

Date: 23 August 2011

Our Ref: SM110819

Your Ref:

To: Steve Meeks

Cc: Jean Lindsay

England

Steve Holdsworth

Chair

Dear Steve

SR10 – Staff Consultation – FC England HR, Finance & IT Functions

FCTU England is pleased to be given the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the SR10 proposals for Forestry Commission England and appreciate the gesture of extending the consultation period.

I do need to take this opportunity however to restate our position in terms of our national campaign. We believe that the Forestry Commission is extremely cost effective in terms of the resources it manages. Through the SR10 programme of cuts we risk losing all the benefits that the Forestry Commission bring to everyone in England. The Trade Union movement has offered the Government countless ways in which to seek out and implement alternatives to these cuts that would allow them to meet the needs of the national deficit. The Government has chosen not to listen so far to these arguments and therefore the FCTU remains steadfastly opposed to any job cuts in the FC.

Following the all staff meetings, the presentation of “Shaping the Future” and the start of the Forestry Commission’s VE scheme, we have seen a great deal of interest and growing anxiety from England staff in how they are going to cope. Not only with change management and the pressures that can bring, but also how they can personally contribute within the new structures and enable the FC to remain fit for purpose.

England HR

The core principles of “Fit For Our Future”, our people’s strategy, are achieving business objectives, managing change, managing expectations and maintaining employee engagement. FCTU England believes that our HR team can potentially facilitate the delivery of these objectives, but we are concerned that the level of demand, following the FC England change plan to 2015, will rise and could well exceed the planned resource available. We believe this represents a huge risk to achieving the people strategy principles.

The consultation document mentions the need for further assessment. It would be helpful to know if there have been any recommendations following this work, which could be shared with us at this time.

England Finance & IT

Again, the concerns of FCTU England revolve around the uncertainty of what challenges the team may face in the coming years. In terms of England Finance,

- what has been the effect of the recent staff cut to the team?
- What work is likely to be transferred from FAS to the team?
- Can this be accommodated within the team at this time?

IT management faces other demands, such as the growing reliance of local staff on network capacity, ageing servers and bespoke IT business applications, such as GIS, SRP and GLOS that increasingly rely on the unique knowledge of only a very few people in support positions.

The effect of the ongoing work (Admin Review Task and Finish Group and Forest District Administration) has yet to be shared with the Trade Unions. We do however anticipate that this too will impact on this implementation plan. Just one example of this is the likely reduction in the number of LIMs around the country. Without such experienced staff in place there will probably be a greater demand on ITLO Managers, at least in the short-term.

Whilst acknowledging that staff reductions and other cost savings are not expected to be in effect until FY 14/15, it is not clear from the consultation document where the other efficiencies in administration will come from. It would be useful for our members to see some detail here about how you arrived at these figures.

I hope you will be able to respond to the queries that have been raised within this letter and I look forward to your reply in due course.

Yours sincerely

Steve Holdsworth
(via e-mail)