



MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21ST MAY, FL1 RM3, IN SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH

Present:	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Allan Mackenzie	FCTU Secretary
	Lorraine Adams	Prospect
	Roy Laird	GMB
	Mary Irvine	PCS
Minute Secretary	Sam Telford	FCTU Office

1. Introduction

Robert welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Andy Patmore.

3. Minutes of 22nd April 2009

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

4. Managing Discipline

Allan reported that he had written to HR following the discussion on the Disciplinary Procedure at the last meeting. The committee had agreed the policy serves to provide all sides with clearly defined responsibilities, however HR were asked that each of the flow charts highlights the provision of a trade representative or work colleague if so wished by the member of staff, as this was only highlighted in two of the flow charts. HR had also been asked to comment on how the procedure will be rolled out, if there would be any training and to give an update in 12 months on how well the procedure is working.

It was noted that HR intended to roll out the new policy on 1st June.

5. Grievance Procedure

Robert referred to the previous discussion and notes on the new Grievance Procedure. Allan said that he would be sending comments as agreed by the FCTUDC to HR and would report back to the group.

6. Efficiency Savings

Allan referred to the response from HR on Efficiency Savings, explaining that the new agreed flexibility is that Departments may apply to use clearly identifiable savings from either their existing pay budget or any of their non-pay budgets to fund pay awards in 2009 and subsequent years. The remit guidance is clear that access to efficiency savings for pay purposes will be on an exceptional, case by case basis and will only be granted where Departments will be undertaking significant workforce reform and that Treasury will apply strict criteria to determine whether any such requests are approved. HR had advised that as Treasury had already approved the 3 year pay remit, there were no plans to re-open this to seek to use the new flexibility at this time.

Allan felt that the FCTU could not take any further action at this time until the national unions gave a clearer picture of their position with the policy.

7. FCTU Strategic Issues Programme

Allan advised that although the Departmental Committee will programme, project manage the programme and prepare project papers, they will look at each project and agree who should be the lead representative in taking responsibility for delivery.

Following discussion, the below plan was agreed:

Priority 1 Key Work Area 2009/2010	Lead Representative	Priority 2 Key Work Area 2010/2011	Priority 3 Key Work Area 2011/2012
Threats to the Forest Estate	TBC	Performance Management	T&S Allowances
Communication	Roy Laird	Training of Union Representatives	Harmonisation of Leave Years
Harassment & Bullying	TBC	Work/Life Balance	Pay
Occupational H&S Reps	Robert Beaney		Modern Apprenticeships
Efficiency Programmes	Mary Irvine		FCTU Profile & Relevance
Recruitment of New Members	Lorraine Adams		
Absence Management	Roy Laird		
Area Committees	Sue Gillingwater		

8. Cambridge Office Closure

Allan referred to the note to Cambridge office staff from Sarah England, HR Business Partner, detailing the Working Group's progress to date on the Business Rules. It was noted that the group were close to reaching a final agreement on the wording of the Rules, however Allan stated that the group had not come to an agreement on mobility and expressed concern that if staff did not accept the package or refused to take the redeployment option there was no other package available. It was unclear if any staff would face this issue however management did not expect the problem to arise.

The committee agreed that the FCTU needed to engage more in the process and that the FCTUDC would attend the next National Office Working Group meeting. Allan said that he would write out to the committee when a date was confirmed.

9. PCS Conference Motions

Allan provided the committee with an overview of motions from the PCS Annual Delegate Conference 2009, which was held on 12th and 13th May. The committee recognised that some of the work required by the motions would be dealt with by the joint unions.

Section 1: Pay and Grading

Motion A1

As FC employees we have the right to expect a fair rate of pay for the work we do. Over recent years certain pay bands have been singled out as "over-generous". Little has been done to enable them to keep pace with rises elsewhere within the implemented pay offers, let alone the cost of living.

Setting suitable rates of pay and deciding on pay systems are major decisions which have a long-lasting impact on members for many years to come, even into retirement. This conference instructs the GEC to carry out a pay comparison study, looking into job responsibilities as well as grading systems across the public sector. Once complete the results should be published within a future PCS newsletter and be used to inform Conference 2010 and the TUS core group/ pay negotiating team as necessary.

Midlands

Motion A2

To instruct the GEC to look at the current pay system in the FC and establish if it is fit for purpose and to question members on how they would like to see the system altered to be more equitable and provide a fair reward for a fair job. The GEC should work with others to bring about these changes and report progress back to the 2010 conference.

