

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 13 December 2007
Alice Holt

Present: Peter Freer-Smith (Chair) Bill Mason
Xanthe Christophers Helen McKay
Tony Cornwell Alison Melvin (AKM)
Hugh Evans Andy Moffat
Wilma Harper Chris Quine

Apologies: Ken Charles
Janet Dutch

Copies to: Liz Holmes, Head of Internal Audit
Ros Bull, Secretary to the Chairman

Agenda Item 1 – Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

1. Corrections to minutes of November 2007 meeting
 - Item 3: Change “AKM’s contract database” to “FR Contract Database”.
 - Item 11: Action point for new Head of Finance not BM. PFS to talk to new HoF. **Action: PF-S**
 - Item 14: Paper will be submitted to January FREB. **Action: AM**

Otherwise Minutes were accepted.

2. Matters arising
 - Greenerways service board will be a CFS cost-centre.
 - Customer Satisfaction: CQ is leading this activity

Agenda Item 2 – Feedback from GB EB and update on implementation of the FR Development Strategy

3. Acting CEO gave feedback from GB EB.
4. Recruitments: Director Wales and FR Chief Executive are to be advertised in mid-January. FR’s new Director Finance will start in early January. Interviews are being held for the Director of BSD.
Action: FREB to respond to WH with comments on CE TORs
5. Michael Ansell is producing a business plan for Renewable Energy and one of the new graduates may be based at NRS to link wind knowledge to Michael Ansell’s initiative.
6. The valuation of FC Estate (as biological assets) is continuing.

7. UK Forestry Standard. Richard Howe is working on standards and guidelines. Considering whether most UK woods would fall into Defra's Category 3 definition (legal, sustainable but not certified). Members of the Advisory Committee for FR are interested and will be discussing with RH.
8. Finance – England and GB budget from Defra is still not confirmed – FR budget depends on this so waiting for confirmation. Scottish Gov doesn't have end of year flexibility this year – so FCS may have some funds available for essential activities. Suggestions include contribution to Climate Change work or the website Information Architecture.
Action: BM and CQ to investigate and co-ordinate FR suggestions
9. HR Issues:
- Jean Lindsay is acting HR Director.
 - Discussions over the pay negotiations 07/08 are ongoing.
 - New FC Diversity Officer will be invited to attend January FREB.
Action: KC to invite
 - Corporate Plan and Annual Report – ensure statements on diversity!
Action: KC
 - Four new graduate trainees on alternate years. A manual has been produced for new graduates and their managers. Graduates may be geographically based, and will be "roving". The three year training programme includes 6-9 month placements.
Action: CQ to coordinate submission of credible FR placements by Feb
10. Health and Safety. New PB4 to be recruited. Consideration of FR Contingency Plan is essential.
Action: PF-S to discuss with CQ
11. Phytophthora – Defra will consult stakeholders on further steps. The FC Board thought policy objectives were blurred. Roddie Burgess is to seek clarification. Concern that the consultation should include the current arrangement, which it doesn't.
12. Climate Change Conference follow-up. A letter from the FC DG will go to all cost centre groups. Pat Snowdon is writing an action plan. First draft by early Jan. The board reaffirmed CC as a research topic. Stuart Snape will be working with Pat Snowdon in the newly instigated FC CC centre. James Morison will be reviewing all CC-related research across FR. The precise relationship between the two CC centres is to be further explored.
13. Energy / Travel targets – Steve Lee will be invited to attend March FREB. FREB want to know specifically what actions the board should take to understand targets for next year and take action towards them.
Action: XC

Head of Corporate and Forestry Services reported on FC Commissioners' December meeting

14. Commissioners met in London on 4/5 December. At dinner in the House of Commons the guest speaker was Johan Eliasch, the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Deforestation and Clean Energy.
- Forest Holidays – Commissioners discussed investment in cabins and lodges. Owners of lodges can only use them for holidays not residential occupation. Cabins which are more permanent structures, will operate on a sale and leaseback option but only with institutional/corporate investors. The current proposal is to create lodges on existing sites only, whereas the development of a new site provides the opportunity to consider the relative roles of cabins and lodges. This enables modernisation of existing sites, development of new sites, and offers a broad range of accommodation options.
 - GB corporate plan will be separate from FC England.
 - Operational Guidance Booklets have won prize from the Plain English Campaign received from Lenny Henry.
 - The FC Chairman will stay in post until June 2009.

