



MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION PCS GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD AT SILVAN HOUSE ON THE 18th & 19th JUNE 2008

Present: Allan MacKenzie
Malcolm Crosby
Edward Shephard
Steve Holdsworth
Jim O'Neill
Antony Griffiths
Hazel MacLean
Mary Irvine (Day 1)
Linda McGinley (Day 2)
Jon Bates
Sue Gillingwater
Andy Best
Fiona Barnett

Minute Secretary: Sam Telford

Apologies: David Gibson and Joanne McAuley.

1. President's Introduction

Allan welcomed the GEC and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Group Constitution

Allan said that it was important that the GEC fully understands the new [Group Constitution](#) and the rules that the group must follow. The group discussed the key elements of the constitution that required particular focus.

It was agreed that a record of attendance at GEC meetings shall be maintained by the FCTU Office and published to Branches.

Action Required: FCTU Office

3. Minutes of the meetings of 5th & 6th February 2008

The above minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

3.1 National Women's Group.

In Joanne's absence there was to update to the National Women's Group. The item would be discussed at the next meeting in October.

3.2 2007 Motion A1 (MC)

Motion A1

This conference instructs the GEC to provide a members report on the review of the operational review affecting FE Scotland. The report should consider what if any cost savings have accrued as a result of the implementation of the operational review. The report should also make comparisons between the previous district structure and today's method of delivering the objectives within FE Scotland, and as well as looking at financial comparisons, workloads, job losses and career paths should be investigated.

Part of the report should include the results of a questionnaire from the GEC that asks district staff about the affect that the operational review has had on them. This conference further instructs the GEC to produce the report by no later than the final GEC of 2007.

It was confirmed that Malcolm had submitted a summary of the survey results for the FCTU website.

3.3 Mileage Rates (ES)

Edward asked that the GEC note that the HMRC review was still to be carried out and that he was awaiting a response from HR on their stance on mileage rates. It was agreed to be vital that the group continued to put pressure onto management to increase mileage rates. Jon felt that setting up a small group to work with HR on travel arrangements would be of value, as it was a complex issue that will be difficult to resolve. The group **agreed** to seek clarification on whether or not the issue of mileage rates and travel costs was being covered by the Greenerways programme, and if not to suggest that HR establish a group to explore the issues.

Action Required: Allan MacKenzie

5. Financial Report

Steve referred to the Group Accounts paper and highlighted the underlying factors that were affecting spending. He said that the NEC has taken the decision to fund Groups on actual expenditure in 2007 and that this would affect the FC group. He added that the group must critically examine how to conduct business during the remaining part of 2008 and that T&S costs are minimised wherever possible. Steve said that the group will have sufficient funds to finance the planned GEC meeting in October with the potential for a Group Organising Committee meeting at the end of the year, depending on Group Officer expenditure.

6. Branch Reports

Allan referred the group to the Branch Reports paper and asked a member from each branch to provide a brief rundown of issues specific to their branch and work being carried out.

Action Required:

- **Jim O'Neill to arrange a branch meeting for North West England and confirm dates to Allan and Edward.**
- **Steve Holdsworth to arrange a branch meeting for South West England and confirm dates to Allan and Edward.**
- **Steve Holdsworth to issue a paper explaining branch finances set up for 2008.**
- **Steve Holdsworth to maintain contact with Branch Treasurers to provide support.**
- **Allan MacKenzie to arrange a meeting for South East England.**
- **Edward Shephard to write to PCS Organising Services with details & contacts for England branches and ask them to make contact with branches direct.**
- **Allan MacKenzie to contact Wales Branch Organiser to get branch strategy up and running.**

7. Pay 2007 & 2008

The GEC noted that following the delay in balloting, the 2007/2008 pay offer was accepted by 81% of members. The GEC was pleased to note the high level of support for the offer from members.

It was noted that the claim for 2008/2009 had been formally submitted to management. The group held a confidential discussion on a number of emerging ideas regarding the Pay & Reward strategy, taking the recent changes in inflation and cost of living into consideration. Following discussion, it was agreed that Edward would contact HR in order to clarify management's position on emerging issues and the group noted that issues would be discussed the FCTU Council meeting on 25th June.

