

## **Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 7/8 November 2005**

**Present:** Prof. Jim Lynch  
Prof. Peter Freer-Smith  
Prof. Sam Evans  
Mr Bill Mason  
Dr Andy Moffat  
Dr Chris Quine  
Mr Tony Cornwell  
Dr Xanthe Christophers  
Mr Ken Charles  
Dr Hugh Evans

**Copies To:** Head of Internal Audit  
Director of Corporate & Forestry Services

### **Agenda Item 1 – Introduction to purpose/format of meeting**

1. This afternoon's meeting will discuss the main body of the agenda with tomorrow morning's meeting dealing with preparation for the CFS meeting on 22 November to discuss FR funding. The FREB will also be addressed by Ed Jenner who is a Non-Executive member of NERC Council and Chair of the NERC Science and Innovation Strategy Board.

### **Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of last meeting**

2. Agreed.

### **Agenda Item 3 – Matters arising**

3. The group to discuss the review of promotion procedures will meet on 25 November with a paper being presented to the next meeting of FREB. **Action: PF-S, AM, KC**
4. Standards Meetings will be arranged for January. **Action: KC**
5. KC to check whether promotion beyond PB2 for research grades is limited to the Individual Merit Promotion (IMP) procedure. **Action: KC**
6. Succession Planning, JL's paper was presented and will be discussed with HoDs outside of the FREB. **Action: JL**
7. JL and XC to discuss taking forward the staff survey in particular the engagement of senior staff with staff either at 'clinics' or direct engagement on a one to one basis on different sites. **Action: JL, XC**

### **Agenda Item 4 – Feedback from FC EB meeting**

8. The general direction that FR was taking was endorsed by the FCEB. JL, XC to work on how FR can improve its communication with the FC and Commissioners. **Action: JL, XC**
9. P. ramorum/kernoviae, paper presented to FCEB by CFS advocating partial eradication of rhododendron in order to contain the disease. **NOTED**

10. JL/XC are taking action on improving communication with people on a local/national level who can influence or help to influence the perception of FR. HoDs to advise XC of potential visitors. **Action: HoDs**
11. FC/IT architecture paper was accepted by FCEB with a caveat that it needed qualification for FR. **NOTED**

#### **Agenda Item 5 – Finance**

12. Accounts for 2004/05, which have been delayed due to delays in completion of the FC audits, are likely to be signed off in December. **NOTED**
13. Forecasts now indicate an end-of-year shortfall of £68K against its target net contribution. HoDs to check their income forecasts, and revise where appropriate. **Action: HoDs**
14. TSU position has improved slightly, forecasts suggest some reduction in expenditure with the current forecast of a net loss of £428K.
15. Capital, to date authorisation amounts to £648K and, allowing for year-end liabilities, the amount still unallocated is £100K. Expenditure to date is still relatively slow at £214K.
16. Service Branches financial forecasts to be made to next RMB. **Action: TC**

#### **Agenda Item 6 – Staffing**

17. KC presented his paper which indicated 15 additional staff by the end of FY with a loss of 10.2 (FTEs). **NOTED**
18. Our Corporate Plan indicates 278 staff for 2005/06 against an expected end of FY figure of 280.6 (FTEs). JL was not concerned with this provided our income was rising to match. **NOTED**

#### **Agenda Item 7 – Review of TSU Nurseries**

19. BM presented the paper of the review committee. The following were agreed:
  - a. That the report be passed to TSU management to implement.
  - b. That basic costs of the nursery infrastructure be charged at full economic cost recovery.
  - c. Any investment in capital projects needs to be supported by a business case and go through normal approval channels.
  - d. Headley nursery needs to be self-financing.
  - e. A nursery management committee be formed as a working group of the TSU Service Board. **Action: BM**

#### **Agenda Item 8 – Emeritus Scientists**

20. The FREB was asked to consider the position of 'Emeritus Scientist/Research Associate' and the bestowment of honorary status on people who can make a contribution to FR. It was agreed that new titles of 'Fellow of Forest Research' and 'Visiting Fellow of Forest Research' will replace the above titles to recognise eminence in cognate areas of research where there has been proven collaboration. **Action: JL**
21. KC to circulate RMB papers which initiated the associate/emeritus status with the updated version which recognises item 20. **Action: KC**

### **Agenda Item 9 – Review of research promotion procedures**

22. The papers produced by KC will be discussed by PF-S, AM and KC before being returned to the FREB. **Action: PF-S, AM, KC**

