



**SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE**  
10.00 am, FEBRUARY 8th, 2007, MES, STIRLING

<b>Present:</b>	Malcolm Crosby	Chair, PCS
	Gordon Donaldson	PCS
	Gordon Kennedy	PCS
	Sinclair Coghill	PCS
	Jeff Dymond	TGWU
	Steven Stables	PCS
	Fiona Barnett	PCS
	Jim Lauder	PCS
	Hazel MacLean	PCS
	James McDonald	GMB
	Steve Osborne	PCS
	Sue Gillingwater	TUS

**Minute Secretary:** Peter Fullarton      Secretary, PCS

<b>Apologies:</b>	Donald McNeill	Prospect
	Alastair Gillies	GMB
	Colin Watret	TGWU
	Brian Duff	PCS
	Ashley Woodhouse	PCS

**1. Introduction**

Malcolm welcomed all to Stirling. Sinclair had been delayed but would join shortly.

**2. Apologies**

As above.

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting**

Agreed.

**4. Matters Arising From Last Meeting**

a. Review of Operations Review:

Gordon Donaldson updated the committee on the previous meeting of the review on 25<sup>th</sup> January. One final meeting was expected (mid March) with Les Bryson providing a draft report for that and for final presentation to the Executive Board.

The meeting had gone through the SWOT analysis then existing staffing. GD had raised point that 3 of the 6 current areas were PB3 only (not PB3 + PB4 support).

Suggestion that areas be restructured from 6 to 4 (N, W, S and E Scotland). Key point was that C&T would be added to West with no increase in staff.

This would mean 3 areas with 1xPB3 and 2xPB4's with last area (Tay and Scottish Lowlands) 1xPB3 and 1x PB4.

Discussion followed on where C&T would end up- west felt to be best since that would add a member of staff. GD happy that something positive had been achieved.

Also, programmes rising (eg Lorne volume to double soon) so Les Bryson would add staff to system to cope (PB5's and WSS's). Gordon Kennedy cautioned that Scottish Borders had experience of this- Ops had lost staff but had recruited in Rec areas.

Malcolm explained that the Review of the Ops Review was more about PB3 & PB4 than PB5 & PB6 and that management would consider extra PB5's as required outwith the review.

GD's overall feeling was that any proposal that adds 2 staff can't be a bad thing. However, the outcome of the PES review could change everything...

## b. Conservancy Issues

Next FA Staff Council due on 21<sup>st</sup> February. Sinclair Coghill (new chair of FCS Cons TUS) highlighted the problems ahead.

There had been no grant applications since April 2006, and all existing were taken to contract stage by December 2006. New grant scheme must be pulled together by October 2007 though little has happened so far. New scheme must run together with SEERAD 'family' grants- a 'one stop shop'. The mechanism for this is far from built- some pieces in place but no links yet eg SNH.

The lack of a scheme has fed the rumour mill- no one knows what is likely to happen though FCS management see a 'leading role' in the SE grant schemes. New scheme unlikely before 2008.

Hazel MacLean added that PandA was trialling GLADE UAT (User Acceptance Testing). Woodland Officers can do everything required on computer and AO's are concerned at loss of work.

## **5. NOC Support**

Sue Gillingwater explained that she had been brought in initially to oversee the devolution of the trade unions. She saw them set up and then left them to develop. Now, she said, it was time to revisit.

She was keen to raise the awareness of managers and members of the work of the NOC's. She would particularly like to improve the NOC/members communication. A poster of elected representatives similar to one done for Wales would be distributed to all offices. (Photos of those present were taken after the meeting).

Malcolm was keen to reduce the amount of time spent travelling, advocating the use of audio/phone conferencing.

SG suggested that training could be organised for Staff Council reps if required eg negotiating skills.

## **6. Health and Safety Issues**

Steve Osborne had attended a 'Gangmasters' meeting in Edinburgh. He explained that new legislation was likely to result in forestry contractors at least having to be in touch with the GLA (Gangmasters Licensing Authority), and that this might need to be written in to future FC contracts.

He suggested that there was some furious back-peddalling going on at departmental level to get forestry excluded since it was only included after forestry had been deemed a part of agriculture in the 1948 Agriculture Act. Legislation would only apply to restocking so there were good reasons to exclude forestry. Expected to hear if exempt by March or April.

SO had also attended the National Health and Safety Conference. Current 'big issue' is 'acoustic shock' where the use of headphones seems to be the problem.

SO has a meeting with Emily Ramsay, NOC H&S reps and other H&S co-ordinators on 22<sup>nd</sup> February to discuss issues and build up a good H&S network in the FC. Hazel MacLean was concerned that no Cons staff appeared to be involved.

## **7. Any Other Urgent Business**

Peter Fullarton brought up the recent external trawl for 2x Woodland Officer posts in Hamilton and 1 x Woodland Officer post in Perth. Jim Lauder had discussed with HR why some posts were done via an assessment centre and others, not. The reason was that where a lot of external candidates were likely, it would probably involve an assessment centre. At the moment in Scotland, there were no set criteria but HR were developing a suite of selection systems for Management to implement. For example, if there were internal candidates, then likely to be internal; if not enough 'fresh blood' in the FC, then likely to go external. It would be left up to the manager of the post to balance the cost of the assessment centre against other possible methods. An assessment centre was most likely when trawling for multiple posts.

MC had been pleased when informed that the Hamilton posts would be filled, given uncertainty over the future of grant schemes. The external trawl is, effectively, a Foresters Board.

Some potential internal candidates felt it was unfair and unnecessary to be put through an assessment centre but others thought that it was a fairer system for demonstrating a candidate's abilities and so the post-filling was fairer.

There was a lengthy discussion and it was agreed that the NOC supported the process undertaken for filling these posts.

No official agreement exists on which trawls are external or internal but a process seems to be developing and will be reviewed by the TUS.

#### **8. Date of Next Meeting**

Decided to wait until next meeting of the Review of the Ops Review before setting next date. Next meeting will included elections to Scottish NOC.