

**Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 16 & 17 May 2007
Ruthin Castle, Wales**

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

Apologies: Prof S Evans, Dr X Christophers

Dr Janet Dutch (JD), Dr D Shannon (DS), Mrs A Melvin (AM) and Mr Ian Forshaw (Director Wales) attended the meeting.

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/welcome to Ian Forshaw

1. JL introduced this item and welcomed Ian Forshaw, Director Wales.

Agenda Item 2 – Update on Bangor meeting (16 May 2007)

2. This meeting was arranged following the production of a paper by Bangor University, 'Centre for excellence for forest research in Wales' which had direct relevance to the Key Performance Indicator (No.6) in Forest Research's Corporate Plan. "FR will agree with FC Wales geographic locations and partnership mechanisms to increase its presence in Wales" The meeting was chaired by Ian Forshaw, FC Director Wales. Amongst the points discussed were;

- potential partners including local authorities
- need to expand the focus beyond timber into social aspects of forestry.
- need to link to Welsh Forest Strategy
- the need to ensure that research is relevant to customers and is communicated well
- ensure that policy is underpinned by good science
- the laying down of ground rules for partners involved in bidding for convergence (EU ERDF) funding. The FC may consider a partnership role.

3. The paper will be re-vamped into a report which will be considered by a small committee comprising of attendees at the meeting plus some of those invited who were unable to attend. JL is committed to following this up with Swansea and Cardiff Universities.

Action: JL

4. Although not part of this agenda item, it was agreed that XC would produce a monthly up-date for FREB detailing progress made against our KPIs. **Action: XC**

Agenda Item 3 - Review of Inventory and Forecasting systems – up-date

5. Ian Forshaw, Director, Wales in introducing this item referred to the report of the same title produced by himself and Roger Coppock. Ian explained the background to the Review Report recommendations. The Inventory work function was made up of a number of widely scattered silos across the FC with little effective Governance. After review and consideration it was concluded that these silos should be drawn together into a single unit under strong, effective leadership.
6. The Report recommended that the Unit should be temporarily placed within Corporate and Forestry Support Division (CFS) on a trial basis. Other locations were considered but the Business Units and Forest Research were rejected for the time being as they were already both undergoing significant changes and restructuring. As an independent unit was preferred, to enable country services to be provided, locating the new unit in one of the countries was also rejected by the Review team. Locating within CFS was considered to cause minimum disruption and aligned closely with the outcome of the recent review of BSD. This situation would be reviewed after 18 months. The status quo was rejected as an unrealistic option with little support across the FC.
7. Although he supported the main conclusions of the Report, JL felt that there were some factual errors relating to FR within the Report. In particular, the logic of transferring the TSU in its totality given the amount of non-survey work undertaken by the TSU. It was agreed that some errors were inevitable given the short review period and the scattered nature of the inventory operation. It had also been difficult getting a common view on some of the issues which made it necessary to make some judgements. FREB were in full agreement with JL's concerns.
8. The GBEB supported the key recommendation of the Report, that a new inventory and forecasting unit was created within CFS. A new Head of Service post would be created to manage the new unit that would report to the GBEB via the Head of CFS.
9. It remained unclear whether TSU and FR Surveys should form part of the new inventory and forecasting unit. This was a complex issue that required further analysis through the process of producing an Inventory Strategy.
10. The new Head of Service would be tasked with producing a corporate strategy and business plan for the management of the inventory and forecasting system for consideration and endorsement by the GBEB. This would include an analysis

of the risks and benefits of bringing the TSU and FR Surveys within the new unit, in discussion with FR.

