

## **FCTU Response to FR Refresh Proposals**

### **Introduction**

The FCTU welcomes the opportunity for consultation on the proposals to create a refreshed FR. Given the gravity of the proposals, FCTU has made considerable efforts to seek views from affected union members in the Forestry Commission and in Forest Research. Meetings with union members were held at Silvan House, NRS and Alice Holt (with out-stationed staff invited to join the Alice Holt meeting by telephone conference). The NRS and Alice Holt meetings were attended by a total of 29 union members. At these two meetings, members worked together with their representatives to identify the most important points of collective concern.

The discussions at the meeting at Silvan House (involving around 20 union members) formed the basis of an initial, provisional draft response from the FCTU. This raised points that were consistent with the outcomes of the consultation meetings at NRS and Alice Holt. Hence, the initial draft has been updated to present a number of high-level points of collective concern amongst around 50 affected union members both in the Forestry Commission and in Forest Research.

At the same time, union members have been encouraged to raise individual points as part of the consultation. By nature, these points are more diverse and cover a range of high-level and detailed subjects of relevance to the proposals.

Accordingly, this submission consists of two parts:

1. A discussion of most important collectively-identified points covered in the union meetings
2. A complete set of comments received from individual members.

Where relevant and appropriate, specific comments from individual members have been integrated into the discussion of points of collective concern.

### **Part 1: Collective points of high-level concern**

The FCTU notes that the formal consultation asks for FCTU views on two specific points:

1. The introduction of a new Vision and set of Objectives for FR
2. The transfer of a number of functions that are currently delivered by CFS over to FR.

Views are offered on these points as part of the FCTU response, but these are incorporated into the discussion of six points of high-level concern raised by union members, which are:

1. Successful integration of existing and new functions will require significant cultural change
2. Costs need to be identified, quantified and addressed
3. The issue of how CFS/SIS procurement will be handled needs to be resolved

4. Deliberations over possible future business models for FR need to be more transparent and inclusive
5. Greater efforts need to be made to develop proposals for the future of staff left out of the FR refresh
6. The success of the FR refresh needs to be reviewed.

These points are discussed further below. It is important to stress that the terms of the FR refresh consultation do not include consideration of either the CSR 2015 or the the Forestry Governance Project, and it has not been possible to take account of these processes as part of the FCTU response, even though these will have significant impacts on a refreshed FR. As a consequence, the position the FCTU needs to take on behalf of union members is very likely to evolve.

The FCTU must also express strong disappointment that staff and union members are being consulted about the implementation of a single option for reorganisation, which has already been decided upon. This is not in the spirit of open and inclusive management, and has been the subject of critical comments from a number of union members (see Box 3, Part 2 of this submission).

### 1. Successful integration of existing and new functions will require significant cultural change

This is the biggest and most complex set of concerns that the FCTU needs to express on behalf of union members. It is complex because "culture" for the refreshed FR is being referred to here in a very broad sense, covering:

1. The physical organisation of the refreshed FR
2. Ways of working within the refreshed FR
3. The valuing and developing of staff in the refreshed FR
4. The need to reflect these points in the vision and objectives of the refreshed FR.

Complexity arises because these points, and relevant concerns raised by members, are intimately interlinked.

The basis of a distinct unease amongst staff about the proposals as they currently stand may be characterised as:

- Some individual staff members and whole teams (both potentially joining the proposed refreshed FR and already part of FR) feeling strongly that their jobs and roles are not properly understood
- An accumulating impression that some jobs, roles and outputs are unfairly (and misguidedly) valued more than others by FR management (a view expressed by union members both potentially joining FR and already working in FR)
- As a consequence, on the one hand, the importance of some areas of work, outputs and delivery may not be recognised or may be viewed as "second class", and may even be de-prioritised and lost
- On the other hand, existing integrated working between groups potentially joining FR, and between these groups and those already part of FR, may be overlooked and disrupted, as might new opportunities for further integrated working between the groups comprising the proposed refreshed FR.

Ultimately, this is leading to serious concerns about risks of inequitable management of staff forming the various professional, technical and scientific roles within the proposed refreshed FR, which may lead to:

- A dissipation of existing clear job functions, and degradation of delivery, as misguided efforts may be made to redefine or re-scope the job responsibilities of some staff, particularly those potentially joining the proposed refreshed FR
- An undervaluing of the contributions made by some staff groups to the business of the proposed refreshed FR, with consequent loss of opportunities for staff development amongst these groups.

All the above points have been strongly registered in the trade union meetings held at Silvan House, NRS and Alice Holt, and such messages are also apparent in a number of the written responses offered by union members, as covered in Part 2 of this submission.

There would appear to be at least circumstantial evidence that such concerns have a substantive basis.

Firstly, the notes of the all-staff consultation meeting convened by FR management at Alice Holt records the following question and answer:

*“Future working of IFOS and FR? The countries are and will need to remain clear on their requirements from IFOS, and we (FR/IFOS) will need to support them in their aspirations. In addition it was noted that it will be a collective team effort to ensure that any integration of IFOS into the refreshed agency is successful and effective – and that everyone will need to be involved and open to this. There are no current plans to reorganise the existing FR Centres, and IFOS will join us as a new Centre in its own right however, we will all have to work on ensuring that interdisciplinary working happens and that we include the new CFS/IFOS teams in our work and thinking going forward”.*

This response from FR management is obviously a summary of the exchange that actually took place. Nevertheless, the response from management about the need to ensure that “interdisciplinary working happens” could include the following interpretations:

- FR management view the groups in IFOS and wider CFS who would join the proposed refreshed FR as being insufficiently familiar with the approach of interdisciplinary working, and requiring education in this respect.
- Existing examples of interdisciplinary working between groups potentially joining the proposed refreshed FR, and between these groups and those already part of FR, are not on FR management’s radar
- Groups potentially joining the proposed refreshed FR would need to accept and embrace the pre-existing FR culture and ways of working.

