

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 30 October 2006

Present: Prof. J M Lynch (Chair) Dr H F Evans
Mr W L Mason Mr K N Charles
Dr X Christophers Mr T Cornwell
Prof S Evans Dr J Dutch
Dr C Quine Mrs W Harper

Apologies: Dr P Freer-Smith
Dr A J Moffat

Director General, Mr T Rollinson, attended for items 9 – 13.

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

1. JL introduced this item and said that the Director General, Mr Tim Rollinson, will attend FREB this afternoon. **Noted**

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of last meeting

2. Accepted with one amendment to item 12, - the *idea* of a National Expert Centre on Forestry and Climate Change was endorsed by FREB **Noted**

Agenda Item 3 – Matters arising

3. JL will 'kick-off' FR's Standards Meetings at the November FREB meeting. **Action: JL**
4. Ian Tubby will attend the November meeting to update FREB on the activities of the Biomass Centre. **Noted**
5. Simon Hodge will be invited to attend the November FREB meeting. **Action: CH**
6. Discussions with Defra are proceeding regarding the funding of the Biomass Energy Centre. **Noted**

Agenda Item 4 - Progress on the FR Development Strategy

7. JL reported that there had been a good response both internally and externally to the Development Strategy. It was well received at the FC Staff Council meeting where FR was represented by Wilma Harper. The change process embraces business, culture and real estate and the choice of the right person to lead the process will be critical. JL has been consulting with a range of senior people who have past experience in this area and whilst these people could not commit to leading the process they are keen to be involved in an overseeing/advisory capacity. Implementation within the timeframe indicated is important and JL is looking at a number of options for the appointment of someone to lead the Change Management process.

Agenda Item 5 – Feedback from GB EB

8. JL gave feedback from the GB EB which included the movement towards the comprehensive spending review, a presentation by Boyd Glen updating the GB EB on the FC's Efficiency Programme, an update from Derek Gilfillan, FC's Procurement Officer, outlining increased procurement prescription largely emanating from Brussels, HR initiatives which will be discussed in more detail at the Senior Staff Group meeting at Dalmahoy this week, Production Forecasting, Carbon Trading, FC Branding (which is an agenda item for this meeting), shared services (Wilma Harper is producing a paper for the next GB EB on the future role of Service Boards.

Steve Lee will be asked to make a presentation on the activities of the FR/FC Greening Committees. **Action: CH/HL**

Agenda Item 6 – PB5 Personnel, Financial and Project Management Training

9. Louise Thanthong, final year Surrey University Business and Management student, presented the results of her research into the needs of PB5 scientists within FR with regard to personnel, financial and project management training. Her research started with a questionnaire which was followed by face to face interviews covering a representative sample of the staff in question. The results of her research indicated that training both formal and informal is required in the three areas. The needs of staff, in the case of personnel and project management, would best be served by externally provided training. Financial management training would best be catered for by an internal, tailored course. The annual cost of the training overall was estimated at £40K. After discussion, FREB agreed to the recommendations contained in the report and KC was asked to take this forward. **Action: KC**

Agenda Item 7 – BIP Group – HR Strategy Feedback

10. CQ reported on the activities of the BIP Group of which he is a member with regard to;
- Update FREB on the activities within the BIP Group
 - Initiate discussion on FR view of priorities for HR Strategy
 - Raise awareness of the development of a core competency framework.
11. Each country, plus FR, has been invited to contribute to the process of prioritisation of the HR Strategy which will be discussed at a forthcoming meeting of the Senior Staff Group. After discussion, FR agreed that three priority areas should be;
- Goal – to develop our people through building an understanding and knowledge about the current skills in the organisation and by articulating and developing the skills, knowledge and competencies we require for the future. Actions - Competency Framework, Learning & Development interventions.
 - Goal – to provide all employees with an environment where consistent and sustainable behaviour is normal practice. This requires us to embrace best management practices. Actions – Employment policies, recruitment and post-filling.
 - Goal – to demonstrate how and why our reputation for effective and efficient delivery is due to the contribution of our people. Action – Performance Management, Reward and recognition. **Action: JL**
12. The specific priorities for FR, as contained in the draft HR Strategy (Appendix 2), need to be consistent with our priorities contained in para. 11 above. **Noted**

13. A sub-group of the BIP group has been developing a core competency framework. A draft framework is soon to be tested in a number of Cost Centres including FR. CQ will circulate the core competencies and KC will examine how these competencies can be linked to the record of training being developed for QA purposes.

