

## Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 9 March 2005

**Present:** Prof. Jim Lynch  
Dr Peter Freer-Smith  
Dr Hugh Evans  
Mr Bill Mason  
Dr Andy Moffat  
Dr Chris Quine  
Mr Tony Cornwell  
Mr Ken Charles  
Dr Janet Dutch (agenda item 5)

**Apologies:** Dr Sam Evans

**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.

### Agenda Item 2 – Matters arising

2. BM is continuing to consider links with SEERAD and the Macaulay Institute and will discuss with PFS before bringing to the FREB. **Action: BM**
3. July FREB meeting date to be re-arranged. FREB members will be contacted by Claire Holmes about their availability for 20, 21 or 26 July. **Action: CH**
4. A draft note (to staff) indicating the senior management roles within FR (CEO/DR/HoD) was circulated at the meeting by KC. FREB members are invited to comment to KC by e-mail before the note is finalised. **Action: FREB**
5. TC will design a template for the 'Finance' section of the Divisional Reports. The values of contracts won will be entered in the 'Confidential' section. **Action: TC, HoDs**
6. SE has been discussing the introduction of an integrated Management Information System (MIS) with CEO. CEO has taken this forward to GB level. The importance of an integrated MIS was acknowledged, however, the Business Improvement Programme (BIP) is going to take precedence during the coming months. **Noted**
7. Alison Melvin [AM] is refining her paper for FR procedures for rewarding inventors. **Action: AM**

8. KC has produced a draft policy for dealing with external contracts which are offered to staff on a personal basis. Following discussion, KC was asked to incorporate additional points, incorporate into a revised paper and circulate to FREB for discussion at next meeting. **Action: KC**
9. Andy Moffat (AJM) and Alison Melvin (AM) have met with CEFAS in connection with a World Bank project in China. CEFAS are interested in collaborating. AJM to prepare a formal briefing note for the CEO. **Action: AM**
10. In general terms, in view of our financial situation, our focus now has to be on the generation of real revenue and not loss leaders. **Action: HoDs [to note]**

### **Agenda Item 3 & 4 - Reports and Feedback from GBEB**

11. JL reported that he and TC had met with Keith Gliddon, Wilma Harper and Jim Galloway and had agreed our 2005/06 budget from CFS. The increase in superannuation has been included as an additional sum this year but an amount to account for inflation over the next three years will not be included. This will mean a reduction, in real terms, of our spend. **Noted**
12. As our centrally provided budget is declining, our highest priority is to expand our external funding to not only make up the deficit, but to expand within a sensible timeframe. **Noted**
13. FREB noted that the Business Improvement Plan is the FC's principal focus at the moment. **Noted**
14. PFS will organise separate meetings with HoDs to discuss Business Planning and the development and interaction of Divisional strategies. **Action: PFS**

### **Agenda Item 5 – TSU Proposal**

15. PFS introduced and Janet Dutch presented her paper.
16. After discussion it was agreed that FREB members will let Janet have their thoughts on her proposals by 'track changes' on the paper with additional comments as necessary. The revised paper will be discussed in detail at the April FREB. **Action: FREB**
17. A small strategic group will be set up with membership from the north and south to review the TSU nurseries and set a strategic broadscale prediction of nursery usage. BM will draw together a draft Terms of Reference and suggested membership of the group. **Action: BM**

### **Agenda Item 6 – Quality Assurance**

18. PFS reported that the Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD) audit was passed successfully. He recorded thanks to Kate Fielding for her efforts. By April 2005, the FC will expect all suppliers to be complying with the Joint Code of Practice (JCP). FR will embark on a phased introduction of the JCP as set out on the FR Intranet QA website. All new work, from April 05, should comply fully with this guidance. We need to ensure that our approved project plans are cross-referenced to approved Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with results recorded as per the QA system and that the recording of formal and informal training is tightened. PFS and Kate Fielding will be making QA presentations to staff in the north and south. All staff will have a QA Key Work Area in the FJP. Project leaders will need to look at which

SOPs will ultimately be needed, SOPs should be co-ordinated at Divisional level. HoDs will act as technical editors of SOPs as they come on-stream. QA will feature quarterly on the FREB agenda. PFS will issue guidance to staff on the above.

**Action: PFS**

### **Agenda Item 7 – Finance**

19. TC reported that we are within £14K of meeting our end-of-year target. He asked HoDs to keep their eyes on expenditure in case we are hit by last minute items. Capital spend to date is £299K. Expected EC income for Forest Focus may not arrive until after 31 March but this is beyond our control.
20. Two areas need to be addressed in next year's Business Plan which has a predicted deficit of £479K.
21. The FREB agreed that; TSU expenditure for 2005/06 to be set at a planned loss for the year of £322k, HE to review his Business Plan, the four Service Heads (Administration, Finance, Communications and Chief Executive's Office) will examine their proposed expenditure with a view to cutting costs and that TC will set dates for Business Planning meetings.  
**Action: JD, KC, TC, XC, PFS, HE**

### **Agenda Item 8 – Staffing**

22. KC presented his paper which indicated our staffing predictions were in line with our Corporate Plan.
23. KC drew to the attention of the Board that there were a number of posts shown against 'agreed additions' which have remained unfilled for a number of months. KC to speak to HoDs concerned to establish the continued need for these posts.  
**Action: KC**
24. Central HR have proposed that probation periods be reduced from 12 months to 8 months to allow action to be taken before the 12 month stage where a probationer is not making the grade and before employment rights become an entitlement. The FREB endorsed this proposal. KC to inform Central HR.  
**Action: KC**

### **Agenda Item 9 – Any Other Business**

25. FREB discussed whether a modern equivalent of 'Director's Review' should be re-instigated. The feeling was that it shouldn't but it was agreed that PFS could attend Divisional meetings where he thought appropriate.  
**Action: PFS**
26. Noted that as the end of the PMS reporting year is drawing to a close that Standards Meetings should be arranged.  
**Action: KC**

**Date of next meeting – 12 April 2005 at NRS**