

**Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 10 April 2007
held by video conference**

Present: Prof J M Lynch (Chair) Dr H F Evans
Mr W L Mason Mr K N Charles
Dr A J Moffat (AJM) Dr X Christophers
Dr C Quine Prof P Freer-Smith
Prof S Evans

Apologies: Mr T Cornwell

Dr D Shannon and Mrs A Melvin (AM) attended the meeting.

Copies to: Mrs Liz Holmes, Head of Internal Audit
Mrs Wilma Harper, Director of Corporate & Forestry Support
Mrs Ros Bull, Secretary to the Chairman

Agenda Item 1 – Introduction to purpose/format of meeting

1. JL introduced this item.

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of last meeting

2. Accepted with one amendment to para 12. PF-S will do the change analysis which he will supply to XC for inclusion in the CE's opening address in the Annual Report.

Action: PF-S

Agenda Item 3 – Matters arising

3. Item 4, the process for nominating 'Fellows' of FR and coverage provided by such 'Fellows' to be put on agenda and discussed more widely at the May FREB.

Action: CH

4. Item 21, the PAWG 'Champions' will meet this afternoon and add 'external funding' to the 'map' of CFS funded programmes.

Noted

5. Item 32, SE will give further details of "PRINCE" project management and a suitable process for FR to manage projects using this at the May FREB.

Action: SE

6. Item 35, TC to issue a note in JL's name to FR staff regarding the protocol to be followed when requesting permission for an overseas visit.

Action: TC

7. Ian Forshaw to be invited to attend May FREB.

Action: XC

Agenda Item 4 – Update on Development Strategy/Corporate Plan

8. JL introduced this item. The Development Strategy is interconnected with the Corporate Plan, some of the Development Strategy will be embedded within the Corporate Plan.

9. DS identified the main areas that need to be kept to the forefront if our Strategy is to keep within its timeframe. These are:

- Science areas - PAWGs will deliver on this, FREB will then decide on areas which will be regarded as 'key' over the next 5 years.

- Financial systems - the Review Group will address this but concern was raised with regard to the draft ToR and membership of the Group. PF-S will look at this.
Action: PF-S
 - Alice Holt site development - discussions have been held and are continuing to be held with Grove & Lawrence and PUK.
 - Customer care - the continuing requirement to convince customers that FR will focus on their needs.
 - Pay, promotion and rewarding staff/senior management training.
 - The active management of the science/policy interchange.
10. There were concerns expressed over making staff time available to focus on activities connected with the Development Strategy, HE and PF-S will discuss.
Action: HE, PF-S
11. FREB members to examine the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as shown in the draft Corporate Plan and to let XC have comments.
Action: FREB
12. Agreed that, "by August 2007" be deleted from KPI No 3.
Action: XC
13. Agreed that in the para preceding the KPIs, that, "period of transition with some disturbances of existing activities" be amplified.
Action: XC
14. Agreed that DS will be asked to act as Project Manager for the Development Strategy. However, it is not expected that DS will have the necessary direct skills to manage all the strands of the Strategy and that other 'experts' will be brought in. DS will pull together an implementation plan and 'road map' for the continuance of the strategy.
Action: DS
15. Agreed that JL, DS and David Evans will meet to discuss next steps, including the need for a staff capability review and leadership training for senior staff.
Action: JL

Agenda Item 5 – Communications Strategy

16. XC introduced this item. External Communication Strategy was tabled which had been produced following comments from the RSMB and FREB. The strategy will be an agenda item for the May FREB and XC welcomes comments/feedback by e-mail. FREB recognised that our technical communication is good but that there could be a better process definition at the science/policy interface.
Action: CH

Agenda Item 6 – Commissioners Papers for September

17. This item had been covered under Agenda Item 4.

Agenda Item 7 – Biomass Update/Opportunities and Status of Strategic partnerships

18. AM introduced her report on FR's income generation progress and opportunities. Main 'push' this month on two items;
- Progress is being made with SEEDA towards the establishment of a Rural Research Strategy Partnership. This platform aims to provide an additional platform for collaborative bid generation.
 - A presentation profiling FR's capabilities will be made to the World Bank in Washington on 19 April involving AM, BM and JL.

19. Agreed that in 'Table 1' an additional column 'Bids Pending' to be added.

Action: AM

20. AM to liaise with TC on contracts information, linking her database with the Finance contracts database.

Action: AM,TC

21. A draft 'Conflict of Interest' policy document was tabled. Comments from FREB should be e-mailed to AM.

Action: FREB

Agenda Item 8 – Review of functions carried out by BSD

22. A copy of Paul Snaith's report on the Review of the Functions of Business Services Division has been received and the DG has invited comments by 13 April for discussion at the next GBEB meeting.

Noted

23. The main point at issue, from a FR perspective, is in the recommendation that the operational service (which is the bulk of OSU) which supports forest managers be located in Corporate and Forestry Support (CFS). The other main recommendations are that the IT function of BSD be located with Director Finance, Silvan House, Office Services being located in HR and the G&L work being dispersed to countries.

Noted

24. It is felt that had it been recommended that the OSU be located within FR, this would have given FC and FR a useful interlink of research and operational development that would be marketable on the international front.

25. JL will respond at the GBEB meeting. PFS to provide a written brief. **Action: JL,PFS**

26. Review of Production Forecasting, individual evidence has been given to the review committee but not a FR corporate view. A draft report will not be issued prior to the final report being sent to Country Directors, CE FR. JL will comment at the GBEB.

Action: JL

Agenda item 9 - Finance

27. In his absence, TC sent a written report. In 2006/07, provided HoD's forecasts have not changed, we will end the year with a small surplus.

28. 2007/08, overall the net contribution is looking positive but there are four key problem areas;

- TSU deficit
- C&FS 'unallocated pot'
- Tree health deficit
- Projected external income is significantly less than target.

Noted

Agenda Item 10 - Staffing

29. KC introduced this item. There are a number of recruitments in the pipeline. It is our intention to use one advertisement to recruit replacements for Mark Broadmeadow and Paul Tabbush. This advertisement will also serve a publicity vehicle for the development of Forest Research. KC is in contact with our advertising agency.

Action: KC

30. Maggie Semple, Civil Service Commissioner and Chief Executive of the Experience Corps is advising the Forestry Commission on diversity matters. HoDs to let Sue Stiles know their availability to meet with Maggie on 1st May at Alice Holt.

Action: FREB

31. FC, HR Director has produced a FC People Strategy. JL to copy this paper to HoDs. HoD's are invited to let JL have their comments for discussion at GBEB and to CQ for discussion at HR Service Board.

Action: JL, FREB

Agenda Item 11 – Divisional Reports

32. Divisional reports were tabled and will appear on the Intranet.

Noted

33. BM enquired about feedback from the recent RSMB meeting and for clarification regarding the costings to be provided for CFS funded programmes. It is thought that this year the old system would be used with the new style being put in place for 2008/09. PF-S will confirm and keep FREB informed of the required style/content that the costings should take.

Action: P.F-S

Agenda Item 12 – AOB

34. There were no items under 'AOB'.

Date of next meeting

16/17 May at Bangor.