develop and model solutions towards an integrated approach to nutrient and carbon management to optimise aquatic systems and land use and delivery of multiple ecosystem services from field to national scale. We will monitor and demonstrate the impact of the agriculture and fisheries sector on the environment to drive behavioural change and adaptation. 	<p>KPI 6 - Delivery of year 3 of the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme in line with project plan.</p> <p>KPI 7 - Bring forward an internal strategy for catchment sciences for Lough Neagh.</p>	<p>DAERA Priority – Natural Environment</p> <p>To protect and enhance our natural environment now and for future generations whilst advocating its value to and wellbeing for all.</p>

Strategic Priority	Strategic Initiative	KPI for 2024-25	Aligned to DAERA Priority
<p>Strategic Priority 4</p> <p>The quality and impact of our science will enhance AFBI's position as a leader in sustainable agri-food, marine, environmental and animal and plant health sciences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will undertake an external peer review of AFBI science to provide assurances that AFBI's science is effective, of high quality, forward looking and impactful. We will continue to enhance the quality and impact of AFBI Science outputs. We will work to maximise the effective communication of our science to our stakeholders. We will further develop our local, national and international collaborations and strategic alliances to maximise the impact of NI science on the local and global challenges. 	<p>KPI 8 – Implement year 1 of AFBI Science Strategy action plan to 2030.</p> <p>KPI 9 - Achieve a score of 2,500 with regard to AFBI's scientific outputs as pathways to impact¹.</p> <p>KPI 10 – We will Establish a Science Advisory Panel to provide external review and advice of our science programmes.</p> <p>KPI 11 – Submission of application to become an eligible organisation for UK Research and Innovation funding.</p>	<p>DAERA Priority - Economic Growth</p> <p>To enhance our food, forestry, fishery and farming sectors using efficient and environmentally sustainable models which support economic growth.</p> <p>DAERA Priority – Natural Environment</p> <p>To protect and enhance our natural environment now and for future generations whilst advocating its value to and wellbeing for all.</p>

¹AFBI's pathways to impact include the publication of peer-reviewed papers, presentations at conference, articles in the press and on social media, representation on local, national and international committees and the development of new patentable innovations, including grass varieties. Depending on the effort and potential impact of these outputs, a score is assigned to each type of output. The combination of these scores cumulates to the overall AFBI score of 2,500. This methodology has been adopted for a number of years now in AFBI, and as such, we are building a framework to monitor and measure our outputs as pathways to impact over a period of years. The core data within this score aligns with the number of the individual outputs and can be used to make comparisons with other organisations and their outputs.

Strategic Priority	Strategic Initiative	KPI for 2024-25	Aligned to DAERA Priority
<p>Strategic Priority 5</p> <p>Enabling world leading science through excellence in people, places, and technology.</p>	<p>Staff Health & Wellbeing, Diversity, and Inclusion</p> <p>We will ensure that AFBI is valued by our staff as a great place to work, by promoting health and well-being, diversity, equality, and flexible career paths.</p> <p>Staff Engagement, Talent Management and Staff Development</p> <p>We will continue to enhance staff engagement to foster a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities across the organisation and investing in ongoing professional development.</p> <p>Capacity and Capability</p> <p>We will continue to evolve our workforce and succession planning processes, to ensure we possess the appropriate capacity i.e. the right people, in the right place, at the right time within the budgetary envelope.</p>	<p>People</p> <p>KPI 12 - Complete a staff engagement survey and develop an updated action plan.</p> <p>KPI 13 – We will develop a new people strategy to deliver commitments outlined in the corporate plan.</p>	<p>DAERA Strategic Outcome – Exemplar Organisation</p> <p>To be an exemplar, people focused organisation, committed to making a difference for the people we serve.</p>

Strategic Priority	Strategic Initiative	Proposed KPI for 2024-25	Aligned to DAERA Priority
<p>Strategic Priority 5</p> <p>Enabling world leading science through excellence in people, places and technology.</p>	<p>Corporate Systems & Infrastructure</p> <p>We will continue to invest in IT platforms and systems to support and improve the management and delivery of AFBI work programmes more efficiently.</p> <p>Business & Financial Systems</p> <p>We will continue to invest in finance and business systems and through implementation improve the efficiency and effectiveness of management reporting and informing strategic decision making.</p>	<p>Systems</p> <p>KPI 14 - Business case approved for a new Finance & Business Management System and implementation of process improvements aligned to Global Design Principles.</p> <p>KPI 15 – Spend budget in line with the principles of regularity, propriety and value for money whilst optimising expenditure at Provisional Resource and Capital outturn to be between 99% and 100% of Final Budget for 2024/25.</p>	<p>DAERA Strategic Outcome – Exemplar Organisation</p> <p>To be an exemplar, people focused organisation, committed to making a difference for the people we serve.</p>



AFBI Budget 2024/2025

Financial Context

AFBI provides the statutory and surveillance science, emergency response capability and expert scientific advice which underpins many of DAERA's programmes of work as well as providing the scientific evidence and innovation to shape policy direction for the agri-food and marine sectors. To that end, AFBI is primarily funded by a grant-in-aid budget from the Department.

