

## Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 28 November 2006

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

**Apologies:** Dr J Dutch  
Mr K Charles

Mr. I Tubby attended for item 5; Mr N Bowering for item 7 and Mr S Hodge for item 11.

**Copies to:** Mrs Liz Holmes, Head of Internal Audit  
Mrs Wilma Harper, Director of Corporate & Forestry Support  
Mrs Ros Bull, Secretary to the Chairman  
Dr Janet Dutch, Head of TSU

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

1. JL introduced this item and welcomed Dr Shannon to the Agency. **Noted**

### Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of last meeting

2. Accepted. **Noted**

### Agenda Item 3 – Matters arising

3. All action points not covered by Agenda items recorded as in hand and ongoing. **Noted**
4. JL reported that the structure of the central Service Boards was under review and he would obtain a copy of Wilma Harper's paper to the GBEB for FREB members. **Action: XC**

### Agenda Item 4 – Progress on the FR Development Strategy & Wilton Park feedback

5. JL reported that David Shannon Ltd have been appointed on a consultancy basis to lead the process of implementing the new research strategy and David Evans will continue to provide input.
6. David Shannon (DS) has already had a provisional meeting with Tim Rollinson and Wilma Harper that was very constructive.
7. DS was encouraged by the positive attitude of the DG. He outlined his initial thoughts on how the process might develop. This will involve gathering information from meetings with key staff and identifying the work streams that will need to be set up. He will arrange a series of meetings with HoDs to get a feel for the science and emphasised that delivery of the strategy will only be achieved if there is full engagement from all FR personnel.

## **Wilton Park**

8. JL reported that the conference, lead by PF-S and his team, was very successful with excellent delivery all round. The circulation of the report of the meeting achieved 140,000 increasing FR's profile significantly. Proceedings will now be edited and published commercially.
9. PF-S commented that the timing of the conference was ideal being in the wake of the Stern Report with 15 countries being represented as well as OECD, IPCC and the UN. Ministers were present and there was good press coverage.
10. Follow up meetings are being organised by Tim Rollinson covering such issues as deforestation, domestic issues, development of woodfuel, a climate change centre and what FR can do internationally.
11. Issues arising need to be taken up with EFI. **Action JL**

### **Agenda Item 5 – Biomass Energy Centre and Woodfuel Research Centre. (report from Ian Tubby)**

12. **Biomass Energy Centre.** This has taken a back seat to the Woodfuel Research Centre but a steering group and website are in place.
13. Activity to date includes attendance at 12 shows and seminars with enquiries rising to 120 a month and the website receiving 15,000 hits a month.
14. Funding for 2007-08 is still uncertain but possible sources are being pursued. Physical accommodation is urgently needed. Other requirements are:
  - Funds for plant and equipment
  - Delegated financial authority to fit the needs of the BEC
  - Operational funding.
15. FREB expressed its appreciation of the efforts so far and stressed the importance of science and business strategies both being put in place.
16. Meeting to be arranged to consider request for resources. **Action JL, PF-S, TC**
17. Staff continuity to be arranged **Action SE**
18. **Woodfuel Research Centre.** Work has been completed on SRC mapping (£7k) and Alice Holt / Westonbirt feasibility studies (£20k) and ongoing funding is secure for IGER willow (£15kpa) and EPSRC consortium (£140k over 4 years).
19. Many opportunities for funding exist and market research is ongoing.
20. WRC now needs to set out potential areas for further research and needs more staff resource and a FREB "champion". **Action SE/JL**

### **Agenda Item 6 – proposal for FR Fellowship - Dr John Finnigan**

21. It was agreed to offer Dr Finnigan an appointment as a FR Fellow subject to satisfactory agreement on contract details. **Action JL/TC**

### **Agenda item 7 – Business Development**

22. **Rewards for Inventors.** The paper was noted and the recommendations accepted subject to the following:
- CEO to give final approval to all proposed arrangements
  - Rewards to be reported in financial report to FREB **Action TC**
  - FREB only requires an annual report on activity but exceptionally an individual case should be submitted to FREB if circumstances so dictate.
23. In the early stages of this scheme each case need to be carefully handled in order to maintain standards of due diligence and propriety.
24. **Environmental Policy.** Noted that FR now follows FC policy.
25. **World Bank.** Paper circulated for information.
26. **PSRE Sustainability.** The timetable for the second annual report to PSRE was noted.

#### **Agenda Item 8 – Finance**

27. The financial position was noted with a half year review confirming that forecasts were robust and targets are likely to be achieved with a small margin to spare.  
*Note: subsequently the surplus has been eliminated due to TSU losing income from the SMWS.*
28. Agreed that the current method and basis of charges from the centre for services was not satisfactory and increases in future years would not be accepted if core funding was frozen or reduced.
29. TC reported that risk management workshops have taken place at NRS and Alice Holt to be followed by a series of tailored events available to all staff. The FR risk register was now transferred to the FC "MAGIQUE" software and would be maintained on this in future. The next step in developing risk management will be the integration of the FR business continuity plan into the risk register.
30. The planning process for 2007-08 is moving too slowly and HoDs need to finalise overall financial plans as a matter of some urgency - despite residual problems with FC funding levels. **Action HoDs, JD, KC, XC**

#### **Agenda item 9 – Staffing**

31. In KC's absence the staffing paper was considered and the details noted.

#### **Agenda item 10 – Divisional Reports**

32. Divisional reports were tabled and noted. Contents will be posted on the Intranet.

#### **Agenda item 11 – Liaison with FC Scotland**

33. Simon Hodge discussed FC Scotland's view of the role of FR with responses for JL and other FREB members. Key points emerging were:
- FCS looks to FR for answers, knowledge and credibility
  - FCS wants FR to see FCS as a customer with as direct a customer/provider relationship as possible
  - Current engagement structures are over complex
  - RLO roles are not properly settled in yet
  - FCS's three key growth areas are health, regeneration and climate change

- More of a stake in the research planning process is desirable from the FCS standpoint.
34. JL confirmed that the capacity and capability to deliver customers requirements is a high priority in the current review of the FR research strategy. In governance terms FR needs a greater degree of freedom in delivering the new strategy.

**Agenda item 12 – Dates for next year's meetings**

35. Dates yet to be confirmed.

**Action CH**

**Agenda item 13 – Any Other Business**

36. None.

**Date of next FREB Meeting**

37. To be arranged.