Action: CQ, KC

Agenda Item 8 – Finance

14. TC reported that our 2006/07 forecast has improved slightly with an expectation that our target contribution will be exceeded by £226K. **Noted**
15. Risk Management workshops are now arranged for 2 November (Alice Holt) and 23 November (NRS). **Noted**
16. Planning 2007/08. TC asked HoDs, in particular, to look at the internal market matrix and expenditure plans. If plans are to keep to schedule, HoDs must devote some time to the planning process during November. **Action: HoDs, JD**

Agenda Item 9 – Staff cost inter-charging and long term leave

17. FREB agreed that for staff absences of over 3 months (illness, maternity leave, etc) will be met from a central fund held in Finance Division. **Action: TC**
18. Split staff time. TC will make adjustments centrally where the effect of split staff time is significant. **Action: TC**

Agenda Item 10 – Staffing

19. KC presented his staffing paper which indicated a present staffing figure of 273.1 (FTE) against a planned figure of 270.0 in the Corporate Plan. The increase is largely due to the additional survey work being conducted within the TSU and Biometrics Division. **Noted**

Agenda Item 11 – Divisional Reports

20. Divisional reports were tabled and will appear on the Intranet. **Action: XC**

Agenda Item 12 - Presentation on FC Branding followed by discussion on Development Strategy, Wilton Park Workshop and Climate Change Centre

21. The DG gave a presentation on progress made on FC Branding and what the next steps would be in rolling out the concept. The presentation covered the following;
- Who we are – what we do.
 - The problem (poor recognition externally, confusion internally, not enough consistency.
 - Project aims – increase recognition of our role and value, provide a solid, valid platform for communication, maximise the value of our roots in the community, knit together the various facets of what we do, make sense of the relationship between different parts of the organisation.

22. In phase II an appropriate brand identity will be provided to ensure that we have the right tools and other resources in place to deliver. Throughout his presentation, the DG's accent was that the FC should be known for its **delivery** at local and national levels and that we should open peoples' eyes to the many real benefits that forests can bring.
23. The project could be 'rolled-out' to appropriate staff by way of workshops, there will be a FC 'story book', the DG intends publishing a 'DG's Blog', new brand and corporate identity guidelines will be made known, communication strategies will be put in place and our website, clothing, publications and vehicle signage will have a corporate brand across the FC.
24. The DG stressed that while staff should use a common brand identity and 'story' when presenting 'who we are' to audiences, the 'story' should be adapted to suit the target audience.
25. Development strategy. JL briefed the DG on action taken to date (see 7 above). JL asked FREB to consider the duties/membership of potential external and internal support groups and to feed their views to KC. KC will consider this and draw FREB's input together. **Action: FREB, KC**
26. Wilton Park Workshop and Climate Change Centre. DG reported that the creation of a Climate Change Centre had been mentioned in outline to Defra but no firm view could be taken at this stage. It would be premature to announce this at Wilton Park. The DG had attended the launch of the 'Stern Report' on the economics of climate change that morning and felt that FR/FC must consider this and give some serious thought to the role that we can play. During the Wilton Park Workshop there will be a field trip to Alice Holt and those attending will be given publicity leaflets detailing what we do on encouragement to partnership working and one describing the Alice Holt Research Forest. The DG recommended asking scientists attending Wilton Park 'What needs to be done in this key area?'. **Noted**

Agenda Item 13 – Any other business.

27. BM noted that there appeared to be a lack of regular feedback from our internal Service Boards and agreed that each Board should be invited, once a year, to present a report to FREB. **Action: CH**
28. The June 06 FREB agreed that a Biometrics Professional Service Board be set up to cover the areas of statistical services, software development and data management. SE asked HoDs to nominate someone from within their Division to serve on this Board. BM asked that requests such as this should be kept to the minimum. It was agreed that this Board should only meet twice a year to agree service levels and charges. These will be reviewed at the mid-year meeting. **Action: HoDs**