



**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS' DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH 2010, EAST BOARDROOM, SILVAN HOUSE, EDINBURGH**

<b>Present:</b>	Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair
	Allan MacKenzie	FCTU Secretary
	Mary Irvine	PCS
	Audrey Campbell	Unite
	Lorraine Adams	Prospect
	Roy Laird	GMB
	Sue Gillingwater	FCTU Network Manager
<b>Minute Secretary</b>	Sam Telford	

**1. Apologies**

No apologies were received.

**2. Minutes of 15 December 2009**

An amendment for item 4 FCTU Action Plan was noted.

**Action Required: Sam Telford**

**3. Matters Arising**

**3.1 FCTU Communications Strategy**

Robert asked for feedback on the Communications Strategy and the proposed document was rejected by the constituent unions. It was noted that a written response would be submitted.

**Action Required: Constituent Unions**

**3.3 DEFRA TU Network Update**

Allan referred to minutes of the last DEFRA TU Network meeting and summarised the key issues discussed. He said that he would provide a paper briefing for the next DC.

**Action Required: Allan MacKenzie**

The committee discussed the new contract with Occupational Safety & Health provider Atos. Allan confirmed that the new contract would not have any impact on People Support and staff welfare at this stage. Allan expressed concern that the contact with Atos is primarily by telephone and said that issues had already arisen with the service. The DC concurred and recognised that the company's goal is to assist the employer in getting staff back to work as soon as possible. Allan said that although Atos may work well for other Government Departments, the FC has always been a face to face organisation and the committee agreed that there will be many issues for members. Further agreement was made that the unions need to get a consensus on their views on Atos, highlighting all of the issues to management. This would be raised at a future DC meeting.

**3.4 Diversity Forum**

Lorraine provided the committee with an update on the Diversity Forum held on 16 February and summarised the key issues discussed.

### **3.5 Occupational Health & Safety Reps Training**

Robert advised that he had met with Emily Ramsay, Head of HSE and that a draft structure for the course had been formatted. He added that the delivery of the course, in particular costs would be discussed with Colin Sobota, Head of L&D. Robert said that the aim was to hold the course over one day and that the training would be an add-on to training from the individual unions, which would still be necessary. Sam said that he would circulate electronic copies of the draft structure to the committee. Robert confirmed that the final draft of the structure would go out to the constituent unions for approval and Roy advised that he would be required to discuss liabilities with GMB.

**Action Required: Sam Telford and Robert Beaney**

### **4. Recruitment of Members**

It was agreed that the FCTU Office would contact organisers from the four unions to organise a meeting and recruitment drive. Robert said that he would obtain details of the new organiser for Unite.

**Action Required: FCTU Office**

In response to a question from Roy, Allan advised that as part of the FC's new branding, the current FCTU logo could no longer be used. He said that the FC's design department were drawing up alternatives and that he would report back when the office receives them. It was noted that a new logo would not necessarily include the two-tree logo and the DC agreed that they would consider a complete change of brand.

**Action Required: Allan MacKenzie**

### **5. Facility Time**

The DC agreed that there was an issue with the application of facility time across the organisation. Following a detailed discussion, Robert confirmed that the constituent unions would respond to the FCTU Office as soon as possible on specifically what their issues with applying facility time are, and that the AGM report would highlight the views given from reps at that meeting. The DC agreed that these issues would then be drawn up and taken to senior management for action.

**Action Required: Constituent Unions**

This led to a discussion on the post-filling paper sent out from the FCTU Office and it was noted that Allan would be analysing the responses.

### **6. Staff Survey**

Allan said that the FCTU Office was in the process of analysing the staff survey results, in particular answers from the union questions and advised that he would bring this information to the DC. He said that the full [narrative report](#) was available on the FC Intranet.

### **7. Lyme Disease**

Lorraine said despite all of the hard work put in by Allan and Robert to get the publication of the Lyme disease credit card information note, this information still isn't reaching all members. Lorraine added that this limited distribution was proven in the initial issue of the leaflets in her department, where 5 leaflets were issued for a total of 34 staff. Secondly, Lorraine said that there seems to be limited reporting via the C49 of the incidents of Lyme disease within the FC and as this is a reportable disease, FC managers could be in breach of health and safety regulations by lack of knowledge rather than by design. Lorraine expressed concern that as these managers could be members, it is essential that the FCTU support them by making sure that they are aware of the regulations.

It was agreed that Allan would contact Emily Ramsay to discuss the issue.

**Action Required: Allan MacKenzie**

## **8. Fit Note Guidance**

The DC discussed the new Government legislative change to replace sick notes with the new 'fit note' and referred to the [FCTU Quick Guide](#) and [HR's Q&A](#). The committee discussed potential implications with the change and felt that issues may arise for members, particularly as there may be a lack of common approach in cases. It was agreed that information would be published on the FCTU Website.

## **9. AOB**

### **9.1 Review of Sick Absence Management**

Sue said HR had advised that they would be reviewing absence management and referred to the papers provided at the meeting. Allan expressed concern that the [Bradford Factor](#) may be implemented and said he would report back after the next DEFRA TU Network meeting, at which this issue would be discussed. The DC concurred with Allan's concern and agreed that it would not be supported by the unions and they would push to prevent its implementation. It was agreed that DC members would gather evidence on use of the Bradford Factor in preparation for a consultation or implementation.

**Action Required: Departmental Committee**

### **9.2 Business Units Review**

Allan gave an update on the review and said that he and Robert had met with FCTU BU to look at how best to respond to the review. Allan said that the Terms of Reference had changed and that they had asked for clarification on why this had happened. He said that there is a consultant and steering group putting a project plan together, which will form the criteria for the review and at that point the unions will have input. Allan said that FCTU BU will submit a written formal response to the review and follow up with a verbal presentation, with factual evidence from members within the Business Units on their views on the BU currently, how they see the future and any possible problems and solutions. Allan said he had offered the assistance of the FCTU Office whenever FCTU BU require it.

### **9.3 Travel & Subsistence**

Allan reported that the FC have agreed to increase all T&S rates by 2.4% and that HR will publish this information to staff. He added that the T&S review within HMT was still ongoing.

### **9.4 Executive Board**

Allan referred to the Pay Remit item from the February EB minutes for information:

*EB members agreed that as the FC was a GB corporate body, different rates of pay would not be adopted for staff in different countries. Therefore, it was agreed that before the next pay remit was scheduled to be agreed with Ministers, a process or working agreement to the principle of a single pay remit would be developed with the pay policy teams in the three administrations. Director, HR would report back to EB members at the appropriate time.*

### **9.5 DC Composition**

It was noted that Mary would produce a paper on issues surrounding issues on the composition and function of the Departmental Committee for the next meeting.

**Action Required: Mary Irvine**

## **10. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting date was confirmed as 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010.