

# MINUTES OF THE 859th MEETING OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSIONERS, HELD AT SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH ON FRIDAY 11 APRIL 2003

Present:

Lord Clark, Chairman  
David Bills  
Anthony Bosanquet  
Tony Cooper  
Simon Hewitt  
John James  
Bob McIntosh  
Duncan Macniven  
Andrew Raven  
Gareth Wardell  
Frank Strang, Secretary

Also attending:

Paul Hill-Tout  
Bruce Inglis, Minute Secretary

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Paul Hill-Tout and Simon Hewitt. Apologies for absence had been received from Victoria Edwards.

## 2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 MARCH 2003

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2003 were agreed as a true record.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING

- Mr Wardell wondered if the '**Green Homes**' project in the New Forest was to be a Commission initiative for affordable housing. Mr Hill-Tout said that the Commission, Defra, local authorities and other bodies were still at a very exploratory stage in this project. The role of housing in helping to sustain commoning was the key issue being considered.
- Mr Hewitt reported that the draft **Corporate Plan for Wales** (or Operational Plan, as the Assembly preferred to call them) had been copied to Mr Wardell and Mr Bosanquet.

- Mr Hewitt reported on progress regarding the draft paper on '**Replanting Policy in Wales**'. Commissioners were relieved to hear that a more considered and less hurried approach was to be taken with this initiative following discussion at the Woodland Forum and the Agriculture Committee. There would be important lessons to learn from the way in which the paper had been drawn up.
- Mr Macniven reported on the **Cash Flow** situation at the end of 2002/03.
- Mr Hewitt said that, rather than wait for the first meeting of the Wales National Committee, he would proceed now with setting up the visit to the **proposed windfarm site at Tywi forest**.

**Action: Mr Hewitt**

#### **4. FORESTRY DEVOLUTION REVIEW**

There was a wide-ranging discussion on this paper. The main points were:

- further thought would be given to the suggestion that the National Committees' terms of reference should include a specific reference to the promotion of forestry;

**Action: Mr Strang**

- further thought would be given to the number and composition of a National Committee quorum;

**Action: Mr Strang**

- the proposed basis and rate of remuneration for non-executive Commissioners were agreed. It was also agreed that this rate would be paid for all work which could be regarded as 'normal governance', including representational duties and committee work. Remuneration for non-executive roles would be added to the remit of the Remuneration Committee. Whilst in principle consideration could be given to temporary top-ups, these would in practice be very rare and reflect exceptional and significant projects, and would require Board approval. All GB non-executive Commissioners would be paid from the GB Vote;

- it was agreed that the dates for the GB Board's meetings in 2004 would be as follows:

10/11 March	(visit and meeting NRS/Silvan House)
9/10 June	(tour and meeting, Scotland)
6/7 October	(tour and meeting, Wales)
8/9 December	(dinner and meeting, London)

The two tours would be run jointly with the National Committees.

- an update on the appointment process for the post-FDR membership of the FCAP would be provided at the May meeting.

**Action: Mr Strang**

- a short paper would be provided for the May meeting clarifying the way in which costs would be attributed to each country post-FDR.

**Action: Mr Macniven**

## **5. REVIEW OF FORESTRY ARRANGEMENTS IN ENGLAND (EMERGING FINDINGS)**

The Chairman reported that there had been a useful discussion on this issue at the inaugural meeting of the National Committee for England. Mr Hill-Tout said that the Commission was contributing to the Steering Group's comments on the 'Crabtree' economic analysis report. Although there was strong endorsement in the report for several elements of the England Forestry Strategy, Mr James pointed out that there was also some ammunition for critics of certain of the Commission's policies. The Steering Group was to pass the report, and their comments on it, to Defra and Treasury Ministers in mid-May. Ministers would decide if the report would then be passed on for consideration under the 'Haskins' review. Mr Hill-Tout said that the Commission had developed a good working relationship with the 'Haskins' review team, and that as part of the review, a questionnaire had been sent to many of the Commission's stakeholders.

Although the Board felt that much of the case being made in the 'Crabtree' report was unproven, there was scope for highlighting positive aspects such as integration of commercial and public benefits.

The Board agreed that Mr Hill-Tout's paper was a good example of a country issue which clearly had implications for the Commission as a whole; it was important that this type of paper came to the GB Board at an early stage. The Executive Board would have a role in identifying such cases.

## **6. DIRECTOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

The DG covered several aspects in his report, including the consultation document on ***Dendroctonus Micans***, the good reception to the UK contribution at the **FAO Forestry Committee** event in Rome, and the momentum gained at the UNECE/FAO seminar in Romania on the **Sound Use of Wood**. He also reported on the **study tour of New Zealand** organised by the Scottish Cluster Initiative, particularly the many learning points which the tour group identified for Scottish and UK forestry. The Board was also interested in the item on post-FDR staffing, and it was suggested that a full organisational/staffing chart would be helpful in due course.

**Action: Mr Strang**

## **7. COUNTRY DIRECTOR REPORTS**

Apart from briefly discussing the progress being made on the FC/Defra Concordat and agreeing that Commissioners should see a copy of the new FE Framework documents, the Board mainly discussed the process for submitting reports on country activities to the GB Board. It was agreed that there need not be an “automatic debate” on the relatively routine issues (significant matters would be the subject of a separate paper) and that the GB Board would be content to see the reports presented by the Country Directors to the National Committees. It would be helpful, however, if these reports all contained key items such as cash flow, new initiatives, and staffing matters. Timber market information, however, would be drawn from each country and summarised in the DG’s Report.

**Action: Mr Hill-Tout and Mr Strang**

## **8. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held in the Houstoun House Hotel, West Lothian, on 8 May. A tour of forestry initiatives in Scotland’s central belt will be held the day before.