

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 5/6 September 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
Dr Janet Dutch

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

Agenda Item 1 – Introduction to purpose/format of meeting

1. JL introduced the meeting saying that the discussions on 5 September (pm) will centre around operational matters with the discussion on 6 September (am) centring around strategic components.

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of last meeting

2. Accepted.

Agenda Item 3 – Matters arising

3. Those HoDs who have not already done so, to let KC have a list of their staff with reporting/confirming officers against each name. **Action: SE, HE**
4. HoDs to note diaries with date of Advisory Committee on Forest Research meeting (29 November 2005) **Action: HoDs**
5. PF-S will action the advertisement for replacement members of the Advisory Committee on Forest Research. **Action: PF-S**
6. Psychometric analysis/profiling; to be organised by XC for FREB members. **Action: XC**
7. HoDs are encouraged to give Bill Mason feedback before he proceeds with a meeting between FR and the Scottish Agricultural College and MLURI. **Action: HoDs**
8. PF-S, KC and JD presented the conclusions of the FREB concerning the TSU report to TSU staff at Alice Holt and NRS. They are meeting with Kielder Field Station staff on 6 September. A paper has been presented to the FC EB seeking assistance with funding for the reorganisation. TC to supply further costing information to K Gliddon who will approach Defra. **Action: TC**
9. HoDs to ensure that their project leaders are aware of what is available to them to spend with the TSU from within their Divisions. **Action: HoDs**
10. After the meeting with Kielder TSU staff, Janet Dutch to issue a note to all TSU staff which will be followed by a note to all FR. **Action: JD**

Agenda Item 4 – Feedback from FC EB meeting

11. JL reported that HR, Silvan House arranged for presentations to be made to the FC EB by three companies providing flexible benefits packages for staff. **Noted**
12. JL presented a Research Agenda paper to the FC EB which was well received. **Noted**
13. Annual Reports from each of the Service Boards were presented to the FC EB. **Noted**

Agenda Item 5 – Finance

14. TC reported that the Agency is forecast to exceed its target net contribution by £117K compared with £170K reported in July. **Noted**
15. TSU has revised its forecast and produced a net loss of £558K effectively declaring that the target loss of £322K cannot be achieved. **Noted**
16. Total spend with FR by whole of FC is £11,969M. **Noted**
17. Capital expenditure has been released for priority and urgent project related requirements and a provision made for IT replacements. Authorised capital to date £577K, unallocated capital, £173K. **Noted**
18. Cashflow. Clearance has now been received to claim the first tranche of sums owed by the EC for Forest Focus in 2003 and 2004. £521K has been claimed with a further £200K to be claimed. **Noted**
19. A review of the value of the work done during the first 5 months of the year by TSU for science divisions to be done by TC. **Action: TC**

Agenda Item 6 – Staffing

20. KC reported that staff figures (FTEs) are currently 275.8 against a Corporate Plan figure of 278.
21. General discussion about the geographical placement of work to the TSUs and staff mobility. HoDs to consider the strategic placement of work within the TSUs and KC to raise the question of mobility with HR, Silvan House. **Action: HoDs, KC**
22. PFS to co-ordinate a paper for discussion by HoDs at next FREB to consider the amalgamation of some FC-funded programmes for 06/07. **Action: PF-S**
23. TC to start the internal Business Planning process now. **Action: TC**
24. It was decided that work within the TSUs should only start or continue following an affirmative response from the project leader. **Action: HoD, JD**
25. TSU Service Board, HoDs to let Janet Dutch have their membership nominations by 16 September. **Action: HoDs**

Agenda Item 7 – Review of FR Promotion Procedures

26. The paper produced by KC was considered. It was agreed that a group chaired by PF-S plus AM and KC would meet to consider the paper in detail and report to the FREB.

Action: PF-S, AM, KC

Agenda Item 8 – Provision of IT Services

27. The transfer to our e-mail facility to BSD is proceeding to an agreed programme and timetable. **Noted**

28. TC reported that BSD had offered to take over the provision of all IT services currently provided in house by FR but had thus far declined to provide a business case to support this proposal. It was agreed that the matter would be considered by FREB if/when a business case is presented.

