

**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE GB EXECUTIVE BOARD
HELD IN THE SILVAN HOUSE BOARDROOMS
ON WEDNESDAY 23 JUNE 2004**

Members: Tim Rollinson (Chairman), Keith Gliddon, Wilma Harper, Simon Hewitt, Paul Hill-Tout, Jim Lynch, Bob McIntosh

Secretary: Stephen Bennett

Guests: Graham Cullen and Roger Herbert (Agenda Item 2 only), Pat Snowdon (Agenda Item 7 only) and Fiona Wright (Agenda Item 6 only)

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 28 April were agreed as a true record, with no amendments.

Matters arising:

Forest Holidays PPP – it was agreed that the EB would receive an update on this issue at each meeting from now on.

Action: Peter Ranken

In the meantime, Scottish Ministers had received a submission advising them of the options for Forest Holidays in Scotland and a decision was pending. However, it was pointed out that the Scottish Executive had agreed that funds would be available for investment in Scottish sites for this financial year only. English Ministers had also been advised of the current situation and a submission to Welsh Ministers was pending. The submissions would be circulated to EB members for information.

Action: Country Directors

The adverts for the new Director, Human Resources would appear in the press w/c 28 June.

Action: Personnel Development

2. GLADE Update

- Prior to the discussion of the update paper, the Country Directors expressed several areas of concern about the GLADE project.

The Board was informed that a two-week re-evaluation period was about to commence, to review the system functionality and to develop a mutually agreed project plan and milestones between BSD and CS.

After this task has been completed, the Board requested a paper detailing project management structure, milestones and a clear picture of the current status of the project and where it is going. It was agreed that this would be circulated by the end of July.

Action: Graham Cullen

The Board also asked for a complete breakdown of costs to date, and anticipated expenditure of the project, ASAP.

Action: Keith Gliddon and Roger Herbert

On receipt of these papers the Board would reflect on their future role and perhaps form a review/audit team to strengthen the project management structure.

Action: Board Members

The Board made very clear that they expected realistic and timely feedback in order to deal with any potential problems. Concern was raised over the complexity of the project and the tensions that had become apparent over the last few weeks. The difficulties should not be underestimated.

Action: Roger Herbert and Graham Cullen

It was agreed that a meeting would be held between the Heads of BSD and CS to iron out any difficulties in defining roles and responsibilities.

Action: Keith Gliddon and Roger Herbert

3. NY2005 Honours

The Board agreed that the Honours system was not being taken as seriously as it should be within the FC. A change in attitude was necessary and candidates selected on the basis of an exceptional contribution to forestry. The general quality of the citations should be improved in future exercises. It was also suggested that a stronger link should be established with HR in the future to identify deserving candidates.

Action: Wilma Harper

The Board agreed the proposed nominations for NY2005.

Action: Wilma Harper

4. Procurement Project Timetable

It was explained to the Board that this project had two objectives.

In the short-term, a rolling programme was being developed in consultation with cost centre managers to ensure that all cost centres were using the POP module of e-financials for all purchases by the end of the financial year. In order to ensure use of this somewhat unpopular system, it was agreed that it would be important to explain to staff why we had to process payments in this way, highlight the benefits, ensure buy-in from all management boards and take a fairly hard line about using the system. While there may be a very few exceptions to using the system, and therefore a degree of flexibility required, this would not be common practice.

Action: Keith Gliddon

The long-term objective of achieving efficiency savings through e-procurement required further fact-finding about purchasing behaviour across the organisation. A paper would be prepared for the EB in December, with a timetable for achieving this objective.

Action: Keith Gliddon

5. Transparency of the Accounts

An initial meeting had been held to discuss this subject, and an initial list of key elements for the accounts drawn up, although it was reported that further discussions would be held with front-line staff in each country.

Action: Keith Gliddon

The Board thought that the list of key points would probably be quite complex and often conflicting. It was agreed that there would be several key essential targets, and a secondary list of less essential items to cover. The EB would be required to take firm decisions on the scope of this exercise, in order to ensure that transparency was achieved.