To be absolutely clear, it would be completely wrong for the FCTU to allege that the above interpretations reflect the actual viewpoint and intended message of FR management. Nevertheless, the FCTU must assert that these are entirely reasonable interpretations of the relevant entry in the meeting record, and that this is an example of how communications from management may serve to reinforce the concerns amongst staff (particularly those potentially joining the proposed refreshed FR) as outlined earlier in this discussion.

Secondly, concerns expressed at the trade union meetings held at Silvan House, NRS and Alice Holt, and also in written comments received from union members, have highlighted the approach that has been taken to assimilating the groups and functions potentially joining the proposed refreshed FR into the existing organisational structure. Generally, there is a perception that (in the words of one member):

“The organogram does not suggest a new vision. Instead it suggests that CFS teams have just been tagged onto FR work areas that provide superficially similar functions without a detailed understanding of what the CFS teams do and how they work”.

This approach reinforces an apprehension (which may or may not have a genuine foundation) that:

- This would be a takeover of certain posts and functions previously (mainly) in CFS by a more dominant FR
- Those joining the refreshed FR would be expected to fit in with existing FR structures and ways of working
- The existing FR’s management culture would predominate.

Thirdly, the steady evolution of the FR Science Promotions Procedure has undermined one of the fundamental principles of the 1998 Pay and Grading Agreement (and subsequent agreement on Staff Unification), i.e. that all employees in the Forestry Commission (with the exception of those in the Senior Staff Group) should be assimilated into a consistent grading system, and that the grading of their jobs should be evaluated on a similarly common and consistent basis. In the most recent revisions to the FR Science Promotions Procedure, FR management has finally come out into the open and admitted that it is applying a different approach to determining the grading of selected staff covered by the system, referring to different criteria, with different priorities (i.e., essentially requiring a track record of academic scientific publications and external income generation). Staff potentially joining the proposed refreshed FR, as well as those already working in FR, are aware of this existing differential treatment of the development and grading of a selected group of staff in FR, leading to a strong impression of at least a “three-class” system being engendered amongst FR staff:

- Those scientific staff whose jobs and ways of working fit the specific criteria being given priority by FR management under the FR Science Promotions Procedure (i.e. “the talent”)
- Those scientific staff whose jobs and ways of working *do not* fit the specific criteria being given priority by FR management
- Other professional, technical and administrative staff who are “not doing science”.

Union members, both those potentially joining the proposed refreshed FR, as well as those already working in FR, are anxious about the direction FR seems to be taking, specifically:

- An apparently growing fixation on academic-oriented science on the one hand, and money-making (“business development”) on the other hand
- Connected to the previous point, a sense of a trend towards exclusivity in the valuing and development of different groups of staff.

These points were particularly apparent in the comments made at the trade union meetings held at Silvan House, NRS and Alice Holt, and such messages are also apparent in a number of the written responses offered by union members, as covered in Part 2 of this submission. To quote one member:

“I am concerned that FR evaluate and grade staff on academic achievement, research success and published papers. Can we be assured that FR recognise [other] staff are technical/professional-based in nature, rather than academic, and our success criteria

and job grading is, and should remain, representative of this". (Square brackets show editing of comment by FCTU for the purposes of anonymity.)

The preceding discussion has covered points relevant to the assertion that the successful integration of existing and new functions requires significant cultural change (as defined at the outset of this discussion). These points are particularly pertinent in the context of the proposals for the refreshed FR, since the expanded scope, function and mission of the proposed refreshed FR must mean that FR cannot continue to regard and run itself as simply a scientific research institute (if it ever was such). Furthermore, the effective projection of the proposed refreshed FR to relevant stakeholders and potential clients needs to reflect the expanded remit and functions of the refreshed FR.

### Recommendations on composition and organisational structure

The FCTU offers two recommendations on the composition and on the development of the organisational structure of the refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 1:** In taking forward the implementation of the refreshed FR between now and April 2016, the proposals for the organisational structure of the refreshed FR are revisited and revised, with the aims of:

- Better reflecting the job roles and functions of staff and groups potentially joining the refreshed FR, ensuring that the existing role and focus of jobs are not lost
- Supporting existing interdisciplinary working between groups potentially joining FR, and also between these groups and those already based in FR
- Starting to grow opportunities for, and eliminating any barriers to, new interdisciplinary working between the various individuals and groups that will comprise the refreshed FR
- Ensuring that the organisational structure of the refreshed FR fully reflects the Agency's expanded remit, roles, functions and outputs.

The FCTU is willing to work with management to gain a fuller understanding of the job roles and responsibilities of staff joining the refreshed FR, and already in FR, and to provide input to further shaping the organisational structure of the refreshed FR, based on the views and insights of union members.

In this respect, the FCTU notes that one example option for an alternative organisational structure has been proposed in a response received from members (see Annex 1), based on the three pillars of:

1. Science and research
2. Evidence and analysis
3. Corporate services.

This is an interesting proposal that indicates the imaginativeness of members' ideas for a refreshed organisational structure for the proposed refreshed FR. However, it must be stressed that the FCTU has not had the opportunity in the time provided to consult adequately with union members to arrive at a collective position on their behalf on options for improving organisational structure. Consequently, further engagement between the FCTU and members is needed before the FCTU can offer a definite position on this matter. What is clear at this point is that management would be well advised to give further thought to the question of an organisational structure that is truly fit for the purposes of the refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 2:** As a matter of urgency, the proposals to transfer certain staff groups/job roles to the refreshed FR should be reviewed more closely, to more definitely establish:

- That the full range of job roles and functions is suitable for transferring to the refreshed FR
- Whether or not particular staff groups/job roles should in fact transfer to the refreshed FR, rather than remaining part of a government department.

