



**FCTU WALES COMMITTEE MEETING
13TH NOVEMBER 2008, 10:00 – 15:00
COED Y GORORAU FOREST DISTRICT, WELSHPOOL**

Present:	Antony Griffiths (AG)	PCS (Chair)
	Paul Finch (PF)	PCS
	St John Ashworth (SA)	PCS
	Eric Williams (EW)	UNITE
	Bob Griffiths (BG)	Prospect
	Chris Tucker (CT)	UNITE
	Andy Phillips (AP)	UNITE

1. Introduction

AG thanked all those present for attending and apologised that the meeting had been moved into a smaller office because of another meeting being held in the building.

2. Apologies:	Chris Edwards (CE)	PCS
	Mike Kennett (MK)	UNITE
	Barbara Anglezarke (BA)	Prospect
	Rhian Evans (RE)	PCS (Secretary)
	John Williams (JW)	UNITE
	Emma Felkin (EK)	Prospect

3. Minutes of Last Meeting – 13 August 2008

Accepted as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Para 5. – Health and Safety – Deferred

Para 6 – Maternity Leave- Not yet resolved

PF has written to Edward Shepard (ES) to see if other part-time staff are on operational pay. ES has answered that there are other part-time staff on operational pay. PF was also told that it was FC-W (and Silvan House) policy that part-time staff can't be on operational pay.

The question was asked of HR if you can change the conditions of service of someone on maternity leave?

The answer from Liz Cookson, which didn't address the point completely, was that if someone went part time after maternity leave for a period they couldn't be guaranteed to be allowed to go back to full time after the period, unless this was agreed in advance. She didn't know if FC-W could make someone non-operational after maternity leave, if they were operational beforehand.

ACTION - PF to ask Edward Shepherd to investigate this issue at a GB level.

Para 7 – Plans for Contact Centre and Staff. Discharged

Para 8 – CYB Visitor Centre Managers post. Discharged

Para 9 - Workload Survey. CT has arranged to meet with Claire Lewis to discuss whether HR would like to input into the some of the questions in the survey.

PF stated that it was important to get both surveys linked into HR / FC survey, so that HR take ownership of the survey and it's results.

AG asked if it's worth the FCTU doing a separate survey? The consensus was 'yes', as long as it met some clear objectives.

ACTION - AG to contact Edward Shepherd to see if other countries are doing similar surveys. AG also to give examples of questions he has to CT before his meeting with HR.

Para 10 – Update from meeting with Director – agenda item for this meeting.

Para 13 – TRA Update - Discharged

Para 15 – Apprenticeship Scheme – Discharged

Para 16 – Priority Posting pool – the question has been asked to HR, there are now fewer staff in the pool.

4. Health and Safety

AP – gave an update that an accident is to be investigated.

Peter Garson is now Forestry Commission Wales' Health & Safety Director. Gordon Adam's (Health and Safety Regional Officer) will be involved with co-ordinating and attending the H&S Committee in Wales. This needs to be discussed at the next Staff Council to move this forward.

5. GIS Pay Band 6b JEGS result

The result has come back and it has been confirmed as 6a in Districts. 2 posts have been JEGS'd and approved so they will all be 6a.

This is a successful result for the FCTU, and Antony will inform Sue Gillingwater.

HR have issued new guidance that people who have had their jobs JEGS'd won't have to apply for their own jobs.

PF raised the issue of GIS staff who may still have to spend some of their time on admin duties, which would be on a 6b paygrade.

This is a management issue and will be raised with unit Managers.

6. Contact Centre and Staff Update

AG has received an email from Lesley Gbel to update him on the latest situation.

PF Asked whether the posts should be moved to higher grade, if they aren't able to recruit enough staff?

ACTION – Staff Council to be asked what is the plan for filling the rest of the posts.

7. PCS day of action

The intention to strike was called off at the 11th hour; further discussions were to take place. This proves the value of 'trade unions'.

PF. Stated that Alan Mackenzie should write to all PCS members saying, "we have had a result, as just the threat of a strike has caused negotiations to restart.

PF. Asked if another day of action was to be held, whether this could be co-ordinated with actions of other unions? This would show unified approach to the management.

PF. Observed that union matters should be dealt with on the website, not on Outlook. Using Outlook for this purpose could be stopped by management. Members should be encouraged to comment on things via website.

8. Scottish Climate Change Bill

At present only affecting Scotland. Will require a change to a Scottish Act of Parliament, but is likely to have implications for other countries.

Union to set up groups to respond to the consultation. The main concern of the unions is the impact on jobs.

