

## Research Management Board Meeting – 19 August 2003 - Alice Holt

**Present:** Prof J Lynch  
Dr P Freer-Smith  
Mr T Cornwell  
Mr K Charles  
Mr W Mason

Copies to: Head of Internal Audit, Silvan House

### Minutes of Last Meeting

1. Accepted

### Matters Arising

2. IS/IT Committee has met. Sam Evans elected as Chair. **Noted**
3. The Welsh Assembly Minister, Carwyn Jones, has been invited to visit Alice Holt, Alan Wilson is being invited to visit NRS. Ben Bradshaw will also be invited to visit Alice Holt. CE will speak to Paul Hill-Tout about the protocol. **Action: JL, BM**
4. Data charging transfer, HoF will meet with Tracy Houston to finalise her paper and will circulate to RMB members. **Action: TC**

### Reports

5. H. of NRS reported that Woodland Surveys will have a Visiting Group next year. **Noted**
6. The RMB noted the excellent performance of Dr Sandra Denman during her Country Life interview about Sudden Oak Death. **Noted**
7. H. of NRS to keep HoF in the picture with regard to contract negotiations for the “Centre of Excellence” in Scotland in wood science and engineering. **Action: BM**
8. CE and H. of NRS to remind HoBs that HoF should be brought into the frame as early as possible with regard to new contract negotiations. **Action: JL, BM**
9. HoF confirmed that the year end audit is complete and that funding for the Discretionary Fund (£100k) has been secured for this year and is likely to remain so in the future. **Noted**
10. The Discretionary Fund will be used to fund a mix of proposals from staff and initiatives from the management team. It is hoped that the fund will be in place for the foreseeable future. It will be administered by the RMB. **Noted**

## Finance

11. HoF reported that in 2002/03, cost recovery of 99.7% was achieved (an operating surplus of £576k). The deficit of £40k was largely attributable to the FC's re-evaluation exercise. **Noted**
12. FC overall income was on forecast but £0.3m less than the previous year. External income was £1.7m, 33% higher than last year. £473k was spent on capital. **Noted**
13. An improvement has been made from a starting operating deficit of £0.25m. Current net shortfall is estimated at £150k. HoF is about to conduct a full review of our current financial position. **Action: TC**

## Staffing

14. The RMB agreed to fill the post of Forest Soils Advisor using a FC-wide trawl. **Action: KC**
15. Replacement RW at Shobdon. CRO to confirm with Norman Day that there is nobody who could be transferred from another Fieldstation [N] & [S] which is not making its target. Otherwise RMB agreed a 12 month FTA. **Action: KC**
16. Agreed that the two FTAs at Newton be extended by 12 months. **Action: KC**
17. RMB agreed that Stephen Hendry be given TRA to act as Head of Section for the period of Sarah Green's maternity leave. **Action: KC**
18. P&AO briefed the RMB about the cost of advertising job vacancies and the amount of money being made available through our SLA with Central Personnel (£21,400). Given the cost of a 'New Scientist' advert [+/- £4000] this will not be enough and the RMB agreed with the following proposals:
  - P&AO to review areas in the SLA where our spend could be reduced.
  - HoBs, where possible, should allow for advertising in project costs.
  - Only one journal insertion will be paid for centrally.
  - P&AO to ask Central Personnel to re-design the FC corporate style advert by removing the 'woodcut' but retaining the usable area. **Action: KC**
19. CE requested that P&AO ensures ease of access to vacancies advertised on the FR and FC internet sites. **Action: KC**
20. The RMB agreed that it wished to continue, as a matter of principle, the recruitment of sandwich students. If there were particular difficulties this year, then the recruitment of a gap-year student or post-graduate could be an alternative. P&AO to inform HoBs. **Action: KC**

## Capital

21. Portable Photosynthesis System, HoF to speak to Sam Evans about a cheaper option. All other decisions on capital expenditure will be deferred until the next RMB. **Action: TC**

### Training Statistics

22. P&AO presented FR's training statistics for 2002/03. These indicated an average training spend per capita of £491 with an average number of training days per member of staff of 4.3. In 2002/03 this was £412 and 4.5. The increased spend for 2002/03 was because of additional funding for the 'Valuing People, Supporting Change' initiative.

**Noted**

### FR Annual Report and Accounts

23. CRO up-dated the RMB with progress made with the Annual Report and Accounts. CRO to propose main chapters for next year's report to CE. **Action: PF-S**

### Any other Business

24. EU monitoring programme, HoF has introduced a variant costing and charging methodology specifically for the Forest Focus programme which the Management Board endorsed. **Noted**

25. Vehicles, as part of the TSU review, HoF has looked at the holding and usage of vehicles. He will look at the wider issues including a re-assessment of the needs for pool vehicles and alternative materials of supply. **Action: TC**

26. The RMB agreed HoF's planning timetable for the Corporate and Business Plans 2004/05 to 2006/07. HoF to proceed with this. **Action: TC**

27. CE to have preliminary discussions with Tim Rollinson regarding FR's financial requirements for 2004/05. **Action: JL**

### Date of Next Meeting

Date of next meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> September 2003 at Alice Holt.