

**Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 6 December 2005
by Video Conference**

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

Copies to: Head of Internal Audit
Director of Corporate & Forestry Services

Agenda Item 1 – Introduction to purpose/format of meeting

1. JL introduced the meeting.

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of last meeting

2. Accepted with one amendment to item 27, replace ‘seminar’ with ‘annual research update’. **Noted**

Agenda Item 3 – Matters arising

3. The group set up to discuss the review of promotion procedures has met and their views sent to HoDs for comment. PFS asked HoDs to let him have their views well before the next FREB (17/18 January). **Action: HoDs**
4. It was agreed that change of grade within FR from PB2 to PB1 will be by promotion to an advertised vacancy, JEGS or Individual Merit Promotion through the BBSRC process. **Noted**
5. KC will arrange PMS Standards Meetings for January. **Action: KC**
6. Details of steps taken and progress made to date on the Staff Survey by FREB members and Janet Dutch to be sent to JL. This will be an agenda item for the February FREB meeting. **Action: FREB/JD**
7. KC to put together a paper on senior staff roles and place on Intranet. **Action: KC**
8. XC to liaise with JL, PFS, KC and TC over dates and format to engage with staff. **Action: XC**
9. HoDs to advise XC of potential visitors who could influence or help the perception of FR. **Action: HoDs**
10. New contracts to be put in place changing the ‘Emeritus Scientist/Research Associate’ titles to ‘Fellow of Forest Research’ and ‘Visiting Fellow of Forest Research’. **Action: KC**

11. HE and CQ to speak to staff associated with their areas about the (above) change of titles. **Action: HE/CQ**
12. HoDs to consider others to whom this honour might be bestowed. **Action: HoDs**
13. KC will take forward the suggestion made by Gary Kerr at the Alice Holt 'All Staff Meeting' to enable staff to give, on an optional basis, upwards feedback on their manager. KC explained that there is a general review of PMS being considered but this might not be in place until 1 April 2007. **Action: KC**
14. Following the address to the November FREB by Dr Ed Jenner, Non-Executive member of NERC Council, JL, AM and SE to discuss and consider our future status with NERC. **Action: JL, AM & SE**
15. PFS to send a note to staff about senior management's support for QA to coincide with the arrival of the new QA manager (Carl Foster) in January. **Action: PFS**
16. HE to produce a paper with options to improve FR's standing and networking in the three countries, in the first instance, in Wales. **Action: HE**
17. Woodfuel Unit. Alison Melvin to be included with Andy Hall and Ian Tubby in this Unit. As this is the first initiative of its kind in FR, the concept was agreed with the intention to discuss the detail of how initiatives such as this will be managed as this initiative develops. **Noted**

Agenda Item 4 – Feedback from FC EB Meeting

18. No feedback to give as FC EB meeting does not take place until next week. However, JL reported that the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Forest Research, which met last week, went well and that there had been a good response to the advertisement for new members of the Committee. The FC EB will consider applicants and appoint. **Noted**
19. CFS produced a paper for the Commissioners meeting making recommendations about the conduct of a review of our Framework Document which we have commented upon. **Noted**
20. AM presented his paper "FREB response to 'A framework for programme advisory groups' ". This identified that out of the 8 priority topics for research, 5 have been selected for most urgent action. These are:-
 - Climate change
 - Biodiversity and habitat restoration
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Social and economic development
 - Changing silviculture.

Programme Advisory Groups will be set up composed of:-

- A representative of each of the Forestry Commission's National Offices.
- A representative of the Forest Service

- A Head of Division, Forest Research
 - A research commissioning manager from CFS
 - Possibly external stakeholders. **Noted**
21. Existing FR programmes need to be put against the 8 priority topics which will be actioned by PFS in consultation with HoDs. **Action: PFS**
22. Noted that HoDs/Project Leaders should be involved in each of the groups. **Noted**
23. Concerns were raised by TC about the costs of running a system such as this and how innovation would be catered for. **Noted**
24. The matter will be put on the agenda for discussion at January FREB. **Action: CH**
25. Concerns raised by HoDs will be taken forward by PFS in his role as advisor to the RSMB. **Action: PFS**
26. PFS will circulate papers and minutes from RSMB to HoDs. **Action: PFS**

Agenda Item 6 – Finance

27. TC presented his report which indicated a forecast shortfall against target net contributions of £59K as against a shortfall of £67K forecast last month. **Noted**
28. Members of FREB and Head of TSU were asked to take positive action to identify sufficient savings to address the deficit and any surplus funds identified to be taken off year-end forecasts. **Action: FREB, JD**
29. Slight improvement in TSU position with a current forecast for a net loss of £396K.
30. Capital expenditure of £68K has been authorised. The amount remaining to be allocated is £20K.
31. FREB members and Head of TSU were asked to continue with the preparation of their business plans and TC proposed that we set mid-February as the deadline for completion of plans so they can be discussed at March FREB. **Action: FREB, JD**

Agenda Item 7 – Staffing

32. KC reported a current staff figure of 277 (FTEs) with projected figures to 31 December of 273 and at 31 March, 277. Corporate Plan figure for year is 278. **Noted**
33. Feedback from HR Service Board was given. The results of the recent liP review will be presented firstly to the FC EB on 14 December. We will take forward any important findings and recommendations along with action to address the findings of the Staff Survey at the February FREB. **Noted**

34. A short briefing was given regarding the central HR initiative on employee benefits. More details about this will be coming out shortly. **Noted**
35. KC informed the FREB that a recent Employment Tribunal case which a former employee had made a claim against FR had been found in FR's favour. JL conveyed the thanks of the FREB to KC for his part in bringing this to a conclusion. **Noted**
36. Concern over the reduction in the number of applicants applying for our vacant posts was discussed. It was felt that as well as formal advertising (to satisfy 'fair and open' recruitment principles) more could be done by the use of networking to ensure that potential candidates were aware of vacancies. It was also felt that if we made the essential competencies too rigorous that this might deter good candidates from applying who, with some investment in training, would have good potential. **Noted**
37. BM suggested that we apply for Marie-Curie Fellowship staff on a corporate rather than individual basis. Fellows recruited under this auspice are at no cost to us. Timescale too short for this year but KC will investigate future cut-off dates. **Action: KC**

Agenda Item 8 – Divisional Reports

38. XC requested that FREB members include advance information in their reports as well as historical. **Action: HoDs**
39. BM is visiting Coillte and is willing to represent other areas on behalf of HoDs such as climate change and pest risk analysis. HoDs to advise BM. **Action: HoDs**
40. AM raised the question of our staff appearing in the media (such as the recent radio programme 'Costing the Earth' where the degree of editing was such that our views were misrepresented. FREB decided that FR should be prepared to take this risk and put forward to the public domain what we are engaged in but that our staff must not appear in the media without having been on the media training course. **Action: HoDs, XC**

Date of next meeting 17 (pm)/ 18 (am) January 2006 at Alice Holt