



MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION PCS GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD AT SILVAN HOUSE ON THE 23rd & 24th JUNE 2009

Present: Mary Irvine
Allan MacKenzie
Sam Telford
Steve Holdsworth
Malcolm Crosby
Antony Griffiths
Hazel MacLean
David Gibson
Jim O'Neill
Kenneth Knott
Sue Gillingwater

Minute Secretary: Sam Telford

Apologies: Joanne McAuley, Amanda Snell, Andy Best, Danny Williamson, Jon Bates.

1. President's Introduction

Mary welcomed the Group and thanked everyone for attending. This was noted to be Mary's first GEC meeting as Group President. Also new to the GEC were Kenneth representing North Scotland Branch and Sam as Group Organiser. The Group also welcomed back Sue.

2. Minutes of the meetings of 3rd & 4th February 2008

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

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Hardship Funds

Steve was asked to clarify the purpose of a Hardship Fund and he said that it is designed primarily around loss of earnings due to industrial action. Steve said that for a Hardship Fund to be set up, funds could not be transferred from existing accounts therefore there would have to be some form of fundraising. He also said a small sub-committee would have to be elected to administer claims, be the signatories to the account and set up rules and guidelines for awarding payouts for hardship. The Group agreed that there are members who could participate in strike action with some assistance from the hardship fund. Having the account could help to raise the profile of the campaign and build support.

Steve advised that he would look into communication and security of personal claims and produce a paper on his recommendations.

Allan suggested that the Group considering levying members. It was noted that Allan and Steve would discuss this further.

Action Required: Steve Holdsworth & Allan MacKenzie

4. Financial Report

Steve referred to the Finance Report paper and said that thanks to the level of the settlement for year, there are sufficient funds to hold all the GEC meetings required for 2009 in addition to holding the Conference in York in May. He said that it is appreciated that GEC members continue to seek good value accommodation and travel particularly for Edinburgh meetings. Steve added that Conference delegates have also helped by holding down the travel and subsistence costs of Conference to 2008 levels. Steve said that this was welcome as it gives the Group the option of using our remaining funds in a focussed way. Funding would be needed to

meet the aspirations for the year that are set out both from the work arising from Conference and the Organising Strategy, whilst enabling them to look into ways to raise awareness of the National Campaigns to members in the Branches.

5. Branch Reports

Mary asked a member from each branch to provide the group with a brief summary of issues specific to their branch and the work being carried out.

6. Motions from Group Conference 2009

Section 1: Pay and Grading

Motion A1 - Carried

As FC employees we have the right to expect a fair rate of pay for the work we do. Over recent years certain pay bands have been singled out as "over-generous". Little has been done to enable them to keep pace with rises elsewhere within the implemented pay offers, let alone the cost of living.

Setting suitable rates of pay and deciding on pay systems are major decisions which have a long-lasting impact on members for many years to come, even into retirement. This conference instructs the GEC to carry out a pay comparison study, looking into job responsibilities as well as grading systems across the public sector. Once complete the results should be published within a future PCS newsletter and be used to inform Conference 2010 and the TUS core group/ pay negotiating team as necessary.

Remitted to FCTU

It was agreed that motions A1-A4 would be remitted to the FCTU. Allan referred to the HMT Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance and said that he has been working on looking at the pay tables for 2012-2013 and that he has produced a paper with pay tables in accordance with the guidance, that is aimed at all Government departments. Allan explained that this would be a progressive pay system where there is an entry point and competency point within the lower pay bands, and 3-5 points in the higher pay bands. He added that he would be discussing the paper with HR but said that there would be a question of affordability. It was noted that Allan would report back to the GEC in October on progress.

Motion A2 - Carried

To instruct the GEC to look at the current pay system in the FC and establish if it is fit for purpose and to question members on how they would like to see the system altered to be more equitable and provide a fair reward for a fair job. The GEC should work with others to bring about these changes and report progress back to the 2010 conference.

Remitted to FCTU

Motion A3 - Carried

FC Wales PCS Branch would like this Conference and the GEC to consider the problems caused by the 10% salary increase on pay-on-promotion for Members on their 'max' given the narrow gap between successive pay bands. In most cases a 10% pay-on-promotion promotes Members to either the Max, spine 2 or spine 1 of the successive pay band. This is de-motivating for Members who see others being promoted with a salary close to the 'max' when others have spent many progressive years on that pay band. In many cases this once again promotes 'leapfrogging'!

