

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 13 March 2008
Alice Holt

Present:

Peter Freer-Smith (Chair)	Bill Mason
Ken Charles	Helen McKay
Janet Dutch	Alison Melvin (AKM)
Hugh Evans	Andy Moffat
Wilma Harper	Chris Quine
	Sandra Smith

Professor Barry Gardiner attended for Agenda Item 2. Dr Steve Lee attended via video-link for Agenda Item 4.

Apologies: Xanthe Christophers

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. FREB members were asked to notify FR CEO's office of progress on "action points" in advance of meeting. **Action: FREB**
2. Graduate recruitment, graduates will be allocated to FR for 3 months during the following periods;
 - Kate Troughton - Jan/June 2009 - NRS
 - Mike Graham - July/Dec 2009 - NRS
 - Amy Stewart - Jan/Jun 2010 - Alice Holt

Rachel Anderson (L&D) will supply BM and CQ with a copy of the first two graduates' CVs, their training plans and thoughts about the placement experience. **Action: BM, CQ**
3. It is the intention to hold Chief Executive's programme review in late autumn. **Action: PF-S, AM**
4. The way the new Centres will function/operate will be resolved on a case by case basis but, given the size of the Climate Change Centre/Hub, this will need further consideration. James Morison, Head of Environmental Change Research Group, is on target to produce his report which will be discussed on 14 April (Climate Change Strategy) and which will be reported to the April FREB. **Noted**
5. The next meeting of the ICT Steering Group is scheduled for 17 April. BM reminded FREB of the desirability of the Group being informed by meetings of local groups at Alice Holt and NRS. He also assured FREB that there is on-going liaison between the ICT Group and the QA Team over long-term experiments and data

archiving. Alice Holt Computer Users' Group to let BM have a list of issues prior to the 17 April meeting. **Action: HE**

6. AKM confirmed that our bid under PSRE4 had been submitted. **Noted**
7. FR's Corporate Plan was approved by the FC EB on 27 February and by the Commissioners on 5/6 March. **Noted**

Agenda Item 2 – Biometrics Professional Services Board update

8. Barry Gardiner attended for this item. The Board was set up in 2006 to oversee the delivery of the services provided by Biometrics, Statistics and Surveys Division. BG reported that there is an increasing need for these services particularly statistics software development and database management.
9. BG and JD will discuss whether there could be a more rational approach and whether requests for the use of the resources contained within Biometrics and the TSU could be combined. It was agreed that it was not the remit of the Biometrics Board to produce a Business Plan or to make a case for additional staff for the Division. **Action: BG, JD**
10. There could be an advantage in mapping out the functions of the various Service Boards. BG will discuss with BM. **Action: BM, BG**
11. HM is giving priority to those customers who have made contact and flagged up their need for Biometrics services prior to the start of the new FY. Other work coming in will be slotted around this. CQ asked for consideration to be given to the needs of customers who are less frequent users of the service. **Noted**
12. The distinction was made between 'bespoke' statistical services and the more routine 'signing off' of reports and whether there could be a fixed price for this. BG will look at this and whether basic statistical training can be provided to reduce some of the demand for more routine work. **Action: BG**
13. Before any request for additional resources is made there needs to be a detailed examination of customer needs and their ability to pay. **Noted**
14. SS will be invited to the next Service Board meeting and BG will discuss with David Georghiou putting the Board minutes on the FR Intranet. **Action: BG**

Agenda Item 3 – FC EB feedback

15. PF-S gave feedback which included an update on the recruitment of senior staff (Director Wales, Director ISS (BSD) and CEO, FR).
16. Project Board, Inventory & Production Forecast, consultation document to staff on 3 March, the Project Board next meets on 11 April and a finalised paper will go to FC EB on 30 April.

