



FORESTRY COMMISSION WALES NATIONAL COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12TH FEBRUARY 2010 IN CARDIFF

Present: Jon Owen Jones, Chairman
Roger Cooper
Trefor Owen
Clive Thomas

Judith Webb
John Lloyd Jones
Rory O'Sullivan

Apologies: Peter Garson

Also attending: Pamela Warhurst
Richard Siddons
James Laing (Secretariat)

Tim Rollinson
Derek Stephen

INTRODUCTION

1. JOJ welcomed Tim Rollinson and Pamela Warhurst. Apologies received from PG.

MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

2. The minutes of 20th November were approved as a true record.
3. RC thanked TMO for the Biomass Briefing paper. He queried the prices for brash bales and short round wood. TMO responded that they were two distinct products that had been sold through open and competitive tenders. Although the income from brash bales is modest, there are significant indirect cost savings on roadside vegetation management.
4. RC reiterated his concern over the relevance of Performance Measures where FCW had no influence or control. This will be discussed further at the next National Committee meeting.

DIRECTOR GENERAL'S FORWARD LOOK

5. Tim Rollinson updated the Committee on Climate Change, Urban Greenspace, Renewable Energy, Biosecurity and Global issues. JOJ highlighted the need for delivering value for money on all programmes. Tim Rollinson responded that this could be delivered through coherent programmes. He outlined the potential for investment from private sector funds, providing the conditions and regulatory framework were right.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

6. TMO commenced his report by forecasting a rise in the new housing market, leading to optimism for the timber market sector next FY. JW asked if the recent inclement weather had affected the forest roading infrastructure. TMO confirmed that FCW engineers had monitored the situation closely through this period and did not forecast a significant roading maintenance cost. TMO also outlined progress on the firewood procurement process.
7. JLJ wished to analyse the BWW figures in the report. TMO responded that this would be addressed under agenda item 5. He added that BWW figures contributed to woodland creation targets in the current Corporate Plan. Any longer term and more ambitious woodland creation targets is a matter for Ministers. The Minister will be giving more consideration to this issue in her response to recommendations by the Climate Change and Land Use Working Group.
8. ROS questioned the effectiveness of FCWs communications regarding topics such as Nant yr Arian, which involved the Minister/AM. TMO pointed out that FCW used quantitative and qualitative measures to gauge positive impact. The latest data revealed that FCW is currently ahead of its target for positive impact for external communications.
9. Performance and Business Measures - TMO updated the Committee on the Business Sustainability Business Measure, which is now amber, not red. The quantitative element of the Communications Business Measure is currently amber and needs monitoring.

FINANCE REPORT

10. FY09/10 - DS confirmed that FCW will meet the Audit & Risk Committee deadline for presenting the restated accounts.
11. FY10/11 - DS highlighted that there had been little change since the last report to the Committee. Funds had been set aside for FY10/11 to absorb reductions in budget using the Flexible Funding Reserve mechanism. JOJ asked why funds are not ring fenced in certain areas of the business. DS responded there was greater flexibility by not ring fencing funds, as we align Corporate Planning to Business Planning processes.

12. ROS shared with the Committee that WAG was undergoing a major exercise of analysing outputs and looking at the impact of a 5% reduction across the board from April 2011. Tim Rollinson added that FC could not make further efficiency savings. A mature dialogue was required with Government to advise on potential cuts.

13. The Committee noted the current position.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR WOODLAND GRANTS

14. Richard Siddons presented his paper on woodland grants. JLJ queried the BWW scheme figures and suggested the scheme was too sophisticated for small woodland owners. JLJ concerned that successful applications were a very small percentage of applications in system. Richard Siddons agreed that some Management Planners continued to have difficulties with elements of the scheme and confirmed the scheme's reliance on Management Planners to take applications forward. He reminded the Committee of the development of "BWW Smallwoods" and "First Steps" to address smaller schemes. TMO summarised that BWW had been developed in response to delivering sustainable woodland management. There are now new priorities for grants. This paper was asking the Committee for strategic direction from *Woodland for Wales*. JW added that careful thought was required to deliver grants. There was always a danger of disengaging from elements of the sector already effectively engaged. ROS wanted FCW to work closely with DRA to gain an understanding of all the consequences regarding proposed changes to BWW. JOJ queried whether the existing scheme was cost effective. JLJ asked about the spend on grants, administration and the benefits from such schemes.

15. The Committee endorsed the recommendation in paragraph 18.

Action: Provide detailed figures to Committee on BWW grant spend by Corporate Programme for 2009/10 by end April 2010

Richard Siddons

NATIONAL FOREST ESTATE WIND FARM PROGRAMME

16. DS shared his report and highlighted programme resources would peak over the next 5 - 8 years. His key focus was to get staff into posts to deal with contractual obligations. The Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) was developing its role and option holders need to be prepared before going to the IPC. ROS confirmed that the IPC role will be different in Wales from England. RC outlined ongoing discussions re deforestation and certification.

National Committee

17.The Committee noted the current position.

READ REPORT SENEDD LAUNCH

18.CT confirmed launch for 16th March. There would also be an event for the sector on 18th May. JW and JOJ requested more strategic communications to achieve greater publicity and higher attendance at the March event.

Action: Communications Team to promote Senedd event

TMO

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FORWARD LOOK 2010

19.The Committee noted the Forward Look 2010.

AOB

20.Newborough Liaison Partnership (NLP) – RC reported that the NLP frustrated at the slow progress of the science review. There was little chance of consensus so the review process would go to arbitration. RC put forward a suggestion from the NLP to have two management plans (one for the science review area and one for the remaining area). He suggested that FCW needed to be proactive to move the issues forward.

Action: Investigate opportunity to hold next NLP meeting within 2 - 3 months

PG

Next Meeting - 26th March in WAG Office, Aberystwyth