



**NATIONAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE
26 FEBRUARY 2008
FOSS HOUSE DEFRA YORK**

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Present: | Tim Gill | Chair - Unite |
| | Tim Medlock | Unite |
| | Mick Hoban | PCS |
| | John Winterbourne | PCS |
| | Sue Gillingwater | FCTU |
| Minute Secretary: | Julie Saunders | PCS |
| Apologies: | Tom Grimwood | Unite |
| | Crispin Thorn | Prospect |
| | Andy Patmore | Unite |
| | Simon James | PCS |
| | Steve Holdsworth | PCS |
| | Ron Melville | Prospect |
| | Steve Smith | Prospect |

1. Introduction

Tim Gill welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for coming. This was going to be more of a discussion rather than a formal structured meeting.

2. Apologies

Listed above. Martin Johnston has now resigned his post on the NOC. Simon James has also reduced his Union involvement.

Action: Email Martin to thank him for all his efforts.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting have been issued and it was agreed to hold these until the next meeting on 12th March in London.

4. NOC arrangements

Tim, Mick, Julie and Sue had a meeting on 22nd January to discuss the way forward for the NOC and ESC.

Tim will be working reduced hours, 2 days a week, from 1st April. At the last NOC meeting in October it had been agreed that Tim would step down as Chair and that Mick would take over the role. Since then Mick has had some personal issues that are preventing him from giving the role the full resources that he feels it needs so would be unable to fill this role at the present time.

Mick has spoken to Paul Hill-Tout to inform him of the changes. England has the largest staff group and their locations are wide and varied. Paul is aware of the concerns and will raise this at GB level. Mick felt that he had a very positive response from Paul.

What options there are for a holding role over the next 12 months.

Tim had also spoken to Paul which he does on a regular basis. He has proposed that he would work on TUS work for the 2 days that he would be at work over the next 12 months. He felt that Paul was receptive to the idea and felt it was important to keep up the good working relations that they had built up. Paul would speak to Sarah and Simon re funding etc.

Sue mentioned that Sarah had contacted Edward about succession planning within the NOC after Tim has left and she didn't appear to have any problems with the proposal.

How could the NOC best offer support to Tim.

Sue said that back in 2006 the FCTU looked at the NOC function and this was a good opportunity to re-look at it. Part of her remit was to meet with NOC Chair/Sec and look at the strengths/ weaknesses. There is capacity to help develop a supporting role in the Unions office in SH. Some NOC members are struggling to balance their core work against Union work.

The NOC would need the proper resources for it to function properly. Proposals would be put to Paul at the next ESC and hopefully would offer his support. Mick happy to carry on as Vice Chair.

It was felt that it would be good to build up better communications with the other NOC's so that we could all learn for each other. And discuss similar issues.

Sue felt that decision to inform the Union office at SH at an early stage was important and they would offer as much help as possible.

It was felt that the current workloads of the NOC would continue rather than it just being for a short period of time due to financial pressures on managers and staff. There is a review due of Natural England which is likely to involve FC heavily and have possible implications on FC.

It was also felt that the ability to get out and meet members and explain what the NOC does was important and that always takes up a lot of time. Tim had been down to Exeter to discuss office accommodation and a meeting was planned in York for the following day for the Clifton Moor/Wheldrake staff. With the financial implication of possible FC budget cuts and DEFRA's budget cut of £300m each year for 3 years the pressure on staff will continue.

There is a copy of the briefing on the FCTU website between Edward, Robert and Joan Ruddock. The minister was very positive. She was shown a letter from one district saying that due to the cutbacks on finance they would have to start closing trails etc. She was very concerned about this. Paul HT was happy with what Edward and Robert had achieved. There will be 3 parliamentary question going through on Forestry regarding health, recreation and sustainability.

The PCS were changing their branch structure as of 1st April to 7 branches in England. There would be 7 elected NOC reps with only space for 4 in the NOC. Co-opt the other 3 on should all 7 wish to attend as long as only 4 members get to vote. Edward and Alan would be attending all the new branch meetings.

The England NOC is short of an H&S rep. Robert is the lead on H&S. Action Write to Robert for list of H&S reps in England and write out to them see if they would be interested in joining the NOC.

New name for NOC. NOC doesn't really tell anyone what we do. Proposed name FCTU England would at least tell people that is it a union committee.

Number of members going to ESC Concerns had been raised about the number of staff attending the ESC and not participating. The meeting are held in London and Paul's request. Plus we use the Unite rooms which are free of charge. Makes sense for planning time to have 2 consecutive days out of the office. Concerns we raised over splitting the meetings as it may lead to duplication of meeting. Plus will still have to attend the ESC so overnight accommodation might still be needed. The NOC also usually continues in the morning of the ESC. Many benefits of staying overnight as allows free discussion in the evening. It was important to keep tot he mot workable option and convient for staff time and work life balance. It was felt that we would stick to the approach that we have now and could always add in NOC Business meeting like the one today.

Sue gave an overview of the recommendations that came out of the last FCTU Council meeting held in SH on 20th February.

Tim thanked all for coming felt that we had had a good discussion and given us some options to take forward for further discussion at the next NOC with those that were unable to attend today.

5. Date of next meeting

12th March 2008 ESC 13th March 2008