South West

Motion A3

FC Wales PCS Branch would like this Conference and the GEC to consider the problems caused by the 10% salary increase on pay-on-promotion for Members on their 'max' given the narrow gap between successive pay bands. In most cases a 10% pay-on-promotion promotes Members to either the Max, spine 2 or spine 1 of the successive pay band. This is de-motivating for Members who see others being promoted with a salary close to the 'max' when others have spent many progressive years on that pay band. In many cases this once again promotes 'leapfrogging'!

The Branch would like this Conference to instruct the GEC to work with other FC Unions to re-structure and re-align the pay bands so that there is a 10% difference between the 'max' and 'min' of successive pay bands. Thus any pay increase on promotion will lead to a minimum pay increase of 10%, but will not result in any Members pay being consolidated above that of the 'min' of the successive pay band. The Branch would like this discussed as part of future pay negotiations following the end of this current imposed 3 year deal.

Wales

Motion A4

FC Wales PCS Branch would like this Conference and the GEC to consider the problems caused by the promotion of Members from Ops pay bands to non-Ops pay bands. This affects those Members promoted from pay band 6a Ops to pay band 5 and pay band 5 Ops to pay band 4. Due to the current procedures in place there is often no incentive, financially, for Members on Ops pay bands to look for a promotion to a non-Ops pay band both in the short and medium terms. In some circumstances some Members can in fact be worse off, financially, for taking a promotion to a non-Ops pay band with a post/role that carries considerably more responsibility and pressure. Clearly the Ops - average 44 hour week - complicates matters, but it is necessary to establish a procedure that is fair to all pay bands and which encourages/promotes Ops pay band Members career development and progression without being penalised financially. This too would be to the benefit of the Forestry Commission.

The Branch would like this Conference to instruct the GEC to work with other FC Unions to come-up with a solution that takes on board the problems raised in the Motion above, i.e. overlapping pay bands. However, on the other-hand a solution is needed to resolve the disincentives for those Ops pay band Members wishing to progress their career development necessitating a move from Ops pay bands to one of non-Ops. The Branch would like this discussed as part of future pay negotiations following the end of this current imposed 3 year deal.

Wales

Motion A5

The GEC were asked to carry out a survey of all staff on the status of operational pay at the 2008 Group Conference. The GEC were to analyse responses and put forward recommendations in time to debate the issue at the 2009 conference.

If no progress has been made, then the GEC is again instructed to carry out a survey of all staff on the status of operational pay, given that there has been a range of views on the subject ongoing for a number of years. The GEC should analyse responses and put forward recommendations in time to debate the issue at Branch 2010 AGMs.

South Scotland

Motion A7

The pay award that was imposed by FC management in March changed the overtime rates for hours worked weekly in excess of conditioned hours from time and a half to plain time for Pay Bands 5, 6 and 7 to be the same as Pay Bands 3 and 4.

This conference asks the GEC to put the restoration of the payment of time and a half for overtime for Pay Bands 5, 6 and 7 as a major component of the next round of pay negotiations with management.

South Scotland

Section 2: Policy and Values

Motion A8

The conference would like statistics on staff interchanges to be reviewed . The GEC is therefore asked to gain and compare statistics on staff interchange between the comparative FC management units eg Forest Districts and Conservancy and Business units such as Forest research. These results to be published via appropriate mechanism.

North Scotland

Motion A9

Conference is aware that the increased functionality of posts and roles is leading to marginalisation of staff including those in business units and central functions. This is leading to most posts becoming 'specialist' reducing the capacity of staff to move between functions and different areas of the FC. The low profile of the current Transfer Register, and the removal of the Tour System are exacerbating the issue The conference asks the GEC to ensure a robust mechanism is put in place within the FC to ensure that staff are able to exchange between functions and business units to maintain or progress their development, as we are concerned that it is an missing mechanism which will be essential if the MDP programme is to deliver its objectives.

North Scotland

Motion A10

This conference regrets the FC's loss of status within the media and wider public as the leading voice in tree and woodland issues, therefore we instruct the GEC to demand that the FC at a GB level work to re-establish its position especially with regards to NGOs and other Government departments.

Yorks and Humber

Motion A11

The conference is concerned that reviews carried out are singular in focus and do not always assess the potential impacts on all staff groups and service delivery. Therefore the conference asks the GEC to ensure future reviews carried out within the FC engage with the unions at the earliest opportunity to ensure that the widest impacts are considered through agreement on the terms of reference used by the review group.