Further funding is derived from a range of local, national and international science funders and commercial organisations. As well as providing a very necessary source of income, external income helps maintain critical scientific capacity and enables collaboration with the local and international scientific community.

This complementary and synergistic arrangement is to the advantage of Northern Ireland. It strengthens AFBI's ability to provide expert scientific support to DAERA policy development and helps to ensure that our science is part of and informed by national and international science activity. It also supports innovation in the agri-food sector to improve production and efficiency, which has both environmental and economic benefits.

In recent years, AFBI has worked hard and had significant success in growing external income sources including via INTERREG VA, Horizon 2020 and the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund. Along with the obvious financial benefits, these projects bring with them opportunities to further strengthen and nurture mutually beneficial partnerships with other public and private sector organisations across the UK, Ireland and further afield.

We are committed to maintaining and where possible growing non-GIA income. This will be accomplished through targeted competitive applications that optimize value to AFBI in line with our strategic and scientific priorities. The organisation is exploring additional sources of research revenue including the forthcoming PEACE Plus initiative, and eligibility to the UKRI funding through Public Sector Research Establishment status.

We will closely monitor the funding landscape and adjust our financial forecasts, accordingly, taking account any financial uncertainties at either local, national and European levels.

Budget 2024-2025

AFBI is acutely aware of the public sector funding pressures and the current difficult financial climate and is committed to seeking savings where possible to do so.

As is the case for many organisations the recent global inflationary pressures with increases in the cost of a number of our inputs presents an on-going financial challenge.

The scale and specialised nature of the AFBI estate for example, with significant energy usage, means that changes in gas and electricity costs have a proportional greater impact on operational costs.

This Business Plan sets out AFBI's key priorities and targets for the year, however, delivery of these may have to flex depending on the extent of inflationary pressures or other in-year changes in staff and other input costs.

The following table details AFBI's 2024-2025 Indicative Opening Allocation against the 2023-24 Closing Budget Allocation.

	CLOSING BUDGET ALLOCATION 2023-24	INDICITIVE OPENING ALLOCATION 2024-25
	£'000	£'000
Income	(25,573)	(19,620)
Staff Costs	35,242	36,725
Non-Staff Costs	38,070	31,780
Operating Costs	47,739	48,885
EU Exit – Staff Costs	-	148
NI Protocol – Staff Costs	795	2,003
NI Protocol – Non-Staff Costs - Programme	191	302
NI Protocol – Non-Staff Costs - Overheads (GAE)	1,238	3,042
Other Operating Costs	2,224	5,495
Recurrent Capital	1,810	-
Capital - RV Replacement	5,395	11,326
Capital - Systems	500	-
Capital – Green Growth	76	1,504
Capital – NI Protocol	626	-
Depreciation	7,116	6,581
Non-Operating Costs	15,523	19,411
DEL Position	65,486	73,791
AME	150	1,400
Total Overall	65,636	75,191



Glossary

AFBI	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute.
AWP	Assigned Work Programme.
BREXIT	Name given for the UK withdrawal process from the EU.
bTB	Bovine tuberculosis.
Competent authority	A competent authority is any person or organization that has the legally delegated or invested authority, capacity, or power to perform a designated function.
CAFRE	College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise.
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019.
CPD	Central Procurement Directorate.
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.
DOF	Department of Finance.
EDRMS	Electronic Document and Records Management System.
EU	European Union.
GIA	Grant-in-aid.
HR	Human Resources.
INAB	Irish National Accreditation Board.
ISO/IEC 17025	International Standards Organisation standard for competence of testing and calibration laboratories.

ISO 27000	International Standards Organisation standard for Information Security.
KPI	Key Performance Indicators.
LIMS	Laboratory Information Management System.
NDPB	Non Departmental Public Body.
NI	Northern Ireland.
NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office.
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service.
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency.
OBC	Outline Business Case.
PfG	Programme for Government.
PMO	Project Management Office.
PPM	Project and Portfolio Management.
QUB	Queen's University Belfast.
SNHS	Soil Nutrient Health Scheme.
SRO	Senior Responsible Officer.
UU	Ulster University.

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