Agenda Item 9 – Health & Safety

29. KC presented the annual RIDDOR statistics (incidents which must be reported to the Health & Safety Executive) which showed one accident in 2004/05 following which the member of staff was absent for 12 days. **Noted**

30. A summary of Accident Book entries was also presented which indicated that the total number of accidents fell slightly when compared to last year. HoDs were reminded that although entering an accident in the Accident Book was not a statutory requirement, staff should be strongly encouraged to make an entry so that trends can be identified and action taken to reduce future occurrences. **Noted**

31. KC's paper, 'Alice Holt/NRS – H&S Committee Inspections' informed HoDs that the H&S Committees feel that the response by Divisions to the reports issued following a Divisional inspection is not satisfactory. In some cases the same defect is picked up 12 months later. JL confirmed his commitment to Health & Safety within the Agency and stressed to HoDs that he expected them to raise the profile of H&S within their Divisions and to attend to the areas within the H&S reports identified as being of concern promptly.

Action: HoDs, JD

Agenda Item 10 – Divisional Reports

32. HoDs tabled their reports which will appear on the Intranet. **Noted**

33. JL reported on his visits to the Research Institutes of Malaysia and New Zealand and his attendance at the IUFRO Conference. **Noted**

34. XC to produce a report on the activities of Communications Divisions. **Action: Xanthe**

Agenda Item 11 – Employee Opinion Survey Reports

35. FREB discussed the findings of the Staff Opinion Survey at length. It was noted that the high response level to the survey and the relative consistency of the findings showed that the opinions voiced were widespread. There was discussion about whether the results needed further exploration, but it was accepted that senior management had received particular criticism about specific areas and that the problems or perceived problems must be addressed. Leadership and Communication were two of the main areas of challenge. It was also agreed that deep seated issues cannot be solved overnight, but that FREB should fully engage with making improvements.

The FREB agreed

- 1) To more clearly articulate FR's plans and strategies
 - Senior staff roles and responsibilities
 - Current position in terms of income and reputation (both good)
 - Future vision for growth of new business combined with fully satisfying the FC
 - Future vision for raising profile as centre of excellence
- 2) To improve engagement of FREB with staff, taking opportunities to meet staff and understand their concerns. This will include regular All Staff meetings, and senior managers taking opportunities to meet with staff at field stations. **Action: FREB**
- 3) To address the challenge of managing staff at a distance and the different structure of different divisions combined with different management styles. It was agreed that all divisions should cascade details of FREB meetings at divisional meetings and be prepared to feed issues back to FREB. **Action: HoDs, KC, JD, TC, XC**
- 4) JL and PF-S (and KC, TC and XC?) to hold regular 'drop in' clinics at both sites to enable staff to raise issues with them directly. **Action: JL, PFS**
- 5) To better inform staff and disseminate information about organisational initiatives and strategies (often represented as publication of documents such as the Science and Innovation Strategy). First example: JL to send email with CFS satisfaction scores to all staff. **Action: JL**
- 6) To build on the very positive relationship with FC, which offers stability and long term good working relationship. FR should also see new business opportunities as a way of continuing to fund existing areas of work or to explore new areas of work. **Action: HoDs**

Agenda Item 12 – Review of structural reorganisation – measures of success

36. The FREB discussed the paper produced by KC and decided that the review of the divisional structure will be conducted by an independent (external) consultant experienced in change management. It will take place in June 2006, two years after implementation, to allow sufficient time for the change to bed in. **Noted**

Agenda Item 13 – Business Development

37. Divisional Reports, XC circulated a structure for FREB monthly Divisional reports and advocated the greater use of electronic diaries. **Action: FREB**
38. Potential and Actual Business Table (PABs), an example of the proposed table was circulated by XC. External income and bids in progress will be picked up from the PAB by TC for inclusion on the contracts register. **Action: TC**
39. The design of the PAB form and difficulties in populating it were discussed. AM to circulate his adaptation of the form to HoDs. **Action: AM**
40. XC to report to FREB every two months identifying future major opportunities that we could bid for. **Action: XC**

41. XC or Alison Melvin to put the PAB form into 'Excel' format and to attend Divisional meetings to explain the form. **Action: XC, AI. M**
42. HoDs to populate PAB form and bring to November FREB. **Action: HoDs**
43. XC circulated FR Innovation Strategy. XC to discuss the presentation of this paper with Alison Melvin to present to either HoDs individually or to the next FREB. **Action: XC, AI. M**

Agenda Item 14 – International linkage – what are objectives and how will we

44. Staff attending international meetings/conferences should take the opportunity to network and identify potential partners for collaborative bids. A Memorandum of Understanding is being developed to be used for international links which will be circulated to HoDs for information. **Action: XC**

Agenda Item 15 – AOB

45. CQ is our representative on the HR Business Improvement Project. CQ to keep FREB informed of developments and HoDs to make their views known to CQ as this project develops. **Action: CQ, HoDs**

Date of next meeting. 11 October 2005.