

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 17 & 18 January 2007

Present:

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

Mrs A Melvin attended the whole meeting and Dr D Shannon attended for agenda item 14. Antony Wallis & Steve Lee attended for agenda item 15.

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. The meeting will take place over two half days, the first will deal with business, the second will be an up-date on our Development Strategy by Dr David Shannon.

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of last meeting

2. A clarification was made to item 12, the Woodfuel Research Centre has now taken a secondary role to the Biomass Energy Centre. **Noted**

Agenda Item 3 – Matters arising

3. The structure of the Central Service Boards was still under review. CQ reported that he had been invited to attend the HR (New) Service Board. KC said that it would have been more appropriate if the TOR for the new board had been agreed and if FR had appointed the most appropriate person to attend. FREB expressed concern about the current Service Boards situation. JL will make these points at the next GBEB when the matter is discussed. **Action: JL**
4. Internal FR Service Boards to be programmed for regular feedback sessions to FREB. **Action: CH**
5. Dr Finnegan has been offered an appointment as a FR Fellow. This is being progressed by BM. **Action: BM, TC**

Agenda Item 4 – Feedback from GB EB (13.12.06)

6. FC's position on carbon trading was discussed, no firm decision take. PF-S to write to Ian Forshaw to ask for FR's involvement in the on-going review of production forecasting. **Action: PF-S**
7. Antony Wallis made a presentation on 'Greenerways', the FC's Sustainability Project (which he will make to FREB tomorrow, and Alice Holt staff in the afternoon). **Noted**

Agenda Item 5 – EU Funding (FP7)

6. Alison Melvin introduced this item. The EU research programme FP7 is now underway. It is considered better for forestry than FP6, but with limited opportunities during the first calls in early 2007. Meetings have been held with HoDs to establish a definitive roadmap for FR, which plans to progress three areas;
- Calls where the topic is squarely within CFS remit and FR clearly wishes to develop an active bid, in which FR staff will either lead or try to play a substantial role and CFS would be the match funder. Examples given; - Tree breeding - Biosecurity;
 - Areas where the science topic is clearly important for forestry's future but where CFS may not currently be spending its budgets or where FR may have little existing in-house expertise. In these cases, FR's involvement must be more carefully thought through - for example, 100% small scale actions may provide an ideal way for FR to work in collaboration and gain expertise which will be of future use to the FC. Alternatively, there may be a specific industrial partner or regional match funder who is interested in developing something which we feel fits well with the FC portfolio.
 - Areas where greater involvement would generally be good for us as an organisation - for example, getting more involved in Marie Curie Fellowships and networks, to secure training and visiting fellows (at no or low cost); or getting involved in dissemination networks to extend the value of CFS dissemination funding. In all three areas, CFS to be kept fully informed of our bids.
7. We are already one month into a three month call period, so consideration must be given as to how staff can be freed-up in order to allow time for them to prepare and submit bids. HoDs should consult with AM and identify individuals who could initiate and take forward bids. In putting forward bids, staff should be mindful of;
- Quality of the consortium as well as of the science;
 - That the proposed bid answers the call text and can demonstrate impact
 - The need for collective ownership of these programmes with CFS.

Alison Melvin can put staff in contact with external people who can facilitate and assist in shaping a bid if this is desired. **Action: HoDs**

8. The question of FR's capacity to prepare/participate in collaborative bids and our involvement in part-funded EU bids is something that will be discussed by JL with James Pendlebury when he visits Alice Holt next week. **Action: JL**
9. Alison Melvin will contact EFI to enquire what assistance they can offer, especially with Marie Curie Fellowship applications. **Action: Alison Melvin**
10. Alison Melvin will circulate the road-map to FREB. **Action: Alison Melvin**

Agenda Item 6 – Finance

13. TC introduced this item. Our headline forecast has deteriorated with an expectation that we may only exceed our target contribution by £46k. This will result in our failing to meet full cost recovery by £50k. TC encouraged all Divisions to exercise prudence for the remainder of the year with the accent on making savings without endangering delivery of outturns to customers. HoDs should review forecasts now, in this context. **Action: HoDs**

14. TC reported that the changes to the level of charges for FC centrally provided services for 2006-07 remain unresolved. Although it has been agreed that charges will not increase into 2007-08, the FR position is that 2005-06 should be the baseline so TC's discussions with the FC will continue at the Finance Officers' meeting in Wales. JL will discuss with the DG and Wilma Harper. **Action: TC, JL**

15. Meetings to discuss Divisional Business Plans are being arranged by TC. **Action: TC**

Agenda item 7 – Staffing

16. KC presented his paper which detailed additions and losses predicted up to the end of this FY. Planned staffing for 2006-07 is 270 FTE, current predictions indicate that this will be met.