Country Directors were particularly keen that the accounting structure linked to country objectives and that front-line managers would be able to identify clear lines from their budgets to country and corporate accounts, and therefore identify their contributions. Consistency between the FC and FE accounting structure was also felt to be important.

More work was required on the accounting requirements at corporate level to maintain the integrity of the corporate accounts. Establishment of the accounting principles at this level would then lead to development of the country accounts thereby introducing an interconnected and corresponding framework across the organisation.

Action: Keith Gliddon

6. The Tomorrow Project

The Report highlighted three main areas of priority actions. The Board agreed that the development of Human Resources policy would be the responsibility of the new Director, HR. In the meantime, the HR issues identified would be explored further with the author of the Report. The Board felt the resources necessary to address the issues raised would be available within the existing Personnel team with some re-direction, after a process of strategic planning.

Action: Fiona Wright

It was less clear how to take forward the two remaining areas of advocacy and clarity of roles. However, it was felt that the organisation would benefit from some public relations advice with a view to increasing positive promotion of the work that we do, and perhaps a review of the existing Communications resource. Board members would reflect upon these issues, and send comments back to the DG within the next couple of weeks.

Action: Board Members

The Board agreed that the Report would remain confidential for the time-being, although copies should be circulated to those who participated. The Executive Summary would be made available to all staff, under a covering note from the DG on the proposed actions and advising of the long-term nature of many of the issues identified.

Action: Tim Rollinson & Marcus Sangster

7. Developing and Evaluating the Evidence Base on Forestry and Rural and Urban Development

Board members welcomed the proposals and agreed all of the recommendations within this paper as it was felt to be important to acquire a stronger evidence base for the importance of the role of forestry in rural development. To this end, it was vital that, in identifying the development of a methodological framework for appraisal and evaluation, the methodology was accepted and respected by the RADs. To achieve this, the methodology would have to be based upon the principles within the 'Green Book' and be reviewed and endorsed by peers within the RADs.

The Board requested that the framework was developed in liaison with the social forestry team, in order to establish a stronger economic interface with the social forestry unit.

In order to maximise benefits of this for users, it would be necessary to ensure consistency of application. To this end, training was being organised for later this year and discussions were being held with FTS to develop a series of integrated training modules.

It was hoped that this work would be used to underpin investment in forestry. The Board advised that guidance should be sought on how to utilise and deploy the information.

Action: Pat Snowdon

The Board requested further investigation into, and development of, possible forestry investment opportunities.

Action: Keith Gliddon and Pat Snowdon

8. Future of the FE Estate – Handling the Workshop (Oral Report)

The Board noted and agreed the proposed agenda and discussion topics for the 'Away Day', scheduled for early July, to discuss and examine the future of the FE estate, focusing on the relationship between the FC and FE and future regulation of the FE by FC.

Action: Wilma Harper

9. Any other business

Three items were raised:

CONFOR – An initial exploratory meeting had been held with the new UK Confederation of Forest Industries. CONFOR were seeking support from the FC in the form of a timber levy. However, as a Government department, this type of financial support would not be appropriate for the FC and other options would need to be explored, including the method, amount and duration of support. The DG and Director, FC Scotland would take the lead on these negotiations. In order to inform the decision making process, analysis would be required of all of the financial support currently provided by the FC to the private sector.

Action: Tim Rollinson, Bob McIntosh & Bob Selmes (analysis of support)

D.micans – A joint FC/trade/growers (FTA) meeting had been held and concluded that the D.micans Protective Zones should be removed. The EB would be updated shortly; the next stage would be to advise Ministers.

Action: Roger Herbert

Legal Issues - In order to resolve several difficult legal issues in Wales, it was agreed that a meeting would be scheduled ASAP between the Defra and NAW legal teams.

Action: Stephen Bennett