### **Agenda Item 10 – Visit Reports**

23. No formal procedure was agreed for reports to be written following an overseas visit. Reports will be written and circulated when appropriate. Appendix 'A' forms will be adapted to include a box which, when ticked, will indicate when a report is required. **Action: TC**

### **Agenda Item 11 – Performance appraisal, opportunity for feedback**

24. XC said that the present PMS form did not give staff the ability to give upward feedback to their manager. KC to raise this with HR Service Board who are considering adapting the present PMS system but there was nothing to stop FR managers starting such a system on a voluntary basis within their teams. **Action: KC**

### **Agenda Item 12 – Divisional Reports**

25. The reports were tabled and will be placed on the Internet for general consumption. **NOTED**
26. Progress against plan with regard to QA was discussed. It is clear that further effort is required to keep QA progressing and on track. Continued support from senior management is required. The new QA Manager takes up post in January and a note will be sent out to staff about QA by senior management to coincide with this. **Action: JL, PF-S**
27. BM would like suggestions for the NRS seminar programme by December. **Action: ALL**
28. Following the FC Wales Strategy Workshop held in Builth Wells SE stressed the importance of FR Liaison Officers maintaining an awareness of ongoing/completed research programmes and a knowledge of the breadth of the research activity undertaken within FR. **Action: XC**

The meeting closed at 17.30 and reconvened at 09.00 the following day.

29. HE to produce a paper with options to improve FR's standing and networking in the three countries with particular emphasis, in the first instance, in Wales. **Action: HE**

### **Agenda Item 13 - AOB**

30. Finance Bulletins, TC will issue formal finance bulletins introducing a structured approach to the circulation of financial guidance, instructions and information within FR. **Action: TC**
31. Woodfuel Unit, SE proposed that a small integrated unit be set up on a cross-divisional basis to develop a clear plan for woodfuel. Proposed members of the Unit will include Ian Tubby and Andy Hall. SE, BM & AM will set out TOR for this team. **Action: SE, BM, AM**
32. Discussion took place about the organisation of our science, and our future funding base and the need for cross-cutting themes to encourage effective cross-divisional working.

**NOTED**

33. The Director General had asked Mike Dudley to speak to JL about forest landscape restoration. MD would like a nominee from FR to give a research dimension and to serve as a contact point within FR for the UK contribution to this subject. CQ will consider and make a nomination. **Action: CQ**
34. Royal Society Exhibition, given the success of our entomology exhibit last year, it was felt appropriate not to make a submission this year but to start considering for next year with, possibly, woodfuel as a theme. **Action: XC**

#### **Agenda Item 14 – Preparation for CFS/FR Meeting on 22 November**

35. PF-S presented a paper setting out his views on future funding and future research areas as a preparation to discussions on 22 November with our main funder, CFS. The CFS/FR meeting will cover;
- 1) Feedback on SLA process
  - 2) ROAME statements
  - 3) Finalise and sign-off MOU
  - 4) Framework Document review
  - 5) Agreement on 06/07 programme funding. **NOTED**
36. Although funding for 06/07 is secure at £10.6M, because of the greater provision for social forestry, economic development and knowledge transfer in 07/08 plus the impact of inflation there will be a commensurate reduction in funding for other research themes. **NOTED**
37. Our Framework Document is due for review and this meeting will ‘kick-start’ the process. It is felt that a relatively light touch is required at this stage in view of the fairly recent review. TC wished to be consulted if changes were made. The appropriateness of the name, ‘Forest Research’ should be considered at the time of the Framework Document review. **NOTED**

#### **Agenda Item 15 – AOB**

38. Simon Hodgson, the new FC(E) CEO, to be invited to visit Alice Holt and a suitable programme to be arranged. **Action: XC**
39. Visiting Group at Agency level, this item to be carried over as an agenda item for the next FREB. **Action: CH**
40. Dr Ed Jenner, Non-Executive member of NERC Council and Chair of the NERC Science and Innovation Strategy Board gave a presentation to the FREB on the activities on NERC and how FR potentially could interact with NERC. Discussion ranged around a number of topics including FR’s ability to access NERC funding because of our status (Dr Jenner said that if there are barriers that are acting as an impediment to our access to funding then NERC may look at ways of removing them), the collaborative use of our field stations for field experiments (Dr Jenner recommended that we contact CEH (but not in the next 6 weeks) to discuss the pooling of resources, we could also use NERC as an information base to find out if universities could use our facilities for work they were doing). In summing up the presentation, JL said that we feel our ambition is best served by partnership working through which we can generate more than if we progressed independently. Dr Jenner was thanked for his interesting and informative address.

**Date of next meeting: Tuesday 6 December at Alice Holt**