

Forestry Civil Engineering (FCE) Head Office Review

Record of Meeting held on 26th October 2009

Present: Frank MacCulloch (Chair)
Gavin Queen
Helen Paterson
Julie McMorran
Diana Hilliard
Bruce Hamilton
Andrew Stewart
Mike Cowan

Apologies: Alan MacKenzie

1. Welcome and Introductions

Frank welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the FCE Head Office Review and introductions were made.

Frank apologised for discussing the contents of an earlier review, carried out by his predecessor, unaware that the Peebles based staff were not involved in that review or knew of its findings.

This was acknowledged and accepted by the group.

2. Purpose of the Review

Frank discussed the background to the review and confirmed that the drivers are as follows:

- Fresh assessment of FCE business by new management
- Forthcoming expiry of Peebles office lease focuses attention on the alignment of the Peebles office with current FCE business objectives
- Current separation of design staff is restricting knowledge sharing and business efficiency

Frank clarified that the purpose of this review is different from his predecessor. The current review will focus on FCE's business objectives whilst ensuring any proposal for a new office location is within a reasonable commute from Peebles, Edinburgh and Stirling.

Also, the current review will be done in partnership with staff and the TU; providing the opportunity for staff and TU to offer their views and ideas.

3. Agree Business Objectives

The group considered each of the business objectives proposed for the review.

- **Provide fit for purpose office provision for FCE staff and customers**

Frank pointed out that the office review must take into the account that the current Peebles office is not sustainable as a suitable long-term FC office. The space is not ideal and the building is not easily accessible for disabled people.

Bruce put forward that the proposed square metres per person sought in the option appraisal does not reflect HSM guidance. Frank confirmed the size of office area sought is approximately 140m² and the review can take the HSM guidance into account.

- **Improve the profile of FCE through greater visibility and access to FC decision makers.**

Frank advised that as a service provider this was a key area for FCE going forward and that he had already taken steps with the field staff to integrate them more fully with their customers. Julie commented that improving the profile and influence of FCE can be achieved without moving from the Peebles location. Frank expressed a belief that location does have an impact on networking opportunities and more frequent access to key figures within the FC will increase visibility and strengthen FCE's business proposition. Helen acknowledged if the outcome of the review was to remain within the Peebles area actions to improve the profile would also need to be agreed.

- **Improve customer service through greater accessibility to key FC staff / offices.**

Julie commented that access to FC offices would also offer better facilities for staff and this should also form part of the consideration for a new office location (showers, clubs, canteen facilities etc). Helen suggested this could feature under the staff retention and attraction section of the scoring matrix.

- **Integrate with another FCS office to improve efficiency and share existing FCS technical assets e.g. Video conferencing, Computer servers , telephone systems**

Frank put forward that seeking efficiency gains in the office review is also an objective with regard to information systems requirements (i.e. sharing server and network capability with another office). Andrew commented that careful consideration would be required for how this is measured. It was also thought that any systems problems would be resolved quicker if FCE Head Office operated from a larger, shared office. Diana pointed out that systems problems experienced by the Peebles office have been infrequent and are resolved quickly.

The staff side felt that cost considerations should be more clearly stated in the objectives.

- **Provide a secure base for staff for the future.**

This objective was agreed by the group.

- **Ensure the location is suitable to allow the retention of key staff and to attract strong fields of applicants for recruitment exercises.**

Andrew highlighted that staff are the FCs greatest asset and this business objective is critical. The staff side also felt that a further objective needed to be added which focused on the health, work life balance and greenerways to make it clear that this would be included in the review of options.

Gavin pointed out that greenerways considerations will be a two-way process because whilst the review must take into account any excess mileage that may result from the proposed options for a new location, the review also needs to consider the impact of staff (not based at the existing Peebles location) who travel to FCE Head Office on business. Frank said that it will be difficult to obtain accurate greenerways mileage data for this review but estimates can be made.

- **Integrate design teams**

Frank explained that sharing of knowledge amongst the design team was crucial. This would lead to efficiencies and sharing of knowledge between the bridge and road design teams.

- **Location to be within daily travel of Peebles and Stirling.**

Locations that had been rejected so far

Frank confirmed that in terms of a proposed new location for the FCE Head Office, Inverness and Stirling have both been rejected.

Frank also confirmed that Peel House was no longer an option. Alan Stevenson, FC Scotland has confirmed that Glentress is now to be a recreational hub and there will not be office accommodation for FCE at this site. **Frank confirmed to furnish the group with a copy of this communication from Alan Stevenson.**

The Selkirk office is also ruled out due to the movement of the Galashiels office into this location.

Further to discussions around the table it was decided that NRS as an option was not feasible due to the cost implications of building a new office for FCE on that site.

Locations for further review

The options which will be considered by the review include another office location in the Peebles area; Silvan House; Tweedbank; and possibly another location yet to be identified within reasonable commute for affected staff.

It was agreed that the following points would be made to the objectives and developed into a terms of reference agreeable to the group:

- Ensuring a healthy work/life balance for staff should be specified
- Acknowledging staff as a valued asset should be illustrated by bringing the retention of existing staff higher up the list of business objectives
- Cost will be incorporated into the business objectives including the financial implications of any proposed move plus greenerways impact.
- Objectives to be in 'plain english' with acronyms explained

Action: F MacCulloch

6. Support for Staff

Frank assured the group that management are committed to supporting affected staff through any change implemented as a result of the review. Additionally, any proposed change affecting staff will be risk assessed using the HSE Management Standards.

Administrative Staff

In response to a point made in Andrew's written comments submitted prior to the meeting, Frank gave recognition that the administrative staff based in Peebles make a valued contribution to the Unit. Diana commented that morale is low within the team and Frank affirmed the commitment to support staff through any proposed changes and also highlighted that a key objective of the review is to retain staff and ensure they have opportunities to develop their career in the future.

Communication of Review

The group agreed that the Terms of Reference for the review would contain a statement outlining how the progress of the review would be communicated to FCE staff. It was agreed that written documents and records of meetings would be available on the intranet but due to the size of the impacted group relevant information would also be emailed to affected staff.

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6. Scoring Matrix

Andrew put forward that the group will require more detail on the scoring methodology used in the matrix and also the weightings which have been applied to each criterion. The additional detail should provide a clearer explanation of what is being taken into account for each criterion. It was agreed that the title of first criterion would be amended to be "Suitable space". Frank will arrange to provide further guidance for the group in advance of the next meeting.

It was also agreed that to accurately reflect the cost efficiency element that a monetary score should also be included in the revised matrix

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4. Agree Milestones for 2nd and 3rd Meetings

The next two meeting dates are fixed, however, it was agreed that there would be flexibility to ensure that meaningful consultation takes place.

The next meeting would focus on **agreeing of the matrix and the weightings and if time allows the possible start on** scoring the three locations identified as requiring further review.