

**FORESTRY COMMISSION ENGLAND  
EIGHTY NINTH MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
NATIONAL OFFICE BRISTOL  
15 NOVEMBER 2017 AT 12.30hrs**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Sir Harry Studholme (Chairman)  
Mary Barkham  
Ian Gambles  
Julia Grant  
Simon Hodgson  
Steve Meeks  
Stephen Penlington  
Mark Pountain  
Steph Rhodes  
Clive Tucker

**Also present:**

Mark Broadmeadow – Item  
Andy Hall – Item  
PK Khaira-Creswell – Item 4  
  
Jenny King - Secretary

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Richard Greenhous had sent his apologies and Steph Rhodes was attending in his place. Shirley Trundle was unable to attend and Stephen Penlington was attending in her place. Richard Barker had sent his apologies and Jenny King was providing secretariat support.

**2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2017**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record.

**3. MATTERS ARISING/UPDATES**

**Support for Afforestation**

Steph Rhodes updated the Committee on recent work to increase support for afforestation: changes to the Woodland Carbon Fund (WCF), the announcement of HS2 Woodland Fund, the earlier opening and uptake of Countryside Stewardship, and the Defra led communications campaign. Steph reported that positive feedback had been received in relation to the changes to the WCF, that FS staff were working hard to raise awareness of the improved offer across the sector, and that we need to allow

time to see the impact of the latest changes. The Committee discussed current ministerial focus on afforestation. Ian Gambles reported that significant time and resource is dedicated to increase afforestation as a priority and asked ENC members to consider what they might be able to do to support that effort.

The Committee discussed opportunities for woodland creation privately and on the PFE.

### 25 Year Environment Plan

Steph Rhodes updated the Committee that the publication for the 25 Year Environment Plan was planned for early 2018. Steph confirmed that current drafts saw forestry featuring prominently in the Plan, and that current work in FS was considering how expected policies and ambitions in the plan could be delivered, depending on funding.

### Future of the Forestry Commission

Ian Gambles reported that there had been a written ministerial statement on the future of the Forestry Commission on the 7 November and subsequent publication of the Future of the Forestry Commission document to staff. Ian stated that reaction from staff and those outside the organisation had been muted but positive, and that implementation would begin in the New Year, with the aim that new governance boards would be functioning by the end of 2018. The ENC welcomed the announcement and looked forward to working to make the new arrangements a success across both FCE and FR.

## **4. CENTENARY PROJECT**

PK Khaira-Creswell reported progress of the centenary programme since the previous update to the Committee in September. PK summarised the key projects being developed and in depth updated the Committee on one project, a PFE Bioaudit. The Committee discussed the opportunity for engagement of the public, volunteers and staff through the Bioaudit, the legacy impact of the project, as well as the tie in to current work on forestry and natural capital.

The Chair noted the importance of the centenary as a positive news story for government if executed correctly.

## **5. FINANCE REPORT**

**Paper 31/17**

Steve Meeks reported that there were no material changes to the report made to the Committee in September and summarised additional resource funding received in Q2 of the year, as well as resource and capital bids pending for Q3. Steve confirmed the RDPE forecasts remained to fully spend the confirmed budget of £27.5m.



## **8. FESB UPDATE**

Mark Pountain summarised the FESB meeting of that morning and updated the Committee on the progress in the establishment of devolved Corporate Services and the FESB's discussion on the delays in obtaining a .gov domain name for FE.

The Strategy Board had discussed the strategic framework and priorities for 2018. The Strategy Board also discussed how FE's indicator reporting could be developed to report qualitative as well as quantitative data. The Committee agreed the importance of this work and the importance of conveying the positive messages coming from this indicator analysis to Defra.

## **9. FOREST HOLIDAYS and CAMPING IN THE FOREST**

**Paper 34/17**

Simon Hodgson updated the Committee on developments with the refinancing of Forest Holidays. Minutes of this discussion are recorded in Annex A, which is currently classified as Official Sensitive (Commercial and in Confidence) and not for wider disclosure.

## **10. ENGLAND PEAT STRATEGY**

**Paper 35/17**

The Committee welcomed Mark Broadmeadow to the meeting. Mark reported that Defra was developing a Peat Strategy for England (EPS). The revised UKFS provides a way forward for decisions over restocking on deep peat (and avoiding new planting) that is consistent with the EPS. However, if the scope of the EPS includes shallow peats, implications for forestry (both new planting and restocking) could be far more significant and would not be covered by the UKFS.

The Committee discussed the importance of this work for forestry and Mark reported that FC colleagues were working constructively with the Defra soils team to ensure sustainable forest management was a consideration of the strategy alongside protecting peat. Stephen Penlington reported that he had begun working with Defra biodiversity team and had requested a more joined up approach to better address the tensions between afforestation, deforestation and the protection of peat.