The FCTU considers that this is particularly necessary in the case of statistical roles, currently residing in CFS, which are proposed for transfer to the refreshed FR. Responses from affected union members give a strong indication that the full roles and functions of these jobs would be compromised by moving to the refreshed FR. To quote one such response:

“I am not convinced that locating Statistics in FR is the best solution. Location within an Agency is likely to be a less attractive option for Government Statistical Service staff than working within a Government Department and being more closely linked to policy colleagues. In addition, if the Agency moves outwith Government, statisticians will lose their Government Statistical Service status. This may lead to recruitment and retention difficulties”.

Management are urged to consider this and related responses from union members, as included in Part 2 of this submission.

The FCTU also draws management’s attention to similar concerns expressed by union members currently in Publications and Technical Communications, Plant Health, Forest Reproductive Material and in IFOS, including the Mapping and Geographical Information Unit.

The FCTU is willing to work with management to gain a better understanding of relevant job roles and functions, and the extent of their suitability for transfer to the refreshed FR.

### Recommendations on ways of working

The FCTU offers one recommendation on the development, or perhaps clarification, of intended ways of working in the refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 3:** In taking forward the implementation of the refreshed FR between now and April 2016, efforts should be made to clarify the intended approaches to ways of working by the various staff groups comprising the refreshed FR, with the aims of providing assurances to staff that:

- Critical job roles currently undertaken by staff groups joining the refreshed FR are not dissipated or completely lost
- Staff are not expected to take on new roles or functions that represent an unreasonable change from their current jobs and responsibilities
- The workloads of staff are not expanded to an unsustainable extent
- Existing effective working relationships between the various groups joining the refreshed FR, and existing groups in FR, continue to be supported and strengthened

- Ensuring that opportunities for growing and improving positive working relationships between the staff groups comprising the refreshed FR are supported and encouraged.

The FCTU is willing to work with management to develop approaches to managing ways of working in the refreshed FR to address the above aims and the concerns of union members.

### Recommendations on valuing and developing staff

The FCTU offers one recommendation on the subject of valuing and developing staff in the refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 4:** In taking forward the implementation of the refreshed FR between now and April 2016, efforts should be made to develop holistic policy and practices towards the development and grading of staff groups in the various job roles and functions comprising the refreshed FR, with the aims of:

- Ensuring fair and equitable treatment and opportunities for all staff groups in the refreshed FR
- Getting the best out of the different staff groups and job roles in the refreshed FR, in support of the business need, recognising the expanded scope and remit of the refreshed FR
- Clarifying the application of the FR Science Promotions Procedure and general grading systems to the various staff groups comprising the refreshed FR, including those categorised as “scientists”
- Mitigating potential risks of pay inequalities amongst individuals and staff groups comprising the refreshed FR.

The FCTU is willing to work with management to identify and address gaps and inconsistencies in existing policies, systems and procedures, to address the concerns of union members, whilst acknowledging legitimate business requirements.

### Recommendations on vision and objectives

The FCTU notes that the proposals for the vision and objectives of the refreshed FR have drawn some critical comments from all sides represented by union members (i.e. scientists commenting that scientific research is downplayed, whilst professional and technical staff have commented that policy informing and evidence provision are downplayed). As such, this could be seen as the mark of a successful compromise. Nevertheless, the FCTU offers one recommendation on the vision and objectives of the refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 5:** In taking forward the implementation of the refreshed FR between now and April 2016, the proposed stated vision and objectives of the refreshed FR should be revisited and possibly revised, with the aims of:

- Taking account of the outcomes of the actions taken in response to Recommendations 1 to 4
- To the extent possible, sharpening the messages projected by the vision and objectives to potential clients and stakeholders.

The FCTU is willing to work with management to advise on the views and aspirations of union members, to inform any further development of the refreshed FR’s statement of vision and objectives.

## 2. Costs need to be identified, quantified and addressed

Union members and the FCTU are very surprised at the suggestion made as part of the proposals for the refreshed FR that changes can be implemented on a cost neutral basis. The FCTU contends that financial costs associated with the formation of the refreshed FR are likely to be significant, and offers two illustrative examples of this point.

**Example 1:** There is a lack of clarity over how the time of staff joining the proposed refreshed FR will be charged for. The FCTU's understanding is that, under current arrangements, FC staff not currently working in FR have their time accounted for (and effectively charged for) on the basis of salary costs, rather than full cost recovery, which is the general practice in FR. If staff joining the proposed refreshed FR were to be charged for on the same basis as existing FR staff, effectively, their charge rates would increase significantly. An admittedly rough calculation based on the paybands of staff covered under the proposals as joining the refreshed FR suggests a total cost increase of around £1.5 million. Whilst this may seem like no more than a paper accounting matter, and whilst the rough calculation may overstate the additional costs, the FCTU asserts that the financial implications for the refreshed FR are real and challenging, and it is far from clear how this issue will be addressed. On the one hand, if staff joining the proposed refreshed FR were to be permitted to charge for time on a different basis to the rest of FR, this could place an excessive burden on the rest of FR to make good the implied financial shortfall. On the other hand, requiring staff joining the proposed refreshed FR to charge for services on the basis of full cost recovery could be likely to significantly curtail their existing capacity for delivery and business development, because the purchasing power of clients seeking their services would be significantly reduced.

