

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 25 January 2008
Alice Holt

Present:

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

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

Agenda Item 1 – Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

1. Corrections to Minutes of December 2007 meeting;
 - Item 9: A manual for new graduate trainees and their managers is in process.
 - Item 14: Substitute 'climate change' for 'rainforests'.
 - Item 14: WH will supply an amendment for first bullet point. **Action: WH**
 - Item 34: SS will keep FREB informed of progress regarding the finance and resource management system, 'Primavera'. **Action: SS**

Otherwise Minutes were accepted.

2. Matters arising
 - Lesley Crozier, FC's Equality and Diversity Manager will attend the 16 April FREB at NRS.
 - Wales PB2 trawl will go out next week, note to be issued to FR staff and HoDs to give notice of the trawl when giving FREB feedback meetings. **Action: HoDs**
 - Graduate Trainees, CQ will put forward FR's submissions to the HRSB when training placements are discussed. **Action: CQ**
 - Jane Devlin, IP Manager joined FR on 21 January.
 - HoDs who haven't yet responded to respond to AKM's note for staff to be nominated as Divisional Innovation Leaders **Action: HoDs**
 - XC has incorporated suggested changes in to the Communications Strategy. HoDs to let XC know of any further changes by end of January. Strategy will then be finalised and issued. **Action: HoDs, XC**
 - Decision Support Systems, a meeting has been arranged in late February between FR, OSU, representatives of GB Planners and FMOs to discuss issues relating to the use of DSS within the wider FC. BM and/or CQ will

- update FREB at the next meeting. **Action: BM/CQ**
- Update on Inventory and Forecasting Project, further discussions are taking place with a meeting on 14 February. Following this meeting there will be a consultative phase to agree the principles before the report goes to FCEB at the end of April. It was noted that a new Cost Centre will not be in place until 1 April 2009 to take the final outcome forward. HM asked that a day be reserved in March for FREB to discuss a response to the consultative document. HM to arrange for a paper to be circulated before this meeting. **Action: HM**

Agenda Item 2 – Programme Advisory Groups – Management of Bids for Funding

3. AM introduced his paper and noted that during the all-staff meeting held by PF-S at Alice Holt, many of the concerns of staff centred round this subject. After discussion, AM's recommendations were accepted and it was agreed that there is a need for process but that it should not be too restrictive. It was also agreed that:
 - Two pre-PAG meetings will be held with CEO, RD and HoDs to discuss Divisional ambitions for new research proposals, the quality of those proposals, the possible expansion/integration of existing research programmes and how they fit into FR's science strategy.
 - The Research Director will be the co-ordinator of the process.
 - It must be linked to the Business Planning process.
 - Information required for the decision making process must be clear to staff.
 It was noted that;
 - C&FS needs to be kept aware of our process.
 - There is a need for a wider range of discussions when new proposals are being put forward.
 - There needs to be clarity where 'sunsetting' may occur.
 - There is a role for RLOs as observers in the PAG process.
 - A practical way forward, in the first instance, was to have a more explicit tie-in to the Director's Programme Review series of meetings. **Action: AM**

Agenda Item 3 – Draft Outline of 08/11 Corporate Plan and possible KPIs

4. PF-S introduced this paper and invited comments from HoDs on the draft Corporate Plan by 1 February. **Action HoDs**

The Corporate Plan will go to the FCEB in February (by circulation) and physically to the Commissioners' meeting in March.

5. Amendments to KPIs were discussed and agreed as follows:
 - KPI 1 – remove 'assuming our current remit from the FC' and include, in the narrative, something explaining the possible transfer of some staff out of FR and the effect that this might have on external income
 - KPI 2 – add 'Biomass Development Centre'
 - KPI 3 – Remove
 - KPI 4 – Agreed

KPI 5 – Insert ‘By June 2008 FR will have appointed.....’

KPI 6 – Start with ‘To enhance our customer care ethos.....’

KPI 7 – Agreed

KPI 8 – Add ‘Following on from last year’s skills audit we will provide training in the areas identified’

KPI 9 – PF-S will re-word ‘to improve transparency and efficiency’.

6. Following these revisions, the Corporate Plan will be revised and circulated amongst FREQB.

Action: PF-S

Agenda Item 4 – Structure/Management of FR Centres

7. AM introduced his paper relating to the establishment of FR Centres. He was looking for the broad principles to be agreed. Three Centres have been agreed;

Climate Change
Biomass-Energy
Urban Greenspace.

