Proposed changes to standards/information boxes
The group considered proposed changes to the RSPCA welfare standards for laying hens for possible inclusion in the next revision of the standards in 2016. The proposals relate to a number of areas of the standards including food and water, environment, floor and litter, lighting, perch provision, multi-tier systems, the range, management, health, beak trimming, welfare outcome assessment, transport and slaughter/killing. These would be taken forwards for further consideration.

Natural cover - novel approaches
The group discussed the provision of natural cover and the difficulties for some members on rented land in meeting the natural cover requirements in the laying hen standards. A number of novel approaches were discussed. This would be taken forwards for further consideration.

Verandas
The RSPCA were considering the benefits of requiring verandas for barn systems. The group discussed the benefits and possible difficulties surrounding this. This would be explored further.

Minimising diet changes
The RSPCA had concerns regarding high numbers of diet changes and a possible link with injurious feather pecking. Diet changes can be a stressor for birds and the different reasons for diet changes were discussed.

Monitoring & Assessment during A.I. incidence
The difficulties around validating Freedom Food certification following disease outbreaks was discussed in light of the recent A.I. incidence. Freedom Food Assessors and RSPCA Farm Livestock Officers respect bio-security procedures. Partnership working with industry in this area was discussed and will be considered further.