



**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' CORE GROUP
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12TH DECEMBER 2007, ROOM 3, 1ST FLOOR, IN
SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH**

Present:	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Edward Shephard	FCTU Secretary
	Allan Mackenzie	PCS
	Marcus Sangster	Prospect
	Alistair Gillies (substitute for Roy Laird)	GMB
	Sue Gillingwater	FCTU Office
Minute Secretary:	Sam Telford	FCTU Office

1. Introduction

Robert welcomed the Core Group and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Tim Gill and Roy Laird.

3. Minutes of 6th September 2007

The above were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Pay

Edward reported that despite making every effort to progress pay negotiations the joint unions were still awaiting a response from the Executive Board following the meeting in early November,. Following a question from Alistair, Edward advised that meetings with management would be held early in the New Year and that members would be kept up to date via the FCTU Website.

5. Efficiency Review Update

Edward provided a report on the scope and workings of the Departmental Efficiency Review. It was noted that FC Scotland had received a financial settlement and a settlement for FC England should follow early in the New Year.

6. Health & Safety

Robert reported that he was continuing to analyse the current framework of Health & Safety representatives within the FCTU membership, looking at the modern H&S at work environment and assessing if the framework is still delivering a good service to members. He was pleased to report that some members across the organisation had expressed interest in updating the current H&S framework.

Robert added that following enquiries, he had discovered that the TUC offer online Health & Safety courses, including a course on Occupational Health. He advised the group that he would enquire about the format of these courses with the TUC.

7. Lyme Disease

Allan expressed concern that he felt that there was a lack of awareness of the dangers of Lyme Disease across the organisation. Allan said there was a perception that Lyme Disease was on the increase nationally. He believed it to be vital that joint unions ensured that the FC's procedures on protecting staff and raising awareness were robust enough.

Allan said that he was engaging in discussions with FC Health & Safety and that he would report back to the group with details of the FC policies on Lyme Disease, if information were available at workplaces and how the policy compares with other government departments.

8. Communication Meetings

It was noted that the communications meeting plan was ongoing and that it was still proving to be very useful in obtaining feedback from staff on a range of issues and generating meaningful discussion. Edward said that Allan, Robert and himself had visited more than half of the districts and conservancies across the organisation and that they aimed to have completed the initial round by mid-2008. Allan added that although the meeting plan was not primarily a recruitment task, some non-members had asked for application forms to join a union following discussions on issues raised at the meetings. Edward confirmed that the plan was long term and the group agreed that it should remain a key element of FCTU communications.

9. Travel & Subsistence

Edward referred to the recent Travel & Subsistence Notice from Human Resources stating new proposed rates effective from 1 January 2008. The proposal was discussed in detail and Edward advised that he would respond to HR, raising the unions' concerns and that he would keep the group informed.

10. AOB

There were no further items to be added to the agenda.

11. Date Of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next Core Group meeting would take place on 16th January 2008.