8. It was agreed that;

- Centres will be given an external profile and a Cost Centre and direct income from CFS as appropriate.
- There will be no delay in establishing the Climate Change and Urban Greenspace Centres.
- There will be a nominated Head for each Centre.
- Climate Change and Urban Greenspace will be based in one Division.
- The management and resources of these two Centres for 08/09 will be examined in more detail at the Business Planning meetings.
- AM will come back to the March FREQB with an up-date.

Action: AM

Agenda Item 5 – ICT Service Board Update

9. This paper was presented by BM who explained that the ICT Service Board has not met for some time. The revised terms of reference attached to BM’s paper were discussed and agreed. It was also agreed that;

- The name of the Service Board be changed to FR ICT Steering Group.
- FR will have a representative on the BSD Working Group.
- Consideration will be given to the establishment of a working group to carry out a review of experimental database and archiving during 08/09.

Action: BM

Agenda Item 6 – New Developments in GreenerWays

10. PF-S introduced this paper, Steve Lee, FR’s GreenerWays ‘Champion’ will be reporting to the March meeting of FREQB (by video-conference) in more detail. Steve was also contributing to the AH Greening Committee’s presentation to all Alice Holt based staff on 31 January.

11. FC/FR will move towards the achievement of Government targets. In order to do this, an annual saving of 3% in our energy use and a 5% travel saving for the next 3 financial years has to be made. It was noted that FR makes extensive use of video conferencing already and has been active in re-cycling during the past two years. Given how far we are down this route it will be correspondingly more difficult for us to show dramatic savings given a 2008/09 baseline figure. However, the GreenerWays Programme Board and local co-ordinators are preparing rollout plans giving advice and tips on energy and travel savings. It was noted that the FC is aiming to achieve accreditation to ISO 14001. **Noted**
12. It was felt that FREB should be leading the way by holding more meetings by video conferencing and publicising this to staff. **Noted**

Agenda Item 7 – Divisional Reports

13. Divisional reports will appear on the Intranet.
14. The CEO and Research Director are finding the Programme Review meetings useful, they would be interested to have feedback from staff. **Action: HoDs**
15. HE to let WH have a paragraph for the DG's report on his invitation by FAO to present a keynote paper. **Action: HE**
16. HM reported on NWSS and NIWT2 Woodland Map progress. **Noted**
17. EHS level II websites are up and running and received 27000 hits.
18. Ecology reported a very positive launch of the Information Note on Climate Change Impacts in Scotland by Michael Russell, Minister of Environment in Scottish Government. Duncan Ray co-ordinated the publication.
19. FMD reported an interest in stump harvesting in South Scotland as a means of providing fuel.
20. PF-S, AM and AKM to get together and consider names for a pool of 'volunteers' to be considered as 'Innovation Facilitators'. **Action: PF-S, AM, AKM**
21. AKM to provide PF-S with a brief on PSRE4 for the February FCEB meeting. **Action: AKM**

Agenda Item 8 – Finance

22. Forecast for 2007/08 indicates a small net surplus.
23. SS to let HoDs have a statement of approved capital items. **Action: SS**
24. SS asked FREB members to note the latest financial position with the objective of remaining within the latest forecast. **Action: HoDs**

Agenda Item 9 – Staffing

25. KC reported that present staffing level is 266 (FTE) which is forecast to rise to 277 by end of FY.
26. References are being taken up on 6 companies short-listed for the provision of PRINCE2 training.
27. Research Promotion Boards are being held on 11/12 February.
28. Judgement from the High Court in the Martin Lipscombe v Forestry Commission was in favour of the Forestry Commission. FREB thanked KC for his involvement in bringing this to a successful conclusion. FR is appearing at the Birmingham Employment Tribunal commencing 10 March defending a constructive dismissal claim brought by the same party.
29. KC identified that more demands will be made on his limited time (Equality and Diversity initiative, introduction of FC People Strategy, Member of the HR Management Board). He is looking at ways of using our SLA with Central HR to take on some of the more routine HR matters in line with what happens in the Countries.
30. TUS have written following a survey they conducted of the workloads of FR staff and have requested that, once further analysis has taken place, a meeting be arranged to discuss the findings.
31. HoDs to give PF-S information on the status of requested posts shown as 'tba' (to be agreed) on the staffing figures paper. **Action: HoDs**

Date of Next Meeting – 13 March 2008 at Alice Holt