

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 8 February 2005

Present: Prof. Jim Lynch
Dr Peter Freer-Smith
Dr Hugh Evans
Prof. Sam Evans
Mr Bill Mason
Dr Andy Moffat
Dr Chris Quine
Mr Tony Cornwell
Mr Ken Charles
Dr Xanthe Christophers
Dr Janet Dutch
(Mrs Alison Melvin attended for 'AoB')

Copies To: Head of Internal Audit
Head of Technical Services Unit
Director of Communications
Director of Corporate & Forestry Services

Agenda Item 1 – Minutes of the last meeting

1. Accepted with one amendment to item 25, academic analogue had been achieved with *BBSRC*.

Agenda Item 2 – Matters arising

2. BM provided a summary of the SEERAD Strategic Review and thought it unlikely that FR can compete against the existing MRPs. However, because of the commitment to greater competition, FR may gain by entering partnerships in specific areas (e.g. SCRI for genomics, Macaulay for climate change and wider land use). BM recommended that we decide by March FREB on a limited number (2-3) to take forward. BM to discuss this, and the proposed meeting between FR and senior staff at the Macaulay Institute, with PFS and bring to the March FREB. **Action: BM**
3. The following amendments were made to the FREB agenda, proposals put forward by KC;
 - Richard Williamson to be invited to the 12 April FREB meeting now being held at NRS to discuss HR policy developments in line with our business priorities.
 - 8 March FREB to be held by video conference.
 - Country matters/liaison to be discussed at 7 June FREB.
 - TSU to be discussed at 6 September FREB.
 - CH/SJ to rearrange date for 5 July FREB. **Action: KC**
4. KC has yet to draft a note indicating the senior management roles within FR (CE, RD & HoDs). **Action: KC**

5. PFS will circulate the latest draft of the Science Strategy to HoDs prior to it going to GBEB next week. The FR science programme has been put into 5 themes by C&FS. HoDs should note that there may be changes following closer examination by Theme Boards and the GBEB. **Action: PFS**
6. The FREB considered and approved the sample condensed recruitment advertisement which indicated the nature of the post and referred interested parties to our internet site for further details. The cost savings were noted and also our use of commercial job vacancy web-sites **Noted**

Agenda Item 3 - Reports

7. TC requested that HoDs gave more focus to the 'finance' section of their reports showing performance against target and projections towards end of FY. **Action: HoDs**
8. JL to write to staff explaining the background to the reasons for our shortfall in finances this year. **Action: JL**
9. XC to consider putting the 'news' sections of HoD FREB reports on the intranet. **Action: XC**
10. TC to set dates for quarterly financial management meetings with HoDs. **Action: TC**

Agenda item 5 – TSU Strategy

11. The Board considered PFS's paper and asked Janet Dutch to bring to the March FREB a 'Phase I' to consist of costed short-term options within an expected total TSU expenditure of between £1.8M and £2.2M. Phase II will set out how the TSU will be managed over the next 2-3 years. In response, Janet stated that in addition to FR, FE was also an important customer to the TSU. She stressed that TSU staff were highly dedicated to their jobs, and that many fieldstations had been working to full capacity this year. She also stated that staff members within the TSU suffered from the general poor budgeting and planning systems within FR and that any reform of the TSU should be accompanied by improvements in these systems plus improvements in accommodation, software/hardware provision and general support for the TSU. **Action: JD**
12. P F-S, XC & JL will write a 'vision' for FR which will include our commitment to the concept of a nationwide network of field stations. **Action: PF-S, XC, JL**

Agenda item 6 – Information Systems & Change Management

Agenda Item 7 – Review of FR Monitoring

13. SE presented his paper which was considered by the FREB. SE emphasised that Information is the core of our business and the need to capture semi-structured and unstructured information as well as structured information.
14. FREB was concerned that timing should be an important consideration in these times of other initiatives which need to be considered before implementation. Consideration should be given to involving Silvan House and getting FC support for this route. SE was asked to;

- arrange a demonstration of a similar system.
- supply an estimate of cost.

Action: SE

15. 'Review of FR Monitoring' was covered during discussions. **Noted**

Agenda Item 8 – Finance

16. TC reported that a deficit of £827K is indicated against our target expenditure for 05/06. Expenditure is only up by 4% despite the substantial increase in superannuation costs of 40% (which is covered by additional income from FC). TC cannot set realistic targets until the TSU deficit is solved and more realistic income targets are set by HoDs. HoDs remarked that the number of project leaders earning a large income from external contracts needs to be increased and requested that a provision be put in the template so that aspirational income can be indicated.

Action: HoDs, TC

17. TC reported that our projected shortfall for this FY is £259K. He asked that FREB members continue to look for cost savings and said that the problem would be solved if our non-payroll cash spend was cut by half between now and the end of the FY. HoDs agreed to continue to look for savings wherever possible.

Action: FREB, XD, JD

18. JL to write to staff informing them of his appreciation for the savings made to date.

Action JL

Agenda Item 9 – Staffing

19. KC informed the FREB that the 'Yourself' project will be rolled out by Central HR on 1 April which will enable staff to see personal data held on them on the REBUS database and which will enable managers to view their staff's data. **Noted**

20. Sandwich student recruitment for 05/06 will be at the discretion of HoDs.

Noted.

Agenda Item 10 – Any Other Business

21. Mike Bushell joined the FREB and gave an interesting presentation on how the grant system works headed 'Experiences on a BBSRC Committee'. KC to draft a note of appreciation for JL thanking MB for his presentation. **Action: KC**

22. A Melvin asked that the FREB consider a policy for a 'rewarding inventors scheme'. This would enable staff to benefit personally where potentially commercial and patentable new concepts have been developed. We also need to negotiate our agreement with UNIS to share any IP (HoDs to note that, in future, this should be negotiated in advance of contracts being signed). **Action: HoDs**

A Melvin to obtain CSL's procedures for rewarding inventors and produce a paper for next FREB. **Action: A Melvin**

23. A Melvin raised the question of whether FR's scientific staff could personally receive honorarium payments for acting as peer reviewers in their own time. KC said that there was already a policy for dealing with external contracts that are offered to staff which, by analogy, could be applied to this. KC was asked to include a draft policy in these minutes which would be considered at the next FREB. **Action: FREB**

- Opportunities to earn external income must first be offered to FR by discussing the matter with HoD.
 - Where it is not practical for this work to be considered during official time, HoD can approve, provided that there is no conflict of business interest, that a member of staff does this in his/her own time and receives payment direct from the commissioning body.
 - In giving approval the HoD should be mindful that if carrying out the work requires annual leave to be taken that provision of annual leave to staff is meant to provide rest and relaxation and the extent of the private work should not impact on this.
 - The individual must be reminded of their obligation to declare such income for taxation purposes.
24. A Melvin asked about FR's interest in bidding for a World Bank forestry project in China. JL undertook to discuss this with the DG. **Action: JL**
25. The Board noted the quality of the production of the FR Annual Report and extended its congratulations to Mrs Claridge.

Date of next meeting **8 March 2005** by video conference.