The Branch would like this Conference to instruct the GEC to work with other FC Unions to re-structure and re-align the pay bands so that there is a 10% difference between the 'max' and 'min' of successive pay bands. Thus any pay increase on promotion will lead to a minimum pay increase of 10%, but will not result in any Members pay being consolidated above that of the 'min' of the successive pay band. The Branch would like this discussed as part of future pay negotiations following the end of this current imposed 3 year deal.

Remitted to FCTU

Motion A4 - Carried

FC Wales PCS Branch would like this Conference and the GEC to consider the problems caused by the promotion of Members from Ops pay bands to non-Ops pay bands. This affects those Members promoted from pay band 6a Ops to pay band 5 and pay band 5 Ops to pay band 4. Due to the current procedures in place there is often no incentive, financially, for Members on Ops pay bands to look for a promotion to a non-Ops pay band both in the short and medium terms. In some circumstances some

Members can in fact be worse off, financially, for taking a promotion to a non-Ops pay band with a post/role that carries considerably more responsibility and pressure. Clearly the Ops - average 44 hour week - complicates matters, but it is necessary to establish a procedure that is fair to all pay bands and which encourages/promotes Ops pay band Members career development and progression without being penalised financially. This too would be to the benefit of the Forestry Commission.

The Branch would like this Conference to instruct the GEC to work with other FC Unions to come-up with a solution that takes on board the problems raised in the Motion above, i.e. overlapping pay bands. However, on the other-hand a solution is needed to resolve the disincentives for those Ops pay band Members wishing to progress their career development necessitating a move from Ops pay bands to one of non-Ops. The Branch would like this discussed as part of future pay negotiations following the end of this current imposed 3 year deal.

Remitted to FCTU

Motion A5 - Remitted

The GEC were asked to carry out a survey of all staff on the status of operational pay at the 2008 Group Conference. The GEC were to analyse responses and put forward recommendations in time to debate the issue at the 2009 conference.

If no progress has been made, then the GEC is again instructed to 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 2010 AGMs.

Sue advised that draft questions for the survey have been prepared. Following discussion she advised that she would circulate the questions and the GEC agreed that it would be raised at the next meeting. Allan said that although other priorities prevented the GEC from taking the required action in 2008, there was still value in creating the survey as even with significant pay reform, there will still likely be issues with operational pay and it would be useful to have feedback from members as early as possible.

Action Required: Sue Gillingwater

Motion A7 - Carried

The pay award that was imposed by FC management in March changed the overtime rates for hours worked weekly in excess of conditioned hours from time and a half to plain time for Pay Bands 5, 6 and 7 to be the same as Pay Bands 3 and 4.

This conference asks the GEC to put the restoration of the payment of time and a half for overtime for Pay Bands 5, 6 and 7 as a major component of the next round of pay negotiations with management.

Allan advised that GMB have raised a grievance against the FC seeking to restore the payment of overtime to the rates they were previous to the 3 year pay deal. Allan said that he would report back at a later date and that the group will need to form a position.

Section 2: FC Policy and Values

Motion A8 - Carried

The conference would like statistics on staff interchanges to be reviewed . The GEC is therefore asked to gain and compare statistics on staff interchange between the comparative FC management units eg Forest Districts and Conservancy and Business units such as Forest research. These results to be published via appropriate mechanism.

Allan said that he would approach HR to ask for statistics and ask for an update on the People Strategy as it is the key document that outlines what staff do, how we deal with staff and how changes will take place.

Action Required: Allan MaKenzie

Motion A9 - Carried

Conference is aware that the increased functionality of posts and roles is leading to marginalisation of staff including those in business units and central functions. This is leading to most posts becoming 'specialist' reducing the capacity of staff to move between functions and different areas of the FC. The low profile of the current Transfer Register, and the removal of the Tour System are exacerbating the issue The conference asks the GEC to ensure a robust mechanism is put in place within the FC to

ensure that staff are able to exchange between functions and business units to maintain or progress their development, as we are concerned that it is an missing mechanism which will be essential if the MDP programme is to deliver its objectives.

The group agreed that the item was linked to A8.

Action Required: Allan MacKenzie

Motion A10 - Carried

This conference regrets the FC's loss of status within the media and wider public as the leading voice in tree and woodland issues, therefore we instruct the GEC to demand that the FC at a GB level work to re-establish its position especially with regards to NGOs and other Government departments.

It was agