

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting (FREB)

Minutes of the meeting held at Alice Holt on 24 August 2004

Present: Prof Jim Lynch
Dr Peter Freer-Smith
Mr Tony Cornwell
Dr Hugh Evans
Prof Sam Evans
Mr Bill Mason
Dr Andy Moffat
Dr Chris Quine

Apologies: Mr Ken Charles

Copies to: Head of Internal Audit
Head of Technical Services Group
Head of Communications (to await arrival)

Agenda Item 1 - Minutes of the last Meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting of 23 June 2004 were approved.

Agenda Item 2 - Matters Arising

2. Alice Holt Site Committee.

The first meeting will take place on 14th September.

3. Proposed further social science appointment in Environmental & Human Sciences Division.

A detailed proposal to be put to the next (October) FREB meeting.

Action: AM_

4. Liaison with FC and representation on committees.

A paper is in preparation for the FCEB September meeting on the FC's advisory committee structures. PF-S has advised CFS that research committees should be rationalised since the new FC RMB has been established. A preferred option is for FRCC to be merged with the new CFS Expert Panel on Research & Development so that the FC consults research funders and stakeholders (the industry) in a single committee rather than separately.

Country Liaison Officers should interact regularly on an informal basis with each other, Heads of Divisions and project leaders. In addition they will provide regular updates via FREB and minutes of meetings between the CLOs and the Countries will be circulated to FREB members. The Communications Director will have a key role in ensuring that these communication channels remain open and effective.

To facilitate two way communication Heads of Divisions will each make a presentation of their activities to the FREB once a year.

A forum is to be established for the CLOs to meet formally on a regular basis.

Action: AM

5. Communications Director.

The selection process for the Communications Director post has been completed. An announcement will be made shortly.

6. FC Organisation.

It was noted that Sustainable Forestry Group has been re-named Corporate and Forestry Support.

7. PMS standards meetings.

Standards meeting are to be arranged.

Action: PF-S, KC

8. Quality Assurance.

An implementation team has been convened and meets for the first time on 27. August 2004 , chaired by PF-S.

Agenda Item 3 – Update on reorganisation and interaction with FC

9. With the successful recruitment of the Communications Director the full management team is now established and will shortly be in place.

10. Relations with FC service boards continues to be an active topic and will be a main issue at the FC(GB) EB on 25 August 2004.

11. Following a visit by the Chair of the DEFRA Science Panel and his complementary comments on the quality of FR's science, it is evident that FR has an opportunity to build up the level and quality of our scientific publications. This needs to become an integral component of our scientific strategy and be strongly represented in our corporate plan.

Action: JL, P F-S, All HoDs,

12. Papers on publications strategy to be prepared for the FC(GB)EB and Commissioners.

Action: JL, P F-S

Agenda Item 4 - Reports

13. Reports were presented by all Divisions were considered and it was agreed that the format and content was at the appropriate level.

14. Following the successful Tree Health presentation at the Royal Society, timely consideration needs to be given to what FR might offer for next year.

Action: JL, P F-S, HoDs

Agenda Item 5 - FC Science Strategy and FR Science Strategy

15. After wide consultation CFS is to draft a new FC GB Research Strategy under the guidance of the newly constituted FC Research management Board (FCRMB).
16. As details emerge FR staff must be kept informed of progress and in particular be involved in negotiation of the new research catalogue.
Action: PF-S, HoDs
17. The FR science strategy will need to complement the new FC strategy and in turn be an integral part of a new FR corporate plan. FREB should watch how the FC strategy develops and the new Communications Director should oversee the preparation of FR's corporate plan during 2005-06.

Action: Communications Director

Agenda Item 6 – Economists in Forest Research

18. Discussions of the role economists should play within FR was generally positive and supportive but it was agreed that the matter should be re-visited once the forthcoming Visiting Group had completed its review.

Agenda Item 7 - Finance

19. It was noted that the 2003-4 accounts were nearing completion with all financial targets having been met.
20. The projected overall shortfall against target for 2004-5 of £146,000 was considered to be manageable at this time of year but careful monitoring was needed to ensure that adequate steps were taken to eliminate it.
21. Within the overall picture, Tree Health, Forest Management and Technical Services Group are facing substantial shortfalls against targets that need to be addressed as matters of some urgency.
Action: HE, BM, Janet Dutch
22. Capital expenditure this year is progressing slowly against authorised acquisitions. HoDs should ensure that allocated funds used.

Action: All

Agenda Item 8 – Staffing (to include Agenda Item 10 – Overtime and operational pay)

23. The latest staffing statistics, including an analysis of PMS marks for 2003-04, were noted.
24. Proposals for a training programme for senior managers were discussed. It was agreed that these should be taken forward with a second stage report with recommendations to be put to FREB.

Action: KC

25. The impact of the change of status for some operational staff, including the implications for overtime costs, was discussed. It was agreed that a proposed FR policy should be put to FREB after consultation with other parts of FC/FE.

Action: KC

26. Consideration of the operational staff issue covered a review of the general level of overtime in the Agency. In view of the very high incidence of overtime in a number of areas, FREB is to be given a monthly report on overtime levels.

Action:TC

Agenda Item 9 – Provision of administrative support for Heads of Divisions

27. It was agreed that a proper level of administrative support within the Divisions was essential to the success of the new structure and the recommended levels of support at Alice Holt and NRS should be implemented. i.e.

- Alice Holt - one support officer each for the three resident HoDs, details of these posts to be passed to Staff Inspection for advice on grading. If feasible, these posts should be located in one office. In addition, one 6B post for local administrative support for the two Divisions based at NRS.
- NRS - One post (at the same level as the three support officers at Alice Holt) to provide financial support to the two resident HoDs. This post will probably be organised as an 'outstation' of FR Finance.

Further consideration is to be given to the level of general administrative support for local and NRS based Divisions, which are proposed to be provided from the local central administration team. This should also take account of any requirements of the Head of Technical Services.

Next steps are to implement these agreed actions, consulting with Staff Inspections and TUS as appropriate and confirm NRS requirements.

**Action: WM, CQ to advise KC of required 6B support for NRS
Action: KC to implement**

Agenda Item 11 - Organisation of FR Conferences

28. This topic to be carried forward to the science strategy meeting.

Action:SE

Agenda Item 12 - Role of Head of Station, NRS

29. CQ's paper was considered and agreed.

Agenda Item 13 – Any other business

30. TC alerted all to the implications of the Freedom of Information Act, which come into force on 1 January 2005. The importance of completeness of records of value added products was stressed and HoDs should review their position on this and advise SE of updates.

31. FREB to be kept informed on progress on FOI Act issues.
Action: HoDs
Action: TC, Communications Director
32. Authors of missing sections for the 2003-4 annual report to be chased for delivery.
Action:HoDs
33. Attendance at IUFRO Brisbane to be considered.
Action: PF-S
34. The Visiting Group for 2005 will be Biometrics.
35. The FR IT service board is fully constituted and will meet for the first time in early October 2005.

Agenda Item 14 - Date of next meeting

36. **Monday 4 October 2004 at Alice Holt**