**Example 2:** Currently, IFOS provides a significant business and technical service to FE England, FE Scotland and NRW, in the form of the Forester GIS and associated Forecast System. Under current arrangements, the infrastructure and delivery of these systems is supported by IS, primarily in Silvan House. Some uncertainty should be noted concerning the future commitment of countries to using Forester GIS, particularly in the case of NRW. However, the presumption should be that IFOS would need to continue providing some or all of this service to the countries in the future, based within the proposed refreshed FR. Whilst it seems likely that the existing infrastructure and delivery processes provided by IS may be used in the immediate future, it seems inevitable that this will have to change, most likely with the proposed refreshed FR taking on responsibility for maintaining the infrastructure and delivery processes. There are likely to be significant financial cost implications of any transition in service and delivery mechanisms that may take place, if the proposed refreshed FR develops such roles whilst the central FC shrinks.

The FCTU accepts that many aspects of the implementation of the proposed refreshed FR have not yet been worked out. Nevertheless, it is the strong view of the FCTU that management would be wise to establish, at least in outline, the likely financial impacts of creating and setting up the proposed refreshed FR, in the immediate term, medium term and long term. Accordingly, the FCTU offers four recommendations on the issue of costs associated with the formation of the proposed refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 6:** As a matter of urgency, efforts should be made to identify and quantify financial costs associated with the formation of the refreshed FR, likely to be incurred in the short term, medium term and ongoing.

**Recommendation 7:** Based on the findings of the actions taken in response to Recommendation 6, efforts should be made to develop a financial plan that will address the increased costs associated with forming and running the refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 8:** In the event that the assessments undertaken in response to Recommendations 6 and 7 reveal that there are significant short-term costs involved with the migration from existing structures to those that will be constituted following the formation of the refreshed FR, management is urged to consider the option of seeking an appropriate level of contingency funding to cover these transitional costs.

**Recommendation 9:** Given the extent of changes taking place in the Forestry Commission and in Devolved Administrations, efforts should be made to obtain assurances that funding for FR currently administered by CFS is safeguarded and that there is a sustainable body for budget-holding and procurement of outputs and services from the refreshed FR.

The FCTU is willing to work with management to identify and quantify costs associated with the creation of the refreshed FR and associated changes.

### **3. The issue of how CFS/SIS procurement will be managed needs to be resolved**

This issue has already been raised in Recommendation 9. In addition, union members and the FCTU are aware that the creation of the proposed refreshed FR, along with implementation of the outcomes of other reviews for Central/Shared Services, will leave behind a very significantly diminished central FC body. In particular, the transfer of IFOS to the refreshed FR, and any reorganisation of the CFS Policy Analyst team, will have significant impacts on the processes of managing and procuring outputs and services from the refreshed FR. Accordingly, the FCTU offers one recommendation on the issue of costs associated with the formation of the proposed refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 10:** As a matter of urgency, arrangements need to be clarified for the holding of budgets and the procurement and management of outputs and services from the refreshed FR, as part of implementation of the FR refresh.

### **4. Deliberations over possible future business models for FR need to be more transparent and inclusive**

Although the subject is not strictly within the scope of the proposals for creating a refreshed FR, union members and the FCTU are very concerned that options for a change in the business model for the refreshed FR appear to be already under consideration, and could have significant impacts. Accordingly, the FCTU offers one recommendation on any deliberations undertaken on the question of a future business model for the proposed refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 11:** As part of any reviews of possible future business models the proposed refreshed FR, management must make all possible efforts on behalf of staff to ensure that the review process is transparent and allows for the views and aspirations of affected staff to be taken into account. This should include consultation with staff on a set of possible options for business model, rather than a “done deal” of a preferred option.

## **5. Greater efforts need to be made to develop proposals for the future of staff left out of the FR refresh**

The FCTU notes that those functions not transferring to the proposed refreshed FR will be considered as part of the wider change programme to develop new corporate service arrangements and for the meantime will remain part of CFS.

Those functions not transferring to the proposed refreshed FR include:

- Economics
- Research commissioning.
- International and support for UKFS.
- Plant health
- The remaining parts of CFS Corporate Services.

Union members and the FCTU are conscious that more information is needed on the functions not transferring to the refreshed FR, and what the constitution will be of the remaining parts of Central/Shared Services that are not transferred to the countries. There are only cursory remarks on those functions that should not move to the refreshed FR and staff are concerned about this lack of information. Furthermore, union members have expressed concerns that effective team relationships are being broken up under proposals to move some groups to the refreshed FR, some to the countries, whilst retaining others in some sort of central body. Particular concerns have been expressed with regard to the functions of Plant Health and Forest Reproductive Material. Management is urged to consider the responses of individual members on this subject, as recorded in Part 2 of this submission. Accordingly, the FCTU offers two recommendations on the subject of functions not transferring to the proposed refreshed FR.

**Recommendation 12:** As a matter of urgency, management should bring forward clear and credible proposals for the futures of those job roles and functions not proposed for transfer to the refreshed FR, demonstrating a rational case for transfer to countries or retention in a central body. Proposals are also urgently required for the constitution of the remaining central body.

**Recommendation 13:** In responding to Recommendations 2 and 12, management should also consider existing working relationships between those staff groups/job roles proposed for transferring to the refreshed FR, and those proposed not to transfer, to ensure that essential working relationships and functions are not disrupted by the breaking up of existing teams and working arrangements.

The FCTU is willing to work with management to gain a better understanding of relevant job roles and functions, and the extent of their suitability for transfer or retention as coherent teams.

## **6. The success of the FR refresh needs to be reviewed**

A strong message from union members has been a sense of frustration at having witnessed many proposals for significant change in parts of the Forestry Commission and its successor bodies, which are subsequently implemented, but never properly reviewed to determine whether the changes have been effective and have met objectives. Accordingly, the FCTU offers one recommendation on the subject of the need for a review of the outcome of proposals for a refreshed FR, assuming these are implemented.

