

19th September 2017

To: Jean Lindsay FCIPD
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Sam Telford
FCTU Secretary

Dear Jean

FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS 2017 PAY CLAIM

On behalf of FDA, GMB, PCS, Prospect and Unite, I would like to submit our joint trade unions' pay claim for 2017.

For many years now, our members have been subject to derisory pay increases, if at all, in the Forestry Commission. This has resulted in real terms pay cuts, with many now earning substantially less net pay than they did five or more years ago, which is wholly unacceptable. FCTU stressed a similar point in the 2016 pay talks, with a fair and proper pay rise being urgently needed long before even then. However, with RPI and CPI steadily increasing following the period of relatively low inflation and now being at the highest since April 2012, it is now imperative that our members are properly compensated for the work they do for the FC; that the effects of the Westminster Government's pay policy are reversed and that our members are not forced to take another real terms pay cut.

Pay and benefits in the Civil Service and the wider public sector now lag significantly behind those available for comparable jobs in the private sector—and indeed the forestry industry, for many roles—with the gap forecast to widen. This has already resulted in many of our members leaving the organisation, ending their long careers with the FC, because of low pay, and moving onto better-paid employment elsewhere.

It has never been more important to ensure that the FC is able to recruit, retain and motivate the skilled staff it needs. To do this, a proper pay rise is severely needed across the Pay Bands. Our members are worth more than a meagre 1% rise and we therefore demand an urgent resolution. While we acknowledge that in 2016 the FC made genuine attempts to increase the pay pot beyond the 1% cap, we are thus far unable to give the same assurances to members this year. The FC must continue to explore methods of avoiding worsening pay levels for staff and continue to send the message to the Cabinet Office that 1% is unacceptable.

OUR CLAIM

FCTU recognises the maximum of the pay scale as the rate for the job. All of our members should attain the rate for the job as soon as they have completed their probationary period. While our pay scales have been substantially shortened over the years, achieving the rate for the job is no longer reachable for those further down the pay range since the removal of progression. We therefore call on the FC to have the Westminster Government reinstate pay progression to allow a single rate for the job on every Pay Band following probation.

We continue to seek that the FC takes steps to reduce working hours and increase leave entitlements. These are entirely justifiable steps to take, as British workers have among the longest working hours and lowest holiday entitlement in Europe. In meeting this demand it will significantly benefit members and their families, helping with the competing pressures of work and family life.

Forestry Commission staff are thousands of pounds a year worse off than they should be as a result of:

- The cumulative effect of a two-year pay freeze coupled with the continuing 1% pay caps.
- A devalued pension and increased pension contributions.
- The rise in National Insurance payments.
- Non-consolidated rises for over half of staff in 2015.
- Pay progression not being honoured for many years before formally removing it in 2015. This means nearly half of staff see no way of reaching the rate for the job.

Our claim in 2017 seeks the following:

1. A *fully consolidated* increase in pay rates of **at least** 5% or **at least** £1200 if the percentage increase is less than this sum.
2. All staff to attain the rate for the job (maximum of Pay Band) after probation.
3. Equal Pay: address the gender pay gap and pay anomalies, preventing instances of leapfrogging, *funded separately from the pay pot*. FCTU believes more has to be done now to break the pay caps to address our pay anomalies.
4. No compulsory redundancies.
5. A phased reduction in working hours toward a 35 hour week for all staff.
6. 30 days Annual Leave on appointment.
7. Allowances to retain their relative value to pay and therefore be increased in line with the 5%+ rise.

8. Overtime to be calculated based on actual hours worked (37 rather than a 42 hour week).
9. The positive adoption of the Scottish Living Wage in all procurement and tendering of contracted-out services.

FCTU calls on the Executive Board to endorse the fair and reasonable demands in our claim to ensure that our hardworking and dedicated members are adequately rewarded for the work they do, at the proper rate.

The Westminster Government, and indeed Forestry Commission, cannot continue to justify imposing a 1% pay cap. We have already begun to see the cap being broken elsewhere in the public sector, particularly with the Police and Prison Officers. We have also heard references to the reports of other pay review boards. The FC must make it clear to this government that, as part of the rest of the Civil Service (those without recourse to a pay review board), we will not be left behind and we will not be made to pay for any of those increases. FCTU will not accept this and believe it is incumbent on the FC to convey our members' issues with pay restraint, pay system anomalies and the content of the FCTU Pay Claim to the government.

We hope that this year's negotiations can be completed satisfactorily in order that an agreed settlement can be paid to members as soon after the operative date for pay as possible. On that basis, we are prepared to meet with you as planned on 25th September to begin formal pay negotiations for 2017.

Yours sincerely,



Sam Telford
FCTU Secretary