



**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TRADE UNIONS'
SCOTLAND AREA MEETING
HELD ON 26TH JANUARY 2010, AT INVER**

Present:	Malcolm Crosby	Chair, PCS
	Gordon Donaldson	PCS
	Brian Allison	PCS
	Gordon Kennedy	PCS
	Donald McNeill	Prospect
	Kenny Hay	PCS
	Jeff Dymond	Position/Union
	Allan MacKenzie	FCTU Secretary

Minute Secretary: Peter Fullarton PCS

Apologies: Alastair Smyth PCS
Brian Duff PCS
Alistair Gillies GMB
Hazel MacLean PCS

1. Introduction

Malcolm Crosby apologised for the lack of meetings and elections in the preceding year and intimated the intention to address these problems this year.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on 26th February 2009 at Inver were approved.

3. Matters Arising From Last Meeting

a. Climate Change Bill

Malcolm was very pleased to state that, formally, we won. This was achieved by hard work and lobbying by members of MSP's, in particular, winning round the Scottish Conservatives, thus denying the SNP a majority.

Allan Mackenzie, Gordon Donaldson and Malcolm had met with Roseanna Cunningham, the new minister, who was very supportive of FCS.

Allan thanked the committee for their work in pushing back the threat of privatisation by providing alternatives. This was viewed as a big success in union circles. He said that things had now moved on from Climate Change but the Scottish Government were still looking for financial restraint. The focus was now shifting to health and the environment, and the minister was hoping for a debate on this in Parliament with a view to divert money from health to environment.

More generally, there had been healthy discussions between the FCTU and the

Scottish Government and the other political parties.

Gordon thanked Allan who took on the role of Trade Unions Secretary and immediately had to begin lobbying in Parliament- a very steep learning curve.

b. Business Units Staff Council

Alistair Gillies unfortunately not able to attend the meeting. Malcolm gave a partial update of a number of meetings, including a Health and Safety Committee.

c. Forest Districts and Administration Reviews

Implemented 1st April 2009. Various issues have arisen regarding staff locations and complementing. Kenny Hay described some of the problems in Wester Ross which were a result of the District and Admin reviews but also the compounded problems from past amalgamations. Staff are giving the systems a chance to settle in but can not, as yet, see benefits. Lack of staff also resulting in difficulties dealing with locals.

Gordon Kennedy said that the finance and procurement hubs were causing problems in the south with the extra work generated, the need for a duty rota of PB5's over the 5 districts, and the perceived lack of support centrally.

Gordon Donaldson said that management were aware of problems in administering the Admin Review and its need to reduce staff, although some of the 15 posts lost have been re-allocated to, for example, GIS support. Review has been successful in places by improving timber security but other aspects show lack of central support (procurement) and difficulties with hub/operations areas not sharing the same boundaries. A further review of the Admin Review may well take place before the end of 2010.

Donald McNeill outlined a number of problems in west Argyll and Lochaber, particularly enforced transfer.

Allan MacKenzie said that Simon Hodge and Bob MacIntosh were due to organise a series of communications meetings around Scotland in April/May, and that it would be good if these issues could be aired then.

Brian Allison highlighted forester issues in Aberdeenshire where strict office hours were being enforced. Concern was also expressed over unfilled posts. Malcolm said that he received a monthly statement from HR regarding intentions on such posts. There were currently 8 posts vacant nationally but some relocations might be necessary to cover the most essential of these.

d. SRDP Review

After a Scotland Staff Council in December, Brian said that there was still concern about SRDP and its impact on staff. Although conservators can now approve schemes under £250000 (hopes of raising this to £750000?) there was significant bunching of work prior to RPAC approval dates. Staff are disgruntled with the computer interface- grants have to be calculated manually- and, so far, only a few AO's have access so most of inputting being done by Woodland Officers. James Simpson has issued a consultation paper on options for the next scheme, after 2013.

4. FCTU Scotland Elections

Elections to the committee were as follows:

Malcolm Crosby PCS S(S) (Chair)
Gordon Donaldson Co-opted as Staff Council chair
Brian Duff PCS N(S)
Peter Fullarton PCS N(S) (Minute Secretary)
Gordon Kennedy PCS S(S)
Jeff Dymond Unite
Audrey Campbell Unite
James McDonald GMB
Alistair Gillies GMB
Donald McNeill Prospect
Andrew Stewart Prospect
Brian Allison Co-opted as Chair FA SC

5. Pay and Finances

Malcolm gave an update. Although finances OK for 2010/2011, 8 posts of unspecified grades had to be shed. Impending election precluded further forecast of changes. Allan outlined the Scottish finances in a GB context. Although pared to the bone, still better than England where 3000ha of disposals are taking place to repay funds to DEFRA.

Allan also said that changes enforced by the Government to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme were unacceptable to PCS so there was likely to be a ballot for industrial action.

6. Health and Safety Issues

Allan passed an Information Pack to Malcolm for the Access and Health debate. Malcolm will feedback to Allan regarding the best (and worst) practices. Kenny Hay raised the issue of difficulties procuring technical training from Learning and Development and the H&S consequences of this. Malcolm explained that there had been a fundamental review of L&D and there would be an improvement in service. The secretary would write to Allan McKenzie regarding the problems with training provision.

7. Any Other Urgent Business

Local provision of venison, brought up by Kenny Hay, was discussed. Changes to food preparation laws would incur unjustifiable expense to amend compliance by current larders. Malcolm suggested that an FC view be sought on the issue but given a local sustainable development and local food slant.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday, 27th May, at Inver.

