

**Forest Research Executive Board Meeting –10 October 2007**  
**Alice Holt**

**Present:** Peter Freer-Smith (Chair)                      Hugh Evans  
Xanthe Christophers                                      Ken Charles  
Bill Mason    Tony Cornwell  
Helen McKay     Andy Moffat  
Chris Quine    Wilma Harper  
Alison Melvin (AKM),                                     Janet Dutch

**Apologies:** Sam Evans

**Copies to:** Liz Holmes, Head of Internal Audit  
Ros Bull, Secretary to the Chairman

**Agenda Item 1 – Summary and agreement of actions arising from discussions on 9 October 2007**

1. Before opening this agenda item, PFS congratulated Bill Mason on being awarded a Senior Doctorate from Bangor University and welcomed Wilma Harper, Janet Dutch and Alison Melvin as full members of FREB. XC to publicise. **Action: XC**
  
2. The following was agreed;
  - A note to be sent jointly by the DG and PFS to all FR staff expressing confidence in the future and the Commissioners and DG's strong support for FR's Development Strategy. **Action: DG, PFS**
  
  - Space in the Silvan House foyer to be made available for publicity for FR. **Action: XC**
  
  - FR to report to DG/GBEB (management processes and profile) particularly on:-
    - Progress against KPIs.
    - Key/significant issues (selected from Divisional Reports).
    - Intellectual Property issues (where we need clearance from GBEB).
  
    - Significant matters FR wish to raise with Countries.
  
4. PFS to put out a guidance note on how GBEB papers are constructed (which

is to be followed by FREB members when putting a paper to FREB). Note to include a reminder for FR CEO Office to put out a call for actions taken on FREB action points. **Action: PFS, CH**

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

4. Accepted with one amendment, para. 21 change 'Biosecurity' to 'Bioenergy'.

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

5. AJM has arranged a meeting on 15 November for FR staff in the main streams identified in our Strategy to meet with Paul Johnson (FC(E)).  
**Action: AJM**
6. Inventory and Forecasting Review. After discussion, it was agreed that an FR options paper would not be helpful until the review has progressed further. HM will invite James Ogilvie to meet with FREB. **Action: HM**
7. HM will update the note drafted for PFS informing staff of progress made on the review. **Action: HM**
8. WH has emailed Keith Gliddon, FC Director of Finance, regarding possible funds from increased timber revenue and awaits a response. **Action: WH**
9. FR requires a system for approval and monitoring of research proposals going to PAGs. A process will be developed to enable FR HoDs and RD to quality check and prioritise research proposals before they go to PAGs. This year, research programme proposals must be channelled through Director Research who will hold a video conference with HoDs by the end of 2007. If HoDs are unable to attend the video conference, they must supply a briefing paper to AJM. **Action: AJM, HoDs**
10. Project reviews will be carried out by CEO/DR in January/February by which time the CFS 08/09 proposed spend with FR should be available for consideration. **Action: PF-S, AJM**
11. Customer satisfaction is one of the tabled items for RSMB. PFS to talk to David Shannon to enquire if he is producing a formal paper. **Action: PFS**

12. Library review. XC introduced the proposed membership and ToR for the Working Group to consider the review and invited comments. XC will report on progress at next FREB. **Action: XC**
13. XC has contacted Learning and Development who reacted positively for the plan to roll-out 'Who we are' brand on a Station-wide basis. **Action: XC**
14. XC has arranged media training. Suitable candidates have been identified for the first course to be held at Alice Holt on 29 November. A course at NRS will follow. **Noted**
15. Research promotion boards. Agreed that one Board will set to interview all candidates comprising of PFS, AJM and CQ plus an external member. KC will organise dates. HoDs to suggest nominations for the external member. **Action: HoD, KC**
16. Definition of a 'Centre', TC clarified that a Centre could be a separate Cost Centre within a host Division. Agreed that AJM and HoDs meet (with input from the administration side of FR) to discuss and agree a common template for a 'Centre' and to narrow down the options by December 2007 for discussion at FREB at the January 2008 meeting. **Action: AJM, HoDs, CH**

#### **Agenda Item 4 – KPIs – Review of Progress**

17. KPI 1 – FR will establish 'Priority Area Working Groups' (PAWGs) as mechanisms to develop business cases for 6 priority areas of research. The process is developing as follows:-
  - Climate change – revised business case to RSMB on 30 October.
  - Bioenergy – final business plan to be ready for end December.
  - Woodchain – being refined by BM by April 2008.
  - Urban Greening – referred to PAG on 15 October (AJM to circulate Urban Greening Proposal to HoDs) **Action: AJM**
  - Biosecurity – HE is taking on board comments from the Visiting Group and consideration is being given to re-naming the Division.
  - Well-being – CQ is awaiting Head of SERG replacement and is considering approaching the PAG about whether a partnership approach be considered for taking this forward. CQ will keep the PAG up-to-date. **Action: CQ**