**Recommendation 14:** Should proposals for a refreshed FR be implemented, then, following a suitable interval, management should commit to undertaking a review of the effectiveness of the organisational changes involved, and whether these have been successful in meeting objectives and sustaining relevant job roles and functions.

***FCTU Temporary Central Services Committee***

## Part 2: Points raised by members in trade union meetings and in individual written responses

Part 2 of this submission provides a comprehensive account of points raised by union members in meetings organised by the FCTU, and in individual written responses received by the FCTU from members. These may be categorised as:

- High-level points of concern collectively identified by members at the FCTU meeting organised at NRS (see Box 1)
- High-level points of concern collectively identified by members at the FCTU meeting organised at Alice Holt (see Box 2)
- Individual points of concern raised by members verbally at the FCTU meeting organised at Silvan House, and subsequently in writing (see Box 3)
- A formal written response received from the FC Publications and Technical Communications Group (see Annex 1).

The high-level points of concern raised at the meetings at NRS and Alice Holt form much of the basis for the structure of the discussion in Part 1 of this submission. However, it is important to stress that the discussion in Part 1 has also been strongly informed by the individual points of concern raised via the meeting at Silvan House and the formal response received from one staff group. In Box 3, an attempt has been made to structure individual comments to show linkages between the high-level concerns identified in the meetings at NRS and Alice Holt, as discussed in depth in Part 1 of this submission, and the individual points raised via the meeting at Silvan House.

The FCTU has received permission from Elaine Dick for the formal submission from the FC Publications and Technical Communications Group to be attributed to her and her group. In the case of other written comments, to the extent possible, these have been edited for anonymity where necessary, with affecting the meaning or spirit of the original comment.

### Box 1 High-level points of concern from NRS meeting

What would be the pros and cons of changing business model?  
What are the options of changing the business model? (Co-op / not-for-profit.)  
What will be left to manage research procurement?  
What will be the transactional costs of managing procurement from the countries? – CFS role?  
How long is the commitment to government core funding?  
This is going to cost money – how much? – where’s the money coming from?  
We need to be clear about what FR is / does and how it projects this to others.  
Staff joining FR need to feel they belong / fit in.  
Fair and equitable staff development.

### Box 2 High-level points of concern from Alice Holt meeting

How does FR Refresh make FR more resilient to future changes (e.g. SR15)?

How will servicing increasingly diverse groups of clients / funders be handled effectively?

Refreshed agency / refreshed culture.

Integration requires everyone to "own" the mission.

How will IFOS and SIS procurement be handled in the (near) future?

FR cannot take financial hits for newcomers / newcomers may not be able to take financial hits without support

Will success be assessed / reviewed – holistic.

### Box 3 Individual points of concern arising directly from (or subsequent to) Silvan House meeting

#### A "done deal?"

I am disappointed that little or no effort has been made to speak to me or the staff in my team and properly understand what we do in advance of the consultation. The consultation paper is incomplete without serious analysis or rationale for example; the 'consolidated analysis' is referred to - but not properly explained or made available.

We are essentially being consulted on an option that appears to have been already selected. I think it would have been helpful to offer more analysis and a clearer explanation of other options and exactly why these were dismissed. I am disappointed that little or no effort has been made to speak to me or the staff in my team and properly understand what we do in advance of the consultation. The consultation paper is incomplete without serious analysis or rationale for example; the 'consolidated analysis' is referred to - but not properly explained or made available.

My overwhelming feeling is one of powerlessness. When I read the documents and listen to the presentations it all comes across as a 'done-deal' and there is nothing I can say or do at this stage to affect the outcome. We are told that the status quo is not an option, but it all seems to be being broken up at the whim of politicians rather than for sound reasons.

#### Impacts of other reviews

With the upcoming spending review it seems to be premature to be moving functions before we have any idea how the spending review will impact the FC and FR. Staff numbers and what can be delivered by those staff will be key so why is this being done now and how will this be progressed in parallel with the spending review?

What's the point of consulting with the Forestry Governance Project Board "review" already started?

## 1. Successful integration of existing and new functions will require significant cultural change (multiple issues)

### *Organisational structure*

There is a feeling that posts and functions are just being slotted where they can, which shows a mismatch in the vision stated through the high level objectives and that it isn't being made a reality when reading further on.

There is a mismatch between the sort of language that was used to describe the FR 'Vision' and what this boils down into in terms of the organisation. The revised organograms show new posts slotted into an existing structure rather than a new unit with a new policy orientated function. It would be helpful to state more clearly what the constraints might be and what the criteria are for functions to be earmarked for the Agency.

The organogram does not suggest a new vision. Instead it suggests that CFS teams have just been tagged onto FR work areas that provide superficially similar functions without a detailed understanding of what the CFS teams do and how they work. The FC Publishing and Technical Communications team has been tagged onto the Centre for Research Services column because it is seen to fit in with the FR Communications and RIS team, but in reality our work is very different. Similarly FC statistics has been tagged onto the FR Social Science, Economics and Statistics team, but their work is also different. A more pragmatic approach is needed whereby teams are positioned to allow them to work effectively instead of being slotted into the existing FR model.

A new organisational model is needed for FR. FR would benefit from moving to a more interconnected or matrix model, which advocates greater synergy across the whole organisation. Spheres of work could overlap, feed information and respond to each other in order to develop and strengthen the organisation while also being able to work on their own individual projects. Suggested spheres of work would be:

- Science – all science and research work (produce knowledge and data)
- Evidence and analysis – knowledge exchange, including technical publishing (produce fit for purpose outputs using knowledge and data from the Science sphere)
- Corporate services – All corporate functions including communications and marketing (provide support to the rest of the organisation).

