



MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19TH AUGUST, FL1 RM4, IN SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH

Present:	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Allan MacKenzie	FCTU Secretary
	Lorraine Adams	Prospect
	Mary Irvine	PCS
	Sue Gillingwater	FCTU Network Manager
Minute Secretary	Sam Telford	FCTU Network Support

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Roy Laird and Malcolm Currie.

2. Minutes of 22nd July 2009

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

3. FCTU AGM

Allan confirmed that the AGM would take place on the 24th and 25th November 2009. The committee discussed the format of the event and Allan said that the first day would involve reviews of what has happened over the previous 12 months from the Departmental Committee and Area Committees. Also on the first day there would be discussion on the FCTU Strategic Issues Programme with the Area Committees, allowing them to give feedback on the issues. Allan said that plans could be made for the evening and said that Sam would be looking into conference room facilities at the Capital Hotel in Edinburgh. Allan advised that the second day would focus on recruitment and activity.

The committee agreed that the union officials would be invited and that where AC Chair and Secretaries were unable to attend, replacements from the committees would be sought. It was noted that Sue would be writing out to the ACs to stress the importance of attending the AGM and that Sam would create a page on the website to promote the event. Lorraine felt that it should also be promoted through e-Connect and the committee agreed. Allan said he would make the approach to Communications branch.

Action Required: Allan MacKenzie, Sue Gillingwater, Sam Telford

4. Buying/Selling of Annual Leave

The committee reflected on the discussion on buying and selling of annual leave at the last meeting. It had been noted that HR were planning to hold a trial period for 2 years allowing staff to buy/sell up to 2 days leave in any leave year (or the pro-rata equivalent for part-time staff). Following discussion it was agreed that the FCTU could not support the proposal due to concerns that experience in other Departments suggests in broad terms the low paid typically sell their leave and the better paid buy more leave. Allan advised that after the 2 year pilot HR were planning to review the take-up, including analysis by pay band and gender etc and that the FCTU may have to take action against the policy at this stage if it is to be rolled out.

5. FCTU Strategic Issues Programme

The committee discussed progress on each strand of the Strategic Issues Programme being dealt with in 2009/10.

Threats to the Forest Estate – Robert advised that as Andy Patmore had stood down from the Senior Lay Rep for Unite role, he would not be working on this part of the SIP. It was agreed that a rep to take the lead on Threats to the Forest Estate would be determined at a later date, however Allan said that the current potential threats in England were being dealt with by FCTU England.

Communication – In Roy's absence this was not discussed.

Harassment & Bullying – It was noted that the committee had agreed at the last meeting to re-assess H&B following the staff survey. Sue advised that this section had been re-written following agreement in July.

Occupational Health – Robert said that he would get in touch with Emily Ramsay to kick-start the process of setting up a bespoke training course for representatives. He said that he would report back at the next meeting with progress.

Efficiency Programmes – Mary said that she had met with Lorraine to discuss how to take the issue forward, and they had agreed to approach the Director General in the first instance and that they had offered available meeting dates.

Recruitment – It was noted that Lorraine and Mary would be setting up the organising meeting with the full time union officials to discuss recruitment and form an action plan.

Lorraine asked that the committee draft 10 reasons to join a union but felt that they should consider new reasons as to why someone would join and try to steer away from the typical promotion of pay and pension related reasons.

Action Required: Lorraine Adams, Mary Irvine, Robert Beaney, Allan MacKenzie, Roy Laird

Allan said that following a meeting with the Director General and Director HR, it had been agreed that management and FCTU would issue a joint statement highlighting the importance of union membership to all staff.

Area Committees – Sue said that due to other pressures the review of Area Committees was put on hold, however Sue reported that she had met with Lorraine to discuss the problems within FCTU Research. Sue gave a summary of what was discussed and said it had been a very productive meeting, and that they had taken steps towards forming a full committee.

6. England Reviews

Allan said that the consultation on the PFE Study was still ongoing and said that FCTU England were actively engaging in the consultation and would be forming a response, whilst encouraging members to respond also. Allan added that he and Robert met with the ConFor Chief Executive to discuss their response to the consultation.