18. KPI 2 – AKM updated FREB on the revision of the Business Development Plan which will be circulated amongst HoDs. Need for analysis to ensure that our predicted growth in income is achievable and, if not, to revise the target. HoDs to look at their 07/08 target figures and revise/confirm by end of October. **Action: HoDs**
19. KPI 3 – FR to increase its presence in Wales, progress is being made which will be reported to GBEB and the Wales National Committee. HE will attend the Wales National Committee meeting in November. HE is meeting with Clive Thomas to discuss possible location, priority areas and a suitable senior person to interface with at a policy level. HE to let CEO have a paragraph on progress, HoDs to let HE have a list of research areas/projects they currently have in Wales. **Action: HE, HoDs**
20. KPI 4 – Audit of staff skills to provide details of business skills, flexibility and development needs. KC reported that discussions had been held with Learning & Development about how they might assist in this task, particularly with regard to their recent development of key competencies. The audit of present skills will be completed by end March 2008 but the second part, our development needs, will be deferred until HoDs have identified and agreed the areas we will be moving into through the PAWG progress. Progress has been made in developing staff skills with ‘Essential Skills for Managers’ courses being programmed and a tender issued for project management training. **Action: KC**
21. KPI 5 & KPI 6 – are agenda items under ‘Finance’.

#### **Agenda item 5 – Discussion of Finance and Management Systems Review**

22. TC presented his paper which included 14 recommendations for discussion by FREB and 48 more general recommendations many of which could be implemented without further reference. A number of the recommendations were approved for immediate action and TC was asked to keep FREB meetings updated on progress. **Action: TC**
23. TC is confident that FC systems can be adapted to provide the information we require by using an interface being used by CSL. He is meeting with Keith Gliddon and Stevie Atkins tomorrow to discuss this. The need for a Working Group comprising of representatives from Divisions to test the proposed new systems and to ensure uniformity across Divisions was agreed. By December meeting, FREB should be assured of the quality of the systems. **Action: TC**
24. E-Track is going to be replaced by a more user-friendly system. **Noted**

25. Transparency – overhead rates, charge out rates and target contributions; TC was asked to put proposals to FREB in November for implementation on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. **Action: See para. 26**
26. If the internal market is charged at cost, this will impact upon Divisional targets. TC to circulate proposals, with a ‘worked example’ to FREB members and to present recommendations on paras 25 and 26 to the November FREB. **Action: TC**

### **Agenda Item 6 – Divisional, Communications & Business Development/IP Management Reports**

27. Reports were tabled.

### **Agenda Item 7 – Report on the two nursery management committees**

28. This paper was deferred.

### **Agenda Item 8 – Finance**

29. TC demonstrated the model which will be adopted as FR’s approach to costing and will provide a standard procedure for costings. A tutorial will be prepared starting with the Divisional Office Managers who will cascade the training to project leaders. **Action: TC**
30. 2007/08 shows a small net deficit which takes account of the reduction in C&FS funding. External income has increased to £2.6M which suggests that our target of £2.7M is achievable. HoDs to update their forecasts by next FREB. **Action: HoDs**
31. TC reported that some capital funding is still available and invited HoDs to submit bids. **Action: HoDs**
32. 2008/09 – the planning cycle will be underway soon. There is uncertainty over the outcome of CSR7 funding review, C&FS funding and the outcome of the Production Forecasting Review are making this difficult. A draft timetable will be circulated later this month. **Action: TC**

### **Agenda Item 9 – Staffing**

33. KC reported a high level of recruitment activity with successful exercises being held for a Timber Modeller, 2 x Research Liaison Officers, Intellectual Property Manager, Social Scientist, Head of Environmental Change, Head of Social Science & Economics Group. Recruitment exercises are in the pipeline for, Head of Finance, Social Scientist (Diversity), Economist,

scientist to assist the Eforwood project and Deer Health & Welfare.

34. Current staffing figure stands at 261.4 against a planned staffing of 270.
35. Recruitment process, requests for additional posts should be sent to PFS, KC, AJM and TC using the standard financial form. They will then appear on KC's staffing paper. HoDs are requested to consider, before applying for new posts, whether the work could be done by an existing member of staff or the TSU and to note the form accordingly. Requests for STTA (casual) staff should be sent direct to KC via HoD. **Action: HoD**

#### **Agenda Item 10 – Any other business**

36. BM will enquire if Norrie Craig (interim Head of BSD) can come and meet with us. **Action: BM**
37. AKM requested that a meeting be arranged FREB/IP Steering Group. **Action: AKM**
38. CQ was concerned that we didn't know dates when the IP Committee meeting was meeting or what, in general, was coming up. A FREB forward diary will be put together by FR CEO Office using Divisional Reports. **Action: CH**
39. Agreed that Outlook diaries would be used by FREB members. **Action: FREB**
40. When communicating about FREB matters with CH/HL, FR CEO Office e-mail address to be used. **Noted**
41. FREB agenda papers to be with FR CEO Office by close of play the Wednesday preceding the FREB meeting, Division Reports by Friday. Papers will be sent to FREB members by Friday. **Action: HoDs, CH**

#### **Date of next meeting**

42. 13 November 2007 at NRS