The analysis of the functions in the appendix is somewhat inaccurate and/or superficial. For example for "Publications" an analysis undertaken by that team that shows a very significant proportion of the work is not research related has been ignored, one assumes because it does not fit with the proposal. Virtually no analysis has been done for international work.

### *Specific comments on IFOS posts/jobs/functions*

I support the proposals for IFOS as it is the best outcome we could hope for in continued employment.

Staff members in IFOS (and potentially other areas) haven't been consulted in the same way as Equality & Diversity in enquiring properly about what they do and who for; therefore it's very likely that less informed decisions have been made.

Given senior management are taking the break-up of the FC forward, I think that

moving IFOS en masse into FR is a reasonable way forward... on the surface. As always, the devil is in the detail.

I can see where the NFI and Forester teams are a good fit for FR. Dataset production and management functions that M&G currently perform also seem suited, but what pressure will the Estates/FoRe work come under?

I hope that with closer links to FR it will open up new areas for M&G staff to expand into, such as Remote Sensing, and become more involved in GIS systems and data in general.

The organograms for the future FR structure miss out the current CFS/IFOS admin team that will also be moving to FR.

#### *Specific comments on CFS Statistics posts/jobs/functions*

Clarity needed on how Statistics will work in the refreshed FR and why it will move across to the agency instead of remaining part of government, which may make more sense particularly with the international provider roles statisticians have in the FC. The work of Statistics is very different to that of Statisticians in FR therefore integration could be problematic.

I am not convinced that locating Statistics in FR is the best solution. Location within an Agency is likely to be a less attractive option for Government Statistical Service staff than working within a Government Department and being more closely linked to policy colleagues. In addition, if the Agency moves out with Government, statisticians will lose their Government Statistical Service status. This may lead to recruitment and retention difficulties. Whilst I agree that it is not sensible to split the function, a better solution would be to locate the team within one of the countries where they could then also provide services to (and on behalf of) other parts of the UK.

I have some concerns that the synergies that currently exist between teams within CFS have not been fully recognised and may be lost when CFS is broken up. For example, Statistics currently do a lot of work with Economics and IFOS on natural capital accounting, and with International on the development and provision of data and indicators to international organisations. It is not clear how well these functions will operate under the proposed arrangements.

If Statistics are to move to FR, it would make more sense to locate the team within IFOS, where there are already strong connections in terms of work on Official Statistics and natural capital accounting. The Statistics team do not undertake research and it would make more sense to have a separate **analysis and evidence centre**, that is less focused on research.

#### *Specific comments on Plant Health and FRM posts/jobs/functions*

How it can be mixed and clear page 17 of the consultation document - Plant Health  
The consolidated analysis although mixed is clear that the Plant Health function should go to the countries.

Plant Health - Why the rush if the other functions within CFS have up to four years  
page 3 of the consultation document - Within the next 4 years (or thereabouts) all FC cross-border functions and shared services will either be; devolved to country-level delivery, divested through changes in forestry legislation or incorporated in a future forestry research body.

The FR Refresh case is silent on Forest Reproductive Material (FRM). Although the FRM Officer is line managed by the Deputy Head of Plant Health it is not a plant health function and previously has been part of Grants and Licences with some of the technical support work carried out by Forest Research. The FRM operational function arguably would fit well within a refreshed Forest Research Agency as some of the work relating to verification of seed orchards and seed stands is still carried out by FR. The function is so specialised, and the volume of work does not warrant a full time post, that it makes sense from an economic and quality of service point of view to transfer the operational function to FR to maintain a single area of expertise with the policy function perhaps in due course to go the countries. In terms of legislation there is a FRM Order that covers England and Scotland

I would suggest that it makes much more sense for the FRM Officer to be part of the refreshed FR Agency as the link in with their work is much more appropriate.

### *Specific comments on Publications and Technical Communications posts/jobs/functions*

I believe that the transfer of the FC Publishing and Technical Communications team and some other functions from CFS to FR is potentially a good thing. Moving to FR to help develop and strengthen that organisation with additional skills and experience and become part of its new vision could prove to be an exciting opportunity for both individuals and teams to develop in existing or new areas. I also believe that moving to FR may offer more job security than being left in the remaining part of CFS.

However, if FR is truly keen to develop under a new vision which drives it towards being recognised as one of Europe's leading providers of forest science, then I feel FR needs to be open to organisational change in order for it to maximise its potential and get the best out of its staff and teams. Below are some points which I think are important and need to be considered.

The FC Publishing and Technical Communications team do more than is stated within the consultation document. We have not seen the consolidated analysis of our work area, but it would appear to be inaccurate from the information contained in the consultation document. Over and above research outputs, the FC Publishing and Technical Communications team produces:

- practice guidance (the majority of which is not generated by FR)
- the UKFS and guidelines
- Plant Health publications
- Health and Safety publications
- Statistics publications
- Other official publications for FCS and FCE and externals.

Moving forward, and given the above points, it is important to recognise that serious thought needs to be given to:

- How the Publishing and Technical Communications team will produce publications for FCS, FCE and external authors
- How the Publishing and Technical Communications team will produce publications for Plant Health, Health and Safety, Statistics, and other non-research outputs.

The FC Publishing and Technical Communications team is the official publisher for the Forestry Commission. Our team undertakes all the official publishing functions of a Government publisher, we:

- Publish in print and electronically on the web and for mobile devices
- Own and allocate our ISBNs
- Supply bibliographic data to Nielsen (the UK ISBN Agency)
- Supply legal deposit copies of all our publications under the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003
- Provide a system whereby customers can obtain copies of our publications, be they free or priced, hardcopy or electronic.

