



**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' CORE GROUP  
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2008, ROOM 3, 1ST FLOOR, IN  
SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH**

<b>Present:</b>	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Edward Shephard	FCTU Secretary
	Allan Mackenzie	PCS
	Tony Cousins (by telephone)	Prospect
	Roy Laird	GMB
	Sue Gillingwater	FCTU Office
	Tim Gill (by telephone)	Unite
	Richard Williamson (item 4.1)	HR Policy
	Fiona Wright (item 4.1)	HR Policy
<b>Minute Secretary:</b>	Sam Telford	FCTU Office

**1. Introduction**

Robert welcomed the Core Group and thanked everyone for attending.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Malcolm Currie, full time Prospect Official.

**3. Minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007**

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

**4. Pay**

The group had a confidential discussion on the latest position with pay negotiations for 2007/2008, details of which were **agreed** not to be recorded in the minutes. Edward reported that a Pay Committee meeting had been arranged for 23<sup>rd</sup> January.

The group noted that many members were understandably enquiring about the situation with pay and Edward advised that information was available for staff on the FCTU Website.

(To access this information visit <http://fctu.org.uk/pay2007/index.asp>)

**4.1 Pay & Reward Strategy**

The Core Group welcomed Richard and Fiona to the meeting to discuss and generate ideas on particular aspects of the pay and reward system including Pay Band Structure, Performance Related Pay, Overtime and Total Reward. It was noted that HR had no expectations for unions to agree on and accept any principles at this stage and that further meetings would be set up prior to pay negotiations for 2008/2009.

## 5. Efficiency Review Update

Edward provided a report on the scope and working of the Departmental Efficiency Review. He advised that a financial settlement for FC England is expected in mid-February. Edward expressed concern with financial management systems in DEFRA and said that he and Robert would be meeting with Joan Ruddock MP next week in order to discuss implications for FC England under the budget settlement.

## 6. Health & Safety

Robert reported that he had obtained accurate lists of union Health & Safety representatives within the FC from the National Organising Committees. He was pleased to report that many reps had expressed interest in updating the current H&S framework.

The group reflected on the discussion on TUC courses at the last meeting in December and Robert said that he had been in contact with the TUC. He felt that the H&S course would not be suitable for the framework within the FC as the course was specifically aimed at senior reps. However, Robert said that he was in the process of enquiring about the TUC online Occupational Health course to find out what subjects are covered, and was awaiting a response giving details of the course breakdown.

Robert added that he would be meeting with FC H&S to discuss the forming of bespoke training courses for reps.

## 7. Communication Meetings

It was noted that the FCTU Office had received several invites to team meetings for 2008, and that many of the FMDs and Conservators looked forward to having the FCTU present at another meeting. The group agreed that the plan should remain a key element to FCTU communications, and that they should continue to visit as many workplaces as possible. Sue advised that she would keep in contact with the NOCs regarding meetings arranged in their area to ensure that the group was aware of key issues that may affect staff in particular workplaces.

## 8. AOB

### 8.1 Forest Research NOC

Edward reported that he had attended a FR NOC meeting with Sue in December to discuss what additional support they would like or need and said that notes of this meeting would be circulated in due course.

Edward advised that he had taken over the Chair position on the FR NOC on a temporary basis. He explained that the main reasons for this were the concerns over the workload of current NOC members the likely level of activity within the Agency over the coming months. He added that the key elements amongst these will be the appointment of a new Chief Executive, the Inventory and Forecasting Review, the review of the Alice Holt site and ongoing concerns over the FR promotion procedures.

### 8.2 Management Development Programme

Edward referred to the Management Development Working Group and his previous email circulating the outcome of the MDP1 discussions. The Core Group **endorsed** the MDP, noting that discussions on the working group had been positive and that generally the MDP2 programme had been well received by participants.

### 8.3 Inventory & Forecasting Review

Edward gave an update on the Inventory & Forecasting Review for information and added that as the review was in the critical stage of generating options for future structures, a broad consultation process would shortly be underway. Edward said that the FR NOC would be addressing any issues of concern and engaging with management over the coming weeks.

### 8.4 Travel & Subsistence

The group reflected on the discussion on T&S rates at the last meeting in December, as well as a notice from Human Resources outlining new proposed rates effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008. Edward reported that agreement had been made on all elements of the proposal, with the exception of mileage rates. He referred to the HMRC view that an increase in FC mileage rates would result in taxation and said that management had firmly highlighted their policy to avoid additional tax payments wherever possible. The group **agreed** that taxation thresholds are not a sound basis for setting reimbursement rates.

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on **19<sup>th</sup> March 2008.**