Agenda Item 3 – FR Commercialisation: Progress and Next Steps

15. FR's IP Steering Group wants to be sure that FREB understands FR IP activity and champions this across FR and the wider FC. The PSRE funding provides "Money to make money" and represents a real opportunity to establish longer term income streams.
- FR's PSRE3 project is half way through. FR has fully met its Yr 1 goals and in particular has rolled out new policies and procedures. However, IPSPG is not convinced that FR and FC culture has substantially changed.... Need to be proactive about deepening our industry interactions.
 - FR's Year 2 and 3 goals are challenging and we specifically need to focus on FR's project portfolio.
 - Charcoal – taking longer than anticipated, but progressing OK.
 - Forest Biocontrol – is the product of long term investment from FC and it is vital that FR and FC form effective partnerships to work together.
 - Proof of Concept fund not used actively enough at the moment. Being granted PoC funding should be highly prized and recognised as desirable. HoDs will insist that those with proof of concept funding must report actively to IP Steering Group. **Action: HoDs/IPSPG**
 - Training events – Newly recruited IP Manager appears now not to be joining FR but the planned March training events will go ahead – would be counter-productive to delay when we need to urgently raise the profile of IP thinking. Post of IP Manager currently advertised as 2 year FT. **Action: AKM**
 - PSRE 4 funding available after April 2008. Call is just published, and FR intends to develop a bid which will provide IP services across FC.
16. FREB accepted all recommendations of paper.
- HoDs will be involved in March training – dates already problematic for

- some HoDs. (All project leaders required to attend.) **Action: HoDs**
- In absence of dedicated IP manager, options for cover were considered. There was agreement that HoDs will identify innovation leader for each division. **Action: HoDs**
- AKM to actively “Head-hunt” appropriate Project Leader (PB3 or PB4) as potential IP manager. **Action: AKM**
- Industry collaboration – existing strong link with industry through PLs and led by PLs should increase and have greater focus on partnership. **Action: HoDs**
- FR will seize opportunities provided by centre initiatives. **Action: HoDs/AKM**
- Important to be aware of forthcoming PSRE4 bid and be planning for it. **Action: AKM to lead**

Agenda Item 3 – FR Approach and Policy for International Consultancies

17. AKM introduced her paper on opportunities for international consultancies. All recommendations were accepted with the following comments
- Albania: BM has met with Mike Dudley / Peter Weston. Cautiously positive about developing FC / FR joint working in this area. Taking forward at a small scale and with caution. **Action: AKM to organise exploratory visit**
 - Business Planning Income Targets - Some concern noted that outer year income targets could overstretch ‘star’ researchers who may become involved in IC delivery, but it was agreed at the income target levels set out, the workloads should be manageable. Targets agreed
 - Renew market intelligence contract - Agreed **Action: AKM**

In-house inventory / GIS capacity – The worldwide interest in ‘smart inventories’ was noted but FR cannot determine its forward inventory mapping capabilities until options for new FC Inventory & Production unit , currently under review by James Ogilvie, are decided. **Action: AKM to assess FR capacity for international consultancy in inventories after new FC unit decisions reached.**

Agenda Item 4 – 08/09 Business Planning; Proposed outline 08/11 FR Corporate Plan and possible KPIs

18. There is still full commitment to the FR Development Strategy, but things have changed a little and PF-S will present this to staff in meetings in December and January.
19. Research Director introduced Paper: Response to CFS Research Proposal Process 08/09.
- The CFS 2008/9 Budget was issued by James Pendlebury on 21 November. In broad terms, FR HoDs are generally able to work within the proposed funding allocations, although the timing is very tight. However, FREB raised concerns about three of the areas of research where significant reductions

in funding are proposed: Process Modelling, Pests and Diseases in a Changing Climate and Non-Chemical Protection. It was agreed that cuts in these areas might have unintended consequences.