11. After a job description for the Head of the new Unit was drawn up, it would be circulated to GBEB members for consideration.
12. The new Unit would be allocated responsibility for the Remote Sensing project work.
13. The Report would be published on the Intranet, highlighting the fact that the GBEB had agreed the recommendations. The TUS would also be advised of the Report and advised that the implementation would be linked to the BSD Review and FR Development Strategy.
14. Ian will discuss the recommendations with FR staff and also prepare an Information Note to ensure that all affected staff were clear about the outcome of the Review.
Action: IF
15. In preparation for the appointment of the new Head of Service, FR will put together a short position paper by 30 May detailing our thoughts on the subject. P F-S will coordinate with input from CQ, JD, BM and AM. **Action P. F-S**

Agenda Item 4 – Minutes of last meeting (17 May 2007)

16. Agreed.

Agenda Item 5 – Matters arising

17. David Shannon (DS), FR's Change Management consultant, explained that while he is happy to continue to 'change manage' and act as a mentor to line management through the authority of the CEO, he would be unhappy being asked to operate as a formal 'Project Manager' which might indicate a line management function. **Noted**
18. DS said that if we were to meet deadlines connected with PAWGS then we need to tighten up on action points. Notes connected with PAWG meetings should be copied to DS. **Action: HoDs**
19. The External Communications Strategy tabled at the April FREB, will be an agenda item for the June meeting. **Action: XC**
20. In relation to a request for clarification regarding costings to be provided for CFS funded programmes, P F-S briefed the meeting. There seems to be different approaches from different purchasers. Agreed that it would be beneficial for FR to liaise with CFS during the development and timing of the introduction of the

system. TC will discuss with James Pendlebury about the programme and how CFS want it to be reported upon. TC will also clarify the timing of the integration of the system into our financial systems. **Action: TC**

21. FREB noted that the interaction between Tree Health Division and CFS with regard to the new schedules has been good. HE was asked to give guidance to other HoDs if required: **Action: HE**

Agenda Item 6 – Feedback from GBEB

22. JL introduced this item. JL's presentation of FR's Corporate Plan was well received. JL asked that HoDs cascade details of FR's KPIs as contained in the Corporate Plan and to discuss the role of the staff in helping to achieve them. JL will be reporting progress on KPIs to the Commissioners in September. **Action HoDS**

23. The HR Service Board will examine bids for assistance from the successful candidates from the graduate recruitment programme and will construct a tailored programme for each graduate. It is intended that the graduates will be mentored at a senior level. New or existing FR bids for graduate time under this scheme to be directed to CQ. **Action: HoDs**

Agenda Item 7 – Update on Change Process/PAWGs

24. DS introduced his papers;
Alice Holt site: KC has been asked to take the lead on this. Meetings have been held with Partnerships(UK) (PUK) with the intention that PUK assists with the preparation of a brief which will be put out to tender to property advisory consultants. **Action: KC**

25. Financial systems review – see under 'Finance'.

26. PAWGs – Working Groups have been established for each of the six growth areas identified in the Development Strategy. The Working Groups will report to the June FREB with draft Action Plans for each area. Final decisions are expected to be taken in July by FREB and FR Senior Management. DS will consider designing a template for the formulation of PAWG final reports which he will send to PAWG Chairs. A replacement is needed for SE on the Biomass Energy PAWG. **Action: DS, P FS**

27. Business Development Function and Business Development Committee, AM now reports directly to JL. A Business Development Committee has been established comprising AM and Heads of the scientific divisions. This committee meets monthly to monitor, plan and coordinate current and future bidding activity. FR's innovation project is progressing well with high calibre external members recruited to FR's IP Steering Group.

28. DS suggested further steps being planned in the Change Management project:

- a revised survey of customer satisfaction is being drawn up in collaboration with CFS for a more systematic and independent survey of customer satisfaction to cover all FR's customers. DS is meeting with James Pendlebury to discuss this. **Action: DS**
- the establishment of a rolling programme of efficiency reviews ensure that FR's operations achieve high standards in this regard.

Agenda Item 8 – Review of Inventory and Forecasting Systems

29. Covered under Agenda Item 3. **Noted**

Agenda Item 9 - Finance

30. TC reported that the provisional financial outturn for 2006/07 indicates that we shall just miss our target contribution by £54K, a full cost recovery rate of 99.7%. **Noted**

31. The full round of Business Planning meetings has been completed. The resulting first pass at the financial plan indicates, at this time, that our external income will fall short of the declared minimum target in the strategy review and that TSU projected loss is again high. FREB discussed the Native Woodland Survey Scotland and the FC(S) SLA in some detail, considered the problems associated with this work and signing the 07/08 SLA, continuing with the survey. JL has already written to Director Scotland setting out his concerns over the financial and reputational risks. Having done this, it was agreed that the SLA should be signed and that the FR staff should continue to deliver against the project to the best they can, given the circumstances. This may require FR science divisions to postpone some of the work which they would have otherwise liked the Scottish Fieldstations to do for them in 07/08.