North Scotland

Motion A13

Asset sales are a major concern for England members where the current targets for disposals is higher now than it ever was under the conservatives. Where previous sales have been to balance the books the last round was clearly to contribute directly to shortfalls within DEFRA's own budget . The disposals programme is not achievable or sustainable and should only be used as an option for reinvestment within that Region.

There is no clear strategy for these disposals and it is clear that more work needs to be done by the TUS to raise the profile of this programme. The GEC is therefore instructed to create a publicity/ media campaign centred around a GB strategy to save our public forest estate, building on the work carried out most recently in Scotland over the Scottish Climate Change Bill. Such a strategy, along with a plan for the associated campaign, should be agreed by the GEC before the next round of Branch AGM's in Feb/ Mar 2010.

Midlands

Motion A14

The conference is aware that the current FD review process has a number of staff complement discussions taking place. The GEC is requested to confirm that the staffing level/complements are not the remit of local implementation groups to decide on.

North Scotland

Motion A15

This conference does not believe that the move to a single National Office for FC England at Bristol is the

correct structural model for the organisation, therefore we call upon the GEC to press for the details of how the move will bring about a reduced carbon footprint whilst ensuring all regional activity is appropriately supported. If FCE cannot set out appropriate and realistic plans to achieve real reductions then the GEC should call for the location of key National Office staff to be reconsidered.

Yorks and Humber

Motion A16

The conference is concerned that in the current Scottish FD review implementation process that a number of staff complement discussions are taking place, this is resulting in a reduction in staff from the numbers in place before the review. We were assured that no staff reductions would take place as a result of the review. The GEC is requested to confirm that the staffing level/complements are not the remit of local implementation groups to decide, and ensure that these post numbers should remain open until filled, preferably within the next six months.

North Scotland

Section 3: Terms and Conditions

Motion A17

The GEC was asked to look at adding to the 2008 pay bargaining, a special disturbance allowance for those low paid staff who are required to work away from home on a regular basis. This would be an extra allowance to baseline salary in specific circumstances. If no progress has been made, then the GEC is instructed to look at adding this to the next pay bargaining round.

South Scotland

Motion A18

This conference recognises the fact that it has been a significant period of time since a fundamental review of Travel and Subsistence rates for FC employees and instructs the GEC, in conjunction with other unions, to press for a review so that staff are recompensed fully for the costs that they occur whilst on official duty.

Yorks and Humber

Motion A19

This conference recognises the excellent work being carried out on a daily basis by local reps within the Forestry Commission. The large increase in the number of personal cases means that reps have become more and more involved with the problems staff face in their daily working lives.

The GEC is therefore instructed to:

1. Review how personal casework is delivered at branch and group level.
2. Put in place a comprehensive personal casework training programme to increase numbers of union reps who feel confident in handling cases at branch level.
3. To appoint a GEC personal casework co-ordinator.

Silvan House

Additional Motions

Motion A20

Approximately one in seven couples in the UK undertakes some kind of fertility treatment. Currently the Forestry Commission does not provide any paid time off for fertility treatment or for investigative procedures which may lead to fertility treatment.

The World Health Organisation defines health "as a physical, mental and social issue not simply related to disease and infirmity", it is now widely accepted that infertility is a health issue.

Using this information conference instructs the GEC to enter into negotiations with the Forestry Commission during 2009 to obtain the element of paid leave for members of staff undergoing fertility treatment; this motion suggests at least 10 days as a fair period of time.

Silvan House

Motion A21

This conference is concerned that Fostering is not included in any of the "Family Friendly Policies" currently available in the Forestry Commission. It is believed that fostering is seen as short term

whereas; adoption is seen as a permanent arrangement and has attracted the necessary legislation. Fostering can be a very demanding role, requiring regular attendance at meetings and training sessions.

Therefore the conference calls upon the FC to recognise the importance of fostering and the need to grant additional paid leave to a member of staff registered as a foster carer and instruct the GEC to enter into negotiations in 2009 with the FC to obtain this outcome.

Silvan House

Motion A22

Open plan working and hot-desking have for many become the accepted way of undertaking their day to day work in the FC. Conference instructs the GEC to compile evidence during 2009 that ascertains;

- how many members of staff are working in an open plan regime*
- how many members of staff are hot-desking as a normal consequence of their job*

Further to this staff should be questioned on what they find good and bad about these working practices and ask for suggestions for change.

Once the evidence has been gathered and analysed then members of the GEC should discuss with the FC their findings and where appropriate resolve particular issues emanating from the survey.

Silvan House

10.AOB

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