PF. Stated that the unions should work with other allies, both within and outside of FC, for example other conservation bodies in Scotland and the timber trade. The important thing is to manipulate the bill so that it best benefits Climate Change and Forestry.

AP. Suggested that we identify allies in Wales e.g. walking and rambling organisations (many of whom showed their opposition to the prospect of privatisation of Forestry Commission).

Unions will have to keep an eye on the situation.

9. Firewood Licensing

What lessons have been learned following the poor Press coverage recently, when no managers were available to talk to the Press? Many staff in direct contact with the public were the unfortunate ones to be on the receiving end of unhappy public concerns.

What steps are being taken to make sure it doesn't happen again?

The current position is that there are few firewood merchants in some areas, so people can put in an application for a licence to collect firewood, until next summer, whilst a network of firewood merchants is being set up. This may not happen quick enough, and even so it may lead to the price of firewood going up, causing people to switch to buying other forms of fuel, coal etc.

Is there a clear policy now?

ACTION – raise as a general communication issue at Staff Council.

10. PMS Training

PF. Stated that for managers the training is only 1 day on how to fill in the form. No training is given on how to conduct interview etc. New managers are not being given proper training.

SA. Stated that some of this is being covered in the 'Challenges' course run by L&D.

ACTION – AG to ask Edward Shepherd to take this up with HR, as it is felt that there is a gap in the training required.

11. Management Development Programme

There are only 10 places in whole of Wales in this financial year, some commitment for next year, but no proper numbers given.

Staff Council to be asked

Why are Forestry Commission giving so little commitment to this, if staff are our greatest asset?

Why only 7 days given to respond to request for participants?

Why don't all PB3 have to go on it, why optional?

Why so little detail, e.g. why are we doing it, what are the benefits etc.

It has been piloted in Scotland and has gone down well.

ACTION - CT to raise this with Claire Lewis before Staff Council.

12. Key Posts

It is felt that there is still some confusion by Members over the establishment of 'key' and 'non-key' posts.

AG has met with Trefor Owen and asked how decisions on 'key' and 'non-key' posts were established. There has been some concern and confusion that the status of key, or non-key, were being driven purely on affordability rather than business need. Trefor Owen confirmed that affordability had to be a consideration, but that it wasn't the sole deciding factor.

Concerns have also been raised where some Members workloads have been based on the physical area of forest blocks that they cover, thus reducing the number of key posts required to cover the work programmes if areas covered are small. The concern is that the physical area, i.e. workload, of forest blocks isn't being related to the geographical spread across an area, which impacts on travelling and available time to carryout work.

Are the structures going to be reviewed each time a District, Business Unit, or Team re-organises?

Is there inconsistencies in approaches from the different Forest Districts, Business Units and Teams?

ACTION – raise concerns at Staff Council. Ask for update on 'key' and 'non-key' posts charts and whether these will be revised to take account of the changes that have already happened? Can the recent FCW 'staff structure chart' be made electronic and put on the intranet, as paper copies can be out of date even before they get printed?!

13. JEGS / Job Evaluation

There is concern that inconsistencies maybe occurring when changes are being made within Districts, Business Units and Teams. For example in Coed y Cymoedd jobs have been changed by the FDM and Peter Garson without any formal evaluation process, whereas other jobs have had to go through a full JEGS procedure. This needs to be carefully monitored by the Unions.

14. Trawls feedback comments to HR

The role of the 'trawls sub committee' was discussed. Their role is to make sure that trawls are fair, that it allows everyone who is qualified to do the job gets a chance to apply. Their role is not to comment on contents of the job specification.

15. AOB

- a) MES – had to consider cost saving measures and produce a paper for Peter Garson.

ACTION – raise at Staff Council.

- b) Core Group's (FCTU) constitution has been changed. There is now a Departmental Committee, which allows more input from Country FCTU Committees. These meetings are being held monthly and allow the Chairs from each FCTU Committee to raise Country Committee concerns and learn what issues are perhaps common, or not.

ACTION - AG will communicate issues discussed back to the FCTU Wales Committee.

- c) Telephone/video conferences were seen as a good thing, (Greenerways agenda) and something that Members should perhaps consider as an alternative to travelling long distances. The appropriate hardware needs to be available in key locations to avoid Members travelling long distances in the first place.

ACTION – raise at Staff Council.

16. Items to carry forward to Staff Council Meeting.

- Health and Safety (Standing Item)
- Contact Centre job vacancies
- Communications
- Management Development Programme

- Key Posts structure updates
- MES in Wales review
- Video/telephone conference facilities

Date of next meeting – 4th March 2009, Coed y Gororau Forest District Office, Welshpool.