32. A Working Group has been established to review our financial and management information systems. The Group will have an external chair, David Evans. The Group will report to the CEO before the end of July **Noted**

33. TC stressed the need for HoDs to up-date their forecasts on a monthly basis.

Action: HoDs

Agenda Item 10 – Staffing

34. KC reported that present staffing numbers are 274 FTE against a planned staffing for 07/08 of 270 FTE. The increase is due to temporary staff taken on for survey work. This number is projected to fall over the year.

35. A number of recruitments are in the pipeline, notably two posts at PB2 to replace Paul Tabbush and Mark Broadmeadow. Two members of staff have resigned, Jonathan Humphrey (Ecology) and Neil Bowering (IP). Sam Evans has been mobilised to go to Iraq. **Noted**
36. Two members of staff have attended the FTS course, 'Essential Skills for Managers' and reported favourably on it. This course will now form part of the suite of three courses being offered to staff as part of a planned development process. Financial management will be run in-house and FREB agreed to the PRINCE2 Foundation Course being used as an introduction to project management. FREB stressed that it is essential to have 'PRINCE' courses backed up by an embedded internal project management system and to use a common system such as Microsoft Project. **Noted**
37. KC has written to the TUS about their concerns with some points of the FR Promotion procedures and awaits their response. He will put this on the agenda on the forthcoming Joint Staff Council meeting. **Action: KC**

Agenda Item 11 - English Forest Strategy

38. AJM introduced his paper. The English Forest Strategy is a high level policy document outlining what FC(E) will be doing over the next 10-15 years. AJM was not aware, following the publication of previous strategies, that FR has responded to the opportunities contained in these documents. AJM recommended that once the strategy is put in the public domain that HoDs and Research Director undertake a mapping exercise, in line with the PAWG process, to identify existing research activities that support the strategy and a gap analysis to identify important holes. Concept notes should be produced to fill them. **Action: P FS**
39. AJM to circulate the strategy around FREB when issued. **Action: AJM**
40. FREB members should examine FR's Development Strategy and send XC comments for up-dating taking account of the English strategy. **Action: XC**

Agenda Item 12 - Risk Register – Formal Review by FREB

41. TC briefed FREB and presented FREB with a copy of FR's Risk Register which included various Continuity Plans within it. The Risk Register is a moving document and TC requested FREB to review the document and to let him have any amendments. **Action: HoDs**

Agenda Item 13 – Action in support of external income generation

42. AM briefed FREB on the following subjects:

- Next steps following visit to World Bank.
 - Next steps for Rural Research and Strategy Partnership.
 - Biofuel Energy Centre.
 - Marie Curie applications in development.
 - Funding from regional bodies and devolved administration.
43. It was suggested by AM and agreed that wherever possible the Business Development Committee should meet before FREB to review external funding opportunities and to discuss one or two topics in more detail. A summary would then be given to FREB. **Action: AM**
44. AM reminded HoDs to let her and TC know of any bids, potential bids and bids in preparation. AM was advised to access the information provided in the FREB Divisional Reports on this matter. **Action: AM, HoDs**
45. Recommendations from the World Bank visit were tabled and FREB was invited to give AM comments outside of the meeting. **Action: FREB**
46. Our international links will be displayed on our web-site. **Action: AM**
47. JL will contact the Chief Scientist at Dfid on World Bank funding. **Action: JL**
48. AM briefed FREB on bids and bids in progress. **Noted**
49. The need to find capacity to replace IP Manager, Neil Bowering, was discussed. Both CQ and BM requested that consideration be given to continuing to site any replacement post at NRS. **Noted**

Agenda Item 14 – Divisional Reports

50. Divisional Reports were tabled and will appear on the Intranet. **Noted**

Agenda Item 15 - AOB

51. Director Scotland, Bob McIntosh to be invited to the June FREB. **Action: XC**
52. FREB noted the imminent departure of Sam Evans to Iraq and wished him a safe return. **Noted**

Date of next Meeting: 18 June 2007 at NRS