17. Negotiations are continuing with Defra to allow acceptance of UKFS as a compliant standard under Category B evidence for sustainable timber. New UK Government procurement policy comes into effect in April 2009 and by then the FC will have published new UKFS and Guidelines.
18. PF-S will circulate a copy of his email to Keith Gliddon to FREB members in which he explains our position with regard to increased central services charges.
Action: PF-S
19. FC's Centre for Forestry and Climate Change, XC to arrange for Pat Snowdon to address FR staff to explain this initiative. There was a danger that there could be a lack of distinction between FC's 'Centre' and FR's 'Centre/Hub'. PF-S explained that the FR Climate Change Centre/Hub will be a key part of the evidence provision to the FC 'Centre'.
Action: XC
20. Framework for Woodland Carbon Management and Emissions off-setting, PF-S will circulate Chris Nixon's paper to FREB and the paper, "Centre for Forestry and Climate Change". WH will follow this up as to how the papers are disseminated to staff.
Action: PF-S, WH
21. Jim Dewar made a presentation 'Wood for Good' which is moving to a more project based function to promote the greater use of wood. Forest Products PAG will be made aware of this initiative.
22. Feedback from the Commissioners' meeting was given by WH. This included; FR presentations to the Commissioners on the PAG system, Wood for Good, a presentation by Barry Gardiner and the Commissioners' visit to Napier University.
23. The next Commissioners' meetings are in Wales (on 11/12 June) and at Alice Holt on 16/17 September.
24. FR Corporate Plan was approved.

Agenda Item 4 – New developments in Greenerways

25. Steve Lee briefed FREB via our new video conference link. Thanks were recorded to Mike Wheeler for getting the system installed in time.
26. In order to meet Government targets, internal FC targets have been set for reductions in carbon emissions resulting from energy use (3% year on year for next 3 years) and administrative travel (5% year on year for next 3 years). Requirements to meet these targets will commence in 2008/09. In addition, FC EB has agreed that we must collect data on waste with a view to reducing the amount sent to landfill.
27. It was felt that, given that the baseline will be 2007/08, FR comes at this from a relatively low baseline having taken steps in recent years to increase our amount of recycling at Alice Holt and NRS. However, account will be taken of those areas

which have already made improvements.

28. It was agreed that FREB members and our two Buildings Managers at Alice Holt and NRS would have emission/travel reductions contained within their FJPs.
Action: FREB
29. SS to look at FR using the FC's Employee Expenses Management system which would simplify the gathering of travel information.
Action: SS
30. All staff to be encouraged to further develop a culture of switching things off (especially growth rooms, cold stores, fridges etc. when not in use), the use of more efficient travel, greater use of video conferencing, greater use of hybrid cars with senior staff setting an example.
Action: FREB
31. Steve Lee to;
 - report back to FREB when 2007/08 baseline figures are available when further discussion on the cost implications contained within his paper will take place
 - draft a standard wording for FJPs.
Action: SL
32. SS to look at providing a Cost Code for Greenerways work.
Action: SS

Agenda Item 5 – Finance

33. SS reported on the current status of FR's finances and the projected outturn for the year 2007/08 which shows a small net surplus. FREB members were asked to check that unit external income and capital data is up to date. Recent capital purchases should be notified to SS.
Action: FREB
34. SS will check on the position regarding the re-evaluation of the estate. **Action: SS**
35. We are not yet in a position to finally agree our budget for 2008/09. FREB will consider our finances in more detail at the April meeting. SS to invite Keith Gliddon to this meeting.
Action: SS

Agenda Item 6 – Staffing

36. KC presented his paper, forecast staffing for 2007/08 stands at 267 against a planned figure of 270 (FTE).
37. 3 companies have been short-listed for the provision of PRINCE2 training and they have been invited to give a presentation.
38. Equality and Diversity training courses have been arranged for NRS (11 June) and Alice Holt (13 June). The Equality and Diversity Manager, Lesley Crozier is attending the April FREB.
39. A candidate has been recommended for appointment to the Tissue Culture FTA post, we failed to find a suitable candidate to interview for the PB2, Head of Research Unit, Wales post.