Allan referred to the Operational Efficiency Review (OEP) and said that FCTU England were concerned that dangers were involved in this programme as it is looking at getting greater commercial benefit, which will likely put pressure on the FC to become more commercial. He said that a paper which was presented to the England Staff Council broke FC England's activities into five strands and that there would be a working group looking at each strand in their commercial aspects. Allan said FCTU England felt that there are fundamental dangers in looking at these strands in isolation and that they had written to members alerting them to these concerns. He said that this will form part of the pre-budget statement in November therefore whatever comes out of the OEP will be Government policy and the FCTU need to ensure that the FC is not in any way disadvantaged by the process. Allan said that FCTU England had also written to Simon Hodgson, FE England Chief Executive ([link](#)).

Allan updated the committee on the England National Office move and said that the period of reflection meeting was held at the Cabinet Office on 30th July and that there would be a further meeting on 24th September. He said that attending were:

John Whittaker - Cabinet Office
Jean Lindsay - FC HR Director

Sarah England - England HR Business Partner
Charlie Cochrane - TUS Council for Civil Service Union Representative
Allan Mackenzie - FCTU Secretary
Stuart Grainger - PCS Representative
Crispin Thorn - Prospect Representative

Allan reported that the meeting focussed on those individuals who are being considered for compulsory redundancy as a result of the closure of the Cambridge Office and that the majority of these staff are non-mobile grades with a small number of mobile grades whose roles are either directly related to the Cambridge office or have been significantly changed as a result of the proposed move. He said the majority of the discussion focussed on how to help support the redeployment process with the clear indication from the Cabinet Office that it should be seen as a priority and HR should be working with other Departments to identify redeployment options.

It was noted that other key discussion items included:

1. The subject of mobility with Jean Lindsay stating that the FC has retained its mobility status for staff at PB5 above. The FCTU responded stating that it would consider the impact of mobility from an individual members' perspective and that the basic premise centred on whether an employer was acting 'reasonably'.
2. The potential impact of any changes to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme which was being considered for review by the Cabinet office. There were no specific details available at the time of the meeting but it was clear that changes could have a potential impact depending on what is finally proposed and the timetable for implementation. Allan said this would be discussed further at the next POR meeting.
3. The time pressures associated with seeking to resolve the redeployment options before the deadline associated with issuing redundancy notices to those who do not wish to acquiesce.
4. The FCTU raised the issue of the remaining members not covered by the compulsory redundancy situation but still impacted on through the closure of the Cambridge Office.

7. Civil Service Compensation Scheme

Allan said that the Government have put formal proposals to the trade unions to reform the Civil Service Compensation Scheme. He said the proposals that are intended to apply to departures from 1 January 2010, are to make compensation arrangements more affordable for the taxpayer while still providing fair and reasonable terms for staff. Lorraine and Allan referred to the briefings from Prospect and PCS, who view this as an attack on terms and conditions leaving many members thousands of pounds worse off in the event of voluntary or compulsory redundancy. The committee recognised that these changes are also likely to lead to more compulsory redundancies as fewer people are less likely to volunteer on detrimental conditions.

Following discussion it was agreed that detailed information would be made available to members through the website, highlighting what the proposed changes mean for them and giving guidance on responding to the consultation.

Action Required: Allan MacKenzie, Sam Telford

8. FCTU Website

Sam advised that the FCTU website was up and running following a number of technical difficulties and the departure of Edward who had previously managed the site. He said that he was in the process of updating the content and creating new pages, but asked that committee members forward on any news items or updates to their section of the site. It was noted that the 'rep finder' info was currently being updated and that Sam would be writing out to all reps to confirm contact details and positions. The committee agreed that as the site was not updated for some time, a re-launch would be done when it was fully up to date.

9. AOB

9.1 Out Of Office Messages

Lorraine asked that the committee agree to use more informative out of office messages when unavailable to ensure that anyone making contact will still be able to contact their union if urgent. This was agreed.