8. PCS National Campaign

The group welcomed John McInally (PCS National Vice President) who thanked the group for the invitation and opportunity to talk to the GEC about the national campaign. The GEC held an in-depth discussion about the relevance of the campaign to the FC.

9. Group Conference 2008 (inc. Motions)

Sue reported that feedback from Delegates had indicated that the 2008 conference was the most successful in recent years and was a valued forum for dealing with motions from branch AGM's, as well as working on revising policies on PMS, performance related reward and operational pay.

Allan referred to the Performance Management Systems – [Feedback from Conference](#) paper and the group had a detailed discussion on PMS. It was noted that the PMS Review Group was in the process of being set up and it was expected to begin later in the year.

Motions from Group Conference 2008:

Section 1: FC Policy and Values

Motion A1 - Carried

If FC management is required to operate a performance bonus system for Top Performers under PMS, can this conference support a payment system where the total amount of the bonus is shared equally between all Top Performers, regardless of Grade.

This item has been achieved (Pay Notice 3 refers).

Motion A2 - Remitted

This conference notes with concern that, once again, the annual pay negotiations were not resolved by the expected payment date of October. This means that not only has the cost-of-living increase not been paid, but also any expected step-up the salary scale has been delayed. This conference therefore instructs the GEC to negotiate a change in the arrangements for the annual pay award, wherein salary increases resulting from steps up the scale are paid with effect from 1st October each year, regardless of any delay in applying a cost-of-living increase. This will ensure that newer staff members receive the greater part of their salary increase at the expected time and not after a protracted delay.

The GEC agreed with the sentiment of the motion and Edward said that if members were to accept a multi-year deal then the trade union side could ask that steps up the scale are paid by 1st October. The group recognised that the pay progression system is a negotiation point and it would not therefore be possible to resolve the issue unless progression was separated under a new strategy.

Motion A3 - Remitted

This conference notes that as PB 5 and 6A are the only two grades left under operational pay. Is it not time PCS negotiated with the FC to abolish operational pay and pay appropriate overtime rates for actual hours worked as they have done with PBs 3 and 4. Therefore this motion urges the GEC to campaign for a truly unified workforce of whereby all staff work under the same basic working conditions.

The GEC agreed that a campaign would not take place and noted that the motion was remitted at the Group Conference.

Motion A4 - Carried

Conference requests that the GEC carry out a survey of all staff on the status of operational pay given that there has been a range of views on the subject ongoing for a number of years. The GEC should analyse responses and put forward recommendations in time to debate the issue at Branch 2009 AGMs.

It was **agreed** that Steve, Malcolm and Jon would look at carrying out a survey on all staff on the status on operational pay and report back in the October meeting.

Action Required: Steve Holdsworth, Malcolm Crosby & Jon Bates

Section 2: FC Policy and Values

Motion A5 - Carried

This conference notes with concern the potential effects of devolution on the Forestry Commission as a UK-wide organisation. The GEC is instructed to look at the possible future ways in which the Forestry Commission might be expected to change, and determine what approach PCS should take with each permutation.

It was noted that Wales Branch would report back with suggested permutations.

Action Required: Wales BEC

Motion A6 - Carried

This conference notes with concern that the Terms of Reference of the "FES Forest District Administration Review" have a limiter applied of "a presumption that savings will be generated of a scale which cover the additional staffing need identified by the Operations Structure review" with the implication that, as savings from the full FES Operations Review were not as great as expected, any further savings will have to come as a result of reduction in administration staffing. This conference instructs the GEC to request a full financial cost/savings analysis from the FES Operations Review with a comparison against the planned savings; and also instructs the GEC to promote the benefit of maintaining a healthy administrative staffing level without shrinkage in staff numbers being forced by errors made elsewhere. This will ensure that the administrative teams are accorded due professionalism and respect by the organisation and are not treated as expendable.

Malcolm advised that the FCTU Scotland Committee would be addressing issues from the motion. The GEC recognised the issues of concern to admin/office staff, such as the broad lack of understanding of the jobs that they actually do and favouritism. It was further agreed that a reduction in overall staff numbers and reorganisation worried admin staff as they tend to be overlooked as dispensable during reviews. The group explored ideas on promoting and encouraging union membership to admin staff and following discussion, Allan said that he would consider ideas further and report back at the October meeting with his findings.