Agenda Item 7 – Time Recording System

40. SS introduced this paper which proposed a new Time Recording System to replace E-Track.
41. FREB accepted the proposals on the basis of avoidance of business risk and customer information and agreed that;
- the new system will be implemented from 1 April
 - in order to improve the data kept on the system, the data will be updated on a weekly basis and transferred into the financial system on a similar basis
 - automated reports will be available
 - recording will be on the basis of actual (rather than the standard 37) hours
 - historical data will still be available
 - in view of the need to train staff on the new system, the first month's recording will be done on a paper basis before being transferred on to the system
 - training will be cascaded through Office Managers. **Action: SS**

Agenda Item 8 – Divisional Reports

42. Divisional reports will appear on the Intranet. **Action: XC**
43. A report on Divisional finances to be included. **Action: HoDs**
44. CQ reported that a valuable meeting between FR and FMOs/GB Planners/OSU on Decision Support Systems (DSS) and their use in the management of the public estate had been co-ordinated by Steve Penney.
45. Tree Health, HE reported that Project Leaders had welcomed the opportunity to participate in the CEO Programme Reviews but are concerned with their reducing budget. New project proposals are being prepared to counter this with some initial success.
46. E&HS, AM highlighted the start of a three year experiment at Flanders Moss, near Aberfoyle. The main purpose of the experiment is to examine how restoring afforested peat bogs by tree removal and drain blocking affects emissions of the key greenhouse gases (GHG): carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. He also highlighted that the Urban Regeneration and Greenspace Centre website will be launched at the end of April.
47. FMD, BM highlighted the SIRT Conference held at NRS on 6 March which was attended by approx. 50 people. Papers were presented by Barry Gardiner, Shaun Mochan and others. There is now a greater understanding of Sitka spruce resonance to help industry and potential benefits of acoustic tools to assess resources. BM also asked that PF-S send a minute acknowledging the recent high volume of administrative demands made on staff (contract proposals, PAGs, business planning etc). **Action: PF-S**

48. Barry Gardiner is going on a sabbatical to INRA, Bordeaux from 14 April to 11 July.
49. Biometrics, HM highlighted that the Biomass Energy Centre website had received a record number of page views (40k) in February. The Centre had also received 100 specific enquiries with each enquiry taking 1.5 hours on average to answer.
50. The final report on empirical and process based yield models for short rotation coppice has been submitted to Defra and Dti.
51. TSU, JD reported on Field Station activities including progress on survey work for the Condition Survey, NWSS and a Christmas tree crop survey to identify sawfly populations.
52. Business Development, AKM highlighted that a new member of staff (Anja Ueberjahn-Tritta) will be joining as RRSP Co-ordinator, IP training is taking place and that the PSRE4 bid had been submitted.
53. CEO/Research Director reported that they found the Programme Reviews very useful. PFS will circulate the minutes of the new FR Audit Risk Committee which met on 20 February and the next RSMB meeting will be held on 10/11 April.

Action: PFS

Agenda Item 9 – FR Quality Assurance

54. AM introduced his paper. The following was agreed.
 - AM will circulate his SOP progress sheets to FREB members. **Action: AM**
 - HoDs to identify staff with spare capacity who could assist with QA on a temporary basis. HM will advise AM about a member of Biometrics who may be able to assist with data/records management. **Action: HoDs, HE**
 - HoDs to ensure that due account is taken when writing 08/09 FJPs of those staff with significant outstanding QA duties. QA manager will inform HoDs in this respect and QA manager will let HoDs have QA progress sheets on a quarterly basis. **Action: HoDs/CF**
 - Only those staff involved in QA duties on a corporate level will be able to charge QA to a specific QA job code. QA activities for project leaders and support staff are seen as central project duties and job coded accordingly. **Action: HoDs**
 - HoDs to include QA as a regular agenda item for divisional meetings and to invite CF, on annual basis to update staff. **Action: HoDs**
 - QA manager to put in place a formal induction process for new entrants to FR. **Action: CF**
 - QA manager to report to FREB in June how the QA system can be developed to accommodate the requirement for customer care auditing, advisory work and output delivery. **Action: CF**

Agenda Item 10 – Any other business

55. End of year Standards Meetings are now due and will be chaired by –

- Alice Holt : Peter Freer-Smith and Andy Moffat
- NRS : Chris Quine and Bill Mason.

KC will arrange dates, brief the Chair and attend all meetings.

Action: KC

56. 'Who we Are' Workshops, XC to set dates.

Action: XC

57. HoDs to initiate end of year reporting procedures.

Action: HoDs

58. Date of forthcoming meetings:

16 April at NRS

9 June at Alice Holt

9 July at NRS/AH via video link

10 September at Alice Holt.

Date of Next Meeting – 16 April 2008 at NRS