Moving forward, and given the above points, it is important to recognise that serious thought needs to be given to:

- How FC staff, forestry professionals and the public will be able to access the catalogue of current and archive Forestry Commission publications both in hardcopy and electronic format
- How publications produced by the Forestry Commission retain their Crown Copyright status – who will own Forestry Commission publications, both the archive and current catalogue as well as future publications
- How the FC Publishing and Technical Communications team retains official government publisher status
- How FR could move away from working in ‘silos’. Organisations have been moving away from working in silos for many years as it reduces efficiency, morale and productivity, however, silos appear to be embedded in the vertical structure shown in organogram No. 11 on page 12 of Annex C.

The work of the FC Publishing and Technical Communications team is about knowledge exchange. The Publishing and Technical Communications team, as well as many other parts of the CFS team – statistics, economics, international and IFOS, are involved in knowledge exchange. We analyse and use information in different ways to reach different audiences. We are experienced at taking the information that scientists and authors produce and delivering it in a format that is fit for purpose, clear and engaging. This is a strength of the Publishing and Technical Communications team and indeed of CFS. As knowledge exchange is one of FRs proposed high-level objectives, the Publishing and Technical Communications team should be positioned to allow it to help deliver that objective.

The work of the FC Publishing and Technical Communications team is cross cutting. The work of our team and arguably other teams in CFS is cross cutting, in that the team works with and receives information from people and teams from a wide range of disciplines. It then transforms that information into outputs that are fit for purpose.

I would be grateful if the FC Publishing and Technical Communications team and CFS generally could get the opportunity to discuss these and other ideas in more detail at the implementation phase, and I look forward to being part of the forthcoming changes within a refreshed FR and to the opportunities that may bring.

### *Ways of working*

There is a synergy within CFS. Many of the teams in CFS collaborate and work on projects together. We use each other to enhance, develop and create the best products, outputs or results we can. There is therefore a high level of synergy within CFS, and creating an Evidence and Analysis sphere within a new FR organisational model as suggested above could retain these synergies and develop them if the right teams were housed together.

The consultation doesn't provide any information on how the move will affect CFS staff. It states that we will adopt existing FR management processes; however there

is no indication of what these are and how they might differ. There are some specifics, for example, there is a lack of clarity on timelines and plans for continuing our day-to-day jobs, IT provision is not clear.

Clarity is needed on what the procurement setup in the refreshed FR will be (NFI especially with specialist services - up to 3m spend per year) Procurement laws in England and Scotland also differ, how will this be dealt with? Without this being clear there seems to be a certain naivety about this issue going forward.

IFOS have a major responsibility to FE countries and to the timber industry as a whole, this appears to be covered within the revised FR vision but there is concern that IFOS will be seen as [expected to be] a centre supporting the work of the existing centres.

### *Valuing and developing staff*

I am concerned that FR evaluate and grade staff on academic achievement, research success and published papers. Can we be assured that FR recognise IFOS staff are technical/professional based in nature, rather than academic, and our success criteria and job grading is, and should remain, representative of this

We know that promotion procedures are different between FR and FC, with FR procedures being based on scientific publications and leaning towards academic qualifications. As such, [CFS] staff will be disadvantaged as these are not the focus of our roles.

Will staff currently receiving allowances continue to receive those allowances, such as RRA and moving allowance (subject to usual caveats that they are not contractual and can be withdrawn at any time)? Or to put it another way, is the move going to be used as an opportunity to remove those allowances for staff currently receiving them?

### *2. Costs need to be identified, quantified and addressed*

I would like to see a fully costed plan for the move. The aim is for the move to be 'cost neutral' but it is difficult to see how this can happen.

Is there any more information about the provision of IT, HR and financial services?

Although I welcome the proposal that IFOS remains, for the time being, a complete unit I do have some questions. What will be the financial impact on IFOS considering FR operates as an agency?

Budget and financing are areas of unknown change. We know that charging and overheads operate differently in FR and FC. It is concerning that the cash budget currently allocated to IFOS will no longer buy the same amount for the countries as it will under FR

Would moving to FR take us out of the Whitehall pay remit, therefore, away from SR15?

### *3. The issue of how CFS/SIS procurement will be handled needs to be resolved*

There is no clarity on how the funding for the project that IFOS currently commission from FR [...] will operate.

#### 4. Deliberations over possible future business models for FR need to be more transparent and inclusive

Is there any indication of the medium-term future of FR (say 3-years onwards)? The proposal feels very much like a holding position for [CFS] and also for the current FR functions. Is there a longer-term strategy for [parts of former CFS] to be moved into the countries or to another GB government body?

Longer term effects are of concern, not just the immediate transfer or not of functions.

#### 5. Greater efforts need to be made to develop proposals for the future of staff left out of the FR refresh

We need more information on the functions not transferring and what remaining part of CFS will mean in the interim.

There is a lot of information on the functions moving across and why but only cursory remarks on those that should not move and people are concerned about this lack of info.

In concentrating on FR, it is an omission that the knock-on effects and options for the rest of the CFS functions are not included or a clear process presented. All the functions should be considered or at least explained more clearly as any decision to take some into FR will have an impact on the rest; in terms of line-management relationships, splitting work areas, or the important synergies that exist, for example between economics and statistics.

Page 12 - Where the service is well integrated such as in IFOS the risk of breaking up such a team is considerable and this would have a severe impact on the quality of service provision. Same would apply to Plant Health CFS. PH legislation England and Scotland Plant Health Order and border controls are administered by one team CFS PH. Transfer of the function to the countries could break up this specialised team which would have an impact on the quality of service. Transfer of PH to FR as an interim does not stop further transfer in the future!

Whilst 'Option 2' shows Westminster funding transferred to FR it is not stated clearly what will happen to the funding associated with these non-transferred functions. Moreover, it seems premature to be undertaking a consultation when there is a very significant spending review in the offing.