- Recommendation: CFS to be asked to re-consider the consequences of the proposed cuts in the three areas and to enable PAGs and RSMB to consider re-allocation of the budgets. The timing available for completion of the forms is short so this needs to be considered as soon as is possible. **Action: AM**
- Proposed Outline and KPIs for FR Corporate Plan held for subsequent meeting. The desirability of greater emphasis upon quality of science as another KPI was stressed by BM.
- PSRE3 project should be included in Corporate Plan. **Action: XC/AKM/PF-S**

Agenda Item 5 – External Communication/Knowledge Transfer Strategy

20. Director Communications introduced Paper on FR's External Communication Strategy.

- Need to resolve terminology issue between comms and business development. **Action: AKM/XC**
- Request for modification of the strategy to include FR's links to learning and development group and other training provision.
- Concern about whether appropriate or feasible to have absolute deadlines and absolute requirement to consult.
- Request for more detail on peer-review publications.
- All to pass comments to XC by end of year. **Action: HoDs/XC**

21. Changes will be incorporated and brought back to January FREB. **Action: XC**

Agenda Item 6 – FR GIS Unit

22. Helen McKay introduced Mark Lawrence's paper recommending the setting up of a FR GIS Unit. The recommendations were endorsed in principle but with the following caveats:

- They should be considered in light of the inventory and forecasting review currently underway and it was recommended that no steps are taken now which might conflict with future decisions / actions.
- GIS licences should only be purchased with advice on specification and procurement from GIS Unit, also taking care over existing structures.
- As currently described this would be an internal FR efficiency measure and it was agreed that the existing licences needed to be rationalised.
- OSU already has a relationship with ESRI and receives discounts on purchases.
- Funding will be confirmed in due course.
- Governance would be through the ICT Service Board for the first year.

Agenda Item 7 – Divisional Reports

23. Divisional Reports will appear on the Intranet.
24. XC enthusiastically re-confirmed request for HoDs to identify 3-4 'highlights' in their reports to be used for communication purposes. **Action: HoDs**
25. Head of Station at NRS noted accommodation was particularly tight.
26. Chris Quine (NRS) and Xanthe Christophers (AH) to be FREB "Bullying and Harassment Champion" (previously carried out by Tony Cornwell at AH).
27. Business Development – Rural Research Strategy Partnership has been given £120K 3 year grant from SEEDA.
28. Ecology – Having RLO Chris Jones and FCW Rep Michelle Bromley at Divisional meeting had been very worthwhile.
29. EHSD – James Morison is to carry out a review of FR's CC research activity by the end of March.
30. EHSD – First year of Urban Greenspace Centre is to be funded from CEO Special Projects and Innovation Fund. Governance of the centre is still to be defined but it will start by producing a business plan.
31. FMD – Peter Weston has produced a synopsis of use of Decision Support Systems by FE. FR can usefully feed into process of evaluation. **Action: BM**
32. Biometrics – Meeting on the Forshaw review on 20 December. Subject to agreement on the options at this meeting, consultation will take place by correspondence, with a swot analysis of each scenario. Report back to the GBEB in February. **Action: PF-S**
33. Comms – Request for more detail from RLO report – particularly outcome / follow-up boxes.

Agenda Item 8 – Finance

34. Director Finance presented this paper.
 - The forecast for 2007/08 still indicates a (smaller) net deficit which takes account of the reduction in funding from CFS. **Noted**
 - TC described the finance and resource management system "Primavera" and recommended that FREB consider whether to commission a more detailed feasibility study in due course. **Action: new Director Finance**
 - Once the new Finance Director is in post, TC and the Office Managers will meet with her as soon as possible.
35. Preparation for next year's budgets should use full cost charge rate for both

internal and external rates.

36. Some capital money is still available. **Noted**

Agenda Item 9 – Staffing

37. Acting CEO presented the HR paper on behalf of KC.

- It indicates a forecast staffing for 2007/08 of 269 against a planned figure of 270 (FTE). **Noted**
- KC has been invited to sit on the FC HR Management Board. **Noted**
- The FREB recorded its appreciation of Mike Wheeler's sterling efforts with regards to the recent gas oil leak at Alice Holt and other challenges. **Noted**
- The GBEB will be looking at issues around workplace stress. **Noted**

Close

The FREB said farewell to Tony Cornwell, FR's Finance Director and thanked him for his efforts on behalf of FR and wished him a long and happy retirement.

Date of Next Meeting – 25 January 2008 at Alice Holt