17. A 'Welcome Pack' for FR's new entrants has been produced. Some printed copies will be distributed. Future copies will be up-dated and printed from screen. **Noted**

18. KC is having meetings with HR, Silvan House to set up training courses for the more junior scientists in Personnel, Financial and Project Management training in 2007-08. **Action: KC**

19. Standards Meetings will be held at NRS on 24 January and at Alice Holt on 5/6 February. KC will attend all meetings. **Action: KC**

20. HoDs agreed to ensure that all staff within their area of control have a FJP and have had a mid-year review. **Action: HoDs**

Agenda Item 8 – Planned FR Seminars

21. Eight research up-date seminars are being organised across England in May/June. The seminars will be planned in close consultation with each of the FC Conservators. XC was asked to take care that the same research staff were not overloaded with this important task. **Action: XC**

Agenda Item 9 – External Communications Strategy

22. XC presented a first consultative draft. Following discussion, XC invited HoDs to give feedback by the end of January. Following this, she will re-draft and re-circulate. **Action: HoDs**

Agenda item 10 – Branding Exercise

23. XC up-dated FREB with progress on the FC Branding Exercise. The DG has been leading this with XC our representative. While XC thinks there is more compliance within FR to the 'Brand' than elsewhere in the FC, there is no question that we will have to conform. A 'roll-out' of what is expected will be presented to FREB by the consultants 'Dragon' and FTS. Following this presentation, we will be expected to cascade the information to our teams. To reduce the cost of 'Brand' change this will be managed over 1 to 3 years rather than happen overnight. **Noted**

Agenda item 11 – Divisional Reports

24. Meetings have been held with C-Questor to consider developing algae production for bio-fuels and terra-forming at Alice Holt. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed and TC has established the cost of the use of our facilities. **Noted**

25. Substantial contracts have recently been won

- Tom Nisbet & Huw Thomas, Floodplain research - £224k
- Joan Webber & Hugh Evans, RELU, possible parallels between Dutch Elm Disease and Sudden Oak Death - £70k.
- Chris Quine, Liz O'Brien and Darren Moseley, RELU, Lyme's Disease - £220k

26. Divisional Reports were tabled and will appear on the Intranet.

Noted

Agenda item 12 – Dates for this year's meetings

27. The following dates were agreed;

6 March @ Alice Holt
 10 April by video link
 14/15 May Wales [?]
 18 June @ NRS
 24/25 July @ Alice Holt
 11 September @ NRS
 9/10 October @ Alice Holt
 13 November @ NRS
 13 December @ Alice Holt

Noted

Agenda item 13 – Any Other Business

28. Mark Lawrence has requested help to underwrite a Silviscan conference in Edinburgh in August 2008. FR is willing to provide assistance subject to Sam Evans being given a business plan.

Action: SE

29. Bill Raynor's report on his recent visit to Chile to be circulated to FREB. BM to draft a letter from JL responding to this.

Action: CH, BM

Agenda item 14 – Development Strategy Update

30. Dr David Shannon up-dated FREB on progress made regarding FR's Development Strategy. David reported that the initial part of his consultancy has been occupied with fact finding and talking to staff and those in the Countries concerned with our scientific output. He gave feedback with regard to his initial findings;

- Staff are supportive, in general, and keen to see the Development Strategy (DS) implemented/taken forward urgently.
- He has discussed the implications for staff training, rewards systems and scope for improved efficiency with staff.
- Some staff felt there was an unhealthy competition between Divisions driven by the financial system.
- PAGs are a potentially powerful tool which are yet to be developed.
- There is a lack of a corporate approach across Divisions and within FR as a whole.
- Concern about costing systems/internal market/overheads.

David will consider these and will decide whether these are areas where action is recommended.

Action: DS

31. On the corporate side he felt that;

- There needs to be a strategic team[s] leading the areas that have been identified for growth.
- A more corporate approach to externally funded work with greater control and support over bids.

- Greater control/guidance on where we should or should not be bidding as the case may be to achieve the best outcome for FR. **Noted**

32. JL responded by agreeing that the above issues will help us manage the change. Growth areas are known and we need to establish how these are going to be developed. We need to set up specific working groups to address the specific growth areas. These areas are not exclusive to other areas of research being conducted within the Agency. It was agreed that each area would be allocated a named FREB "Champion(s)" [with TOR established to take them forward];

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|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Biosecurity | Hugh Evans/Sam Evans | |
| • Well-Being | Chris Quine | |
| • Urban Greening | Andy Moffat | |
| • Climate Change | Peter Freer-Smith | |
| • Biomass Energy | Sam Evans | |
| • Woodchain | Bill Mason | Action: HE, SE, CQ, AM, PF-S |

33. It is crucial that the process includes Alison Melvin, XC, KC & TC when processes and changes to working practices are being considered. **Noted**

Agenda item 15 – Environmental Management Systems

34. This item was introduced by Antony Wallis and Steve Lee who made a presentation about the Greenerways Forestry Commission Sustainability Project. The purpose of the project is to put in place and promote a Sustainability Development Action Plan which reflects Government policy and raises awareness and engages staff. There will be a requirement to collect baseline data and set up meaningful targets to reduce our carbon footprint. Steve Lee is FR's "Greening Champion" and "Greening Committees" have been set up at Alice Holt and NRS to examine our use of energy and how we dispose of waste. Antony was repeating his presentation to all staff in the afternoon. **Noted**

Date of Next Meeting

35. 6 March 2007 @ Alice Holt.