Action Required: Allan MacKenzie

Motion A7 - Carried

Conference condemns the ongoing practice of employing consultants and contractors to undertake work, often at great expense, that could be done by FC staff. The true cost of this is often masked by assigning the costs to other budgets. We need to focus on the provision of in-service training to improve efficiency and the quality of our services to enable staff to deliver their programmes. This approach often undervalues the skills and competencies of existing staff who could have achieved the required results themselves and at a far reduced cost.

Conference therefore calls on the Group Executive Committee to engage with Senior Management to ensure that the use of consultants and contractors is justified and that skills transference is built into the process. Senior Managers should also provide details of the cost of consultants to the unions and to introduce safeguards against abuse of the system by formulating a set of guidelines on the scope and use of these services in consultation with the Unions.

The motion was remitted to the Silvan House NOC and Mary advised that she would report back to the GEC on progress.

Action Required: Mary Irvine

Motion A8 - Remitted

This conference is concerned that the JEGS process takes too long to carry out and is being used in such a way that it favours the more senior paybands. Conference instructs the GEC to review the JEGS process and note how it has been applied in recent years.

Edward reported that the related Personnel Memoranda has been amended with the intent of reducing the timescale of the JEGS process. He added that a new timetable has been issued and therefore this has been achieved already.

Motion A9 - Carried

This conference notes with concern that despite various initiatives by HR, staff still have no confidence in the post filling procedure. This concern stems from the inequality of decision making apparent at several stages, especially where a business case needs to be put forward before a post can be filled and where this seems to depend on the payband of the job involved. This conference instructs the GEC to review the post-filling procedures so that inconsistencies can be identified and the confidence of staff restored.

Motion A9 was addressed under agenda item 14. Post Filling.

Motion A11 - Carried

This conference asks the GEC to look at a special disturbance allowance to compensate those staff who are required to work away from home on a regular basis. This would be outside the normal pay bargaining situation.

Jon suggested that exploring what other departments do in terms of disturbance allowance would be useful. The group concurred and Edward said that he would contact the Civil Service Unions Nation Secretary to find out if any other departments have a similar policy.

10. Group Conference 2009

The group discussed arrangements for the 2009 Group Conference. The group felt that feedback from the 2008 conference would be used in organising the event. It was agreed that subject to costs the conference would return to York but try and avoid the bank holiday week.

Action Required: Sue Gillingwater to acquire costing for Ramada hotel

11. Group Review (inc. elections) & Organising Priorities

Allan referred to the action points agreed under agenda item 6 and said that the meetings in England were an organising priority. He added that a meeting would be set up with the Standing Ordered Committee and that the group would meet the new Group Secretary when appointed by Mark Serwotka. It was noted that Allan and Edward would be meeting again with John McNally ASAP.

12. FC Finances

This topic was not discussed.

13. Reviews in Scotland & Forest Research

Malcolm provided the group with an update of the various reviews being carried out in FC Scotland including reviews of Estates, Operations, Admin, FD District Boundaries Amalgamation, Direct Production and SEARS.

Edward reported that he would be meeting with the Research CEO and Chief Research Officer on 20th June to discuss a range of issues including the financial control system, the financial management of TSUs, the Inventory & Forecasting Review and the Climate Change Centre. Edward said that he had been co-opted as Chair of the FR NOC as additional capacity and support was needed in addressing many issues in FR over the coming months.

14. Post-filling Processes

Edward referred the paper on proposals from the post-filling review. He said that the closing date for submitting comments on the proposals was 20th June, and that he would respond to HR with comments.

15. Management Development Programme

Edward highlighted the Management Development proposal paper that was circulated prior to the meeting and asked for initial comments were made by 4th July.

16. Group Newsletter

Edward thanked the group for giving articles for the newsletter in February. The GEC were keen to release another newsletter following the meeting.

It was agreed that it would be useful for the newsletter to include information on conference feedback, England branches, admin support issues, Wales branch activity, SEARS, Ops Pay, National Campaign, ADC, and the PCS Women's Forum. Contributors to the newsletter were noted and Edward said that he would make contact following the meeting to confirm action points.

17. Any Other Competent Business

There were no further items to add to the agenda.

18. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the dates of the next meeting would be 7th and 8th October 2008.