



**SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE**  
10.00 am, January 31st, 2008, Silvan House, Edinburgh

**Present:**

Malcolm Crosby	Chair, PCS
Gordon Donaldson	PCS
James McDonald	GMB
Robert Beaney	FCTU Chair, Unite
Alan MacKenzie	PCS
Sam Telford	FCTU
Sue Gillingwater	FCTU
Allan MacKenzie	PCS

**Minute Secretary:** Peter Fullarton      PCS

**By Conference Call**

Jim Lauder	PCS
Jim Seaton	PCS
Phil Whitfield	Prospect
Alastair Gillies	GMB
Gordon Kennedy	PCS
Kenny Hay	PCS
Donald McNeill	Prospect
Steven Stables	PCS
Hazel MacLean	PCS

**Apologies:**      Alastair Smyth      PCS

### **1. Introduction**

Malcolm Crosby welcomed those present to Edinburgh. Sam Telford was thanked for setting up the conference call system so that the others could join remotely for the main items on the agenda.

### **2. Minutes of Last Meeting**

Agreed.

### **3. Matters Arising From Last Meeting**

#### **a). Estates Review**

Draft proposals have now been sent out after the review group (Laurie Tyson, Donald McLellan, Gordon Donaldson and Anthony Hart - from Bidwells) has met several times since starting in May 2007. Several options have been suggested but awaiting final proposals from management.

#### b. Committee Members

No further nominations have been received for the vacant positions in Unite and Prospect.

#### **4. Review of the Operations Review**

Malcolm stated that the on-line survey had been carried out but he had yet to find time to analyse and summarise the results.

#### **5. AO Review**

One meeting of group to date. They have requested relevant information from all Scottish districts. Corinne Cheetham is TU rep. Increasingly unlikely that the group will meet its April reporting deadline. Malcolm will contact Corinne with a view to tying in this review with the other reviews currently running.

(Minutes of review at <http://www.fctu.org.uk/scotland/index.asp#003>)

#### **6. Review of Forest Districts**

Malcolm said that on 17<sup>th</sup> January, Hugh Insley had met with Malcolm and Gordon Donaldson and that political feedback suggested a preference to avoid piecemeal reviews. FCS therefore felt the need to review all the forest districts.

Malcolm then briefly ran through a number of potential options.

Gordon Donaldson then gave his view of the 17<sup>th</sup> January meeting. He had asked if 'repositioning' (i.e. disposals) over the next three years, and the number of districts controlled by Head Office were a problem. Hugh had said that there were many factors influencing districts and it was important to look at the bigger picture. Gordon felt that management were reasonably sure of how they wanted the review to go and were pressing for the next meeting. Hugh, Les Bryson and Nicol Sinclair would form the management team.

Phil Whitfield thought that the Moray/Aberdeenshire merger had been looked at for a while but knew that no business costings had been done. He had done his own independent costings and does not think the financial case for a merger adds up. He also wondered why ease of management of districts by Head Office should be achieved at the expense of efficient, effective delivery of prime functions on the ground. He felt that the basic principles of district delivery of forest policy should be included as part of the review.

Kenny Hay echoed Phil's points and said that even with the disposals of some of Fort Augustus' Skye blocks, an amalgamation and/or split of the district was unlikely to ease problems of geography significantly.

Malcolm introduced the subject of out-stations but after a detailed round up of current and potential scenarios, the consensus was not of out-stations as 'districts without admin' but as a significantly poorer substitute for districts leaving those on the ground isolated and often unsupported.

It was agreed after further discussion that the TU side for the review would consist of Malcolm, Gordon, one Prospect rep, one GMB rep, one Unite rep (Robert Beaney?). Gordon Kennedy, PCS, volunteered, but it is necessary to keep the balance of Unions in a similar ratio to the NOC.

Gordon Donaldson summed up the discussion, stressing the fundamental need to start with the principle of the need for change. The TU had not agreed to the suggested 31/3 deadline and would not be bullied into quick but erroneous decisions.

(A round-table and round-country assessment of the success or otherwise of the tele-conference was made. All found that it was a good way of bringing a lot of views to the meeting but should not be used as a substitute for face to face meetings too often, especially when topics had particularly serious repercussions.)

## **7. SRDP (previously On The Ground Initiative)**

Hazel MacLean gave an update. SRDP will be formally approved in mid February and the new grant scheme will open at the start of April. However, it will not be fully formed or fully supported by IT for the first year at least.

SEARS1 will have the first ten 'deliverables' ready for The Royal Highland Show. The next tranche will be looked at after the initial launch but unclear who will do this since those currently developing the policy (conservators and ops managers) will by then be administering the scheme.

CARS work, originally expected to be done by SEPA will be done by Woodland Officers so additional training will be required. The additional workload from CARS is likely to be more substantial in the west where blocks are younger, larger and less roaded.

Hazel expressed concern that after a year without a grant scheme, the coming year will be very busy. On being asked about admin officers, she said that it was not yet clear what was required of them yet. This may be clearer after the 'people-mapping' exercise currently underway. Retraining needs and possibilities should also be identified by this.

Staffing needs are also still vague though management have stated that they 'are not going to pay foresters to do admin work'.

Hazel also said that she would value input from SNOG into the 'people mapping' process.

(Hazel's notes can be accessed from <http://www.fctu.org.uk/scotland/index.asp#005>)

## **8. Health and Safety Issues**

### **a. Lyme Disease**

Robert Beaney and Allan MacKenzie reported that they had just met with Emily Ramsay with a view to raising the profile and stressing the danger of this potentially killer disease. A new leaflet will be produced to explain what FC staff should do: how to self-inspect, how to remove a tick, how to recognise the signs and symptoms of LD and what to do next. A video is planned for future use. A joint launch is planned and LD will be included in all First Aid Courses and be given prominence on the New Entrants' course.

## **9. Any Other Urgent Business**

There were no further items to add to the agenda.

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

Date of next meeting will be dependent on the timings of the various review meetings. Details will be issued when known.