#### Other comments

Page 8 of the consultation document specifies IFOS staff will be moving onto FR's time recording system. Is this referring to their flexi time recording system (of which Silvan House staff already use) or their system that requires them to record their chargeable time for every 6 minute interval. If it is the latter, then this is an unreasonable burden on IFOS staff, and an inefficient use of their time, given their current customer base/country SLA.

"(The only changes will relate to the need for transferred staff to use FR's time recording system and management systems)." It's difficult to respond when we don't know what the management systems are. For instance, do FR operate the same flexi-system as we do (do they have core-time?), do they have self-certification of

expenses and GPC?

I am uncomfortable with the position on location move being voluntary and at the expense of the person. (page 13) A clearer line/description needed here, as I presume they just mean no moving allowance, and are not going to charge out to the person setting up furniture etc?

I think we need some clarity on accommodation. Are people from IFOS, expected to move to NRS? Even if management say they are not for now, presumably FC Central Services will be charging FR for accommodating their staff in Silvan House. My view is that this charging can make a real difference to the business case and management eventually say that we didn't want to move staff but we have to because of the cost.

The consultation documents are full of inaccuracies and are misleading, more so than the proposals themselves.

My feeling, which is shared by a number of colleagues, is that the information put out officially by management has been inconsistent and is somewhat misleading. Also, I think the consultation proposals are poorly drafted, open to misunderstandings and generally unhelpful.

I am concerned over the way the above has been presented to us, over the so called 'Business Case' and over the concept of a 'Refreshed FR' with a new 'vision'.

## Annex 1 Formal group response from FC Publications and Technical Communications

### Consultation response to the proposal on the FR Refresh

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the FR Refresh proposals.

#### FR Refresh Business Case

I found the contents of this document unclear in places, and some information that would have been useful to structure comments around is not available. For example, the mixed requirements [from the countries] in the 'consolidated analysis' referred to throughout the paper. Notwithstanding this, my comments on the two specific points as requested:

3. Introduce a new Vision and set of Objectives for FR.
4. Transfer a number of functions that are currently delivered by CFS over to FR.

#### New Vision and set of Objectives for FR

Most of the roles currently carried out by the Publishing and technical communications team could still work well in a refreshed research agency with a revised vision and set of objectives if, (i) the organisational structure allowed for it and (ii) the existing synergies with the other teams in CFS and in the countries were not lost in the restructure.

The FR organogram shown in the staff presentations and the consultation paperwork shows the status quo for the Agency, with the CFS teams 'bulking out' existing teams with superficially similar functions. My first point would be to ask if there would be an opportunity to look at this structure again at the next (implementation?) phase of the project?

## **FR organisational structure**

My second point would be to propose a simpler (and possibly more dynamic) structure for the Agency that organised its core functions into three main areas, such as:

### **1. Science and Research Group (for all sustainable forestry related research)**

This would cover functions such as science, research, data collection, modelling, monitoring(...)

With the FR high-level objective:

- *To provide innovative applied research, development, monitoring, scientific services, forestry data services and professional training to UK, European and international forestry stakeholders.*

### **2. Evidence and Analysis Group**

This would cover functions such as knowledge brokering, evidence and analysis, policy support, technology transfer (...)

With the FR high-level objectives:

- *To provide evidence and expertise to inform the development and delivery of UK, Welsh, Scottish and European forestry related policies.*
- *To facilitate knowledge exchange directly, and/or in partnership with others, to UK, European and international audiences.*

### **3. Corporate Services Group**

This would cover corporate support functions such as business development, marketing, training, finance (...)

With the FR high-level objectives:

- *To be the preferred supplier to the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments for forestry science as a result of its quality of service, value for money and reputation with the sector.*
- *To work in partnership with others to promote the development of the wider UK, Scottish and Welsh forest science and research capacity and capability in particular through staff recruitment, training and development.*

The work of the Publishing and technical communications team would in this scenario sit within an 'Evidence and analysis' work group, rather than a Corporate communications team (which would be largely dedicated to web, marketing and internal communications, for example).

## **Transfer of functions**

My third point is to ask how the significant proportion of work that the Publishing and technical communications team carries out *that is not related to research outputs* (from any agency) is handled if the team moves to FR. The FR Refresh Business Case only mentions serving the countries in a bespoke way with regard to research outputs. Much of our current workload is directly related to the UK Forestry Standard and the

guidance for the FC and the sector that supports it (most of it UK in scope). Examples are the many guides on planning. If we don't have a central team co-ordinating this (e.g. if countries published their own guidance in isolation) it could mean unravelling the UKFS – or at least lead to inconsistencies and potential confusion.

My final point is to ask how the 'gap' between the scientific 'push' from the FR Agency and policy/practitioner 'pull' from the countries and the sector will be bridged without CFS. FC and FR have used the skills of the Publishing and technical communications team to this end so that the work they carry out goes beyond that of a traditional design/publications team and adds considerable value to the our outputs. The team currently fills the gap in the commissioning/ supply chain of research by ensuring that outputs are quality assured, fit for purpose, and meet the needs of audiences – not just scientists/subject specialists.

For policy audiences in particular, the relevance of the science to the issues of the day, and the crucial importance of timing, underline the need for interactive knowledge brokering approaches that can deliver synergistic combinations of science push and policy pull. The fact that these activities are growing in importance means there is a need for continued investment in specialised approaches, mechanisms and skillsets for knowledge transfer at the interface of science and policy and science and best practice. I am concerned that our work in these areas would be less effective in the Agency (than it currently is on the commissioning side) unless steps were taken to protect these functions (cf my suggestion of a new organisational structure).

Elaine Dick  
(and on behalf of Ron Wilson and Judith Wright)

16 October 2015