

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting (FREB)

Minutes of the meeting held by video conference on 1 November 2004

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

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. Consultation regarding the problems in Alice Holt Nursery will be with the Nursery Working Group at NRS. **NOTED**
2. The question of whether FREB membership should be increased to include Director of Communications and Head of TSU will be addressed at a later stage. **NOTED**

Agenda Item 2

Matters Arising

3. XC to make recommendations to JL by mid-November regarding use of the Tree Health RSA exhibit at the Edinburgh Science Fair. **Action: XC**
4. A diary of significant events involving senior managers will be built up by XC. Senior management diaries will be co-ordinated by JL's secretaries and held electronically. **Action: XC,JL**

Agenda Item 3

Reports

5. PF-S will circulate 'highlights' from the draft 03/04 FR Annual Report to HoDs. Main chapters will be included where these have not been given final approval by HoDs. **Action: PF-S**
6. HoDs to consider main chapters for 04/05 Annual Report (one from each Division). XC is handling this. **Action: XC**
7. TC reported that a recommendation going to the [FC]EB will be that the 04/05 Annual Report should be in final draft form by July '05 with the Annual Report and accounts being published by end July '05. **NOTED**

8. Discussion took place on the possible impact of the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament reducing their funding to Countries which could have a knock-on effect on the funding of FR. **NOTED**

Agenda Item 4

Feedback from [FC] Executive Board

9. JL reported that the Forestry Ministers' Group meeting had been held and that the Ministers had agreed to hold one formal meeting per year, in addition to an annual, individual meeting each with the Chairman and DG. **NOTED**
10. JL is producing a paper for the DG in which he will suggest a more effective way of addressing the (1) strategic direction, (2) supervision and (3) monitoring of our research. **Action: JL**
11. HoDs to consider '10' above and to give constructive inputs for JL's paper post FR's meeting with Wilma Harper later this month. Comments should focus on a better committee structure to achieve (1), (2) and (3) above. **Action: HoDs**
12. 'Concept' notes from FR staff will be fostered and encouraged by the FREB. These will take the form of one page notes which could include science and technology transfer. **NOTED**
13. JL is exploring how to increase, within our present budgets, some latitude to develop new research areas. **Action: JL**

Agenda Item 5

Future Scientific Meetings

14. JL asked that consideration be given to holding scientific meetings once or twice a year between FR and [FC]EB. Possible topic for the first meeting; 'Climate Change'. HoDs to give this some thought and feed them to PF-S prior to 29th November science strategy meeting along with possible agenda items for that meeting. **Action: HoDs**
15. BM to consider a joint meeting early next year between FR and senior staff of the Macaulay Institute. This will be put on the agenda of the science strategy meeting (29 November). HoDs to examine the Macaulay Institute web-site to identify possible areas for collaboration and items for the agenda for the meeting. **Action: BM, HoDs**

Agenda Item 6

Finance

16. TC asked HoDs to ensure that they examined their forecasts in order to bring our finances back in line. This FY is progressing and, unless we take action now, we could end up, for the first time, with a deficit at the end of this FY. The situation is still recoverable but TC prefers to achieve this by voluntary rather than prescriptive action. **Action: HoDs**
17. TC has put next years' planning templates in place. **NOTED**
18. TC alerted the FREB that our superannuation contributions are going up by 50% which will cost us an additional £500k. Although enough funds will be given to us to

cover this, it will have an effect of putting up our costs and, therefore, our chargeable rates. **NOTED**

Agenda Item 7

Staffing

19. P&AO presented staffing figures as at 1st November along with projected figures for end of December '04 and end of March '05. **NOTED**

20. A draft paper to go to [FC]EB has been prepared by Central Personnel supported by the FC and FE members of the Personnel Development Service Board advocating the abolition of the 'Tour System'. This was discussed by FREB who viewed the Tour System as advantageous to FR.

This is on the agenda for discussion by the Personnel Development Service Board on 3rd November where it was likely to be agreed by the majority and referred to [FC]EB for a decision. KC was asked to give our position and should the majority view be that abolition was preferable, KC was to ensure that reserved rights were in place for our present staff.

(Note: It was agreed at the Service Board that the matter would not be referred to the [FC]EB, that Central Personnel would include the 'Tour System' in a bigger review of post filling procedures.)

21. The question of the re-engagement of staff who reach age 60 and opt to retire and return on part-time terms needs careful consideration by HoDs in view of the financial situation of the Agency. **Action: All**

Agenda Item 8

FR's External Image

22. A presentation was given by Alison Melvin and Graham Sprigg, IMS Marketing Communications Plc, following a market survey on the 'perception of Forest Research by research funders'. Alison Melvin to circulate to FREB members the PowerPoint presentation. FREB members to feed their comments to XC particularly on having a contracts database and also on post-contract customer care. XC to consider replies and to make recommendations to JL for further action.

Action: All, XC

Agenda Item 9

AOB

23. KC to arrange for dates and locations for future FREB meetings (excluding Mondays). FREB members to give consideration to timetabling important agenda items for future meetings and to let KC have details of these. **Action: KC, All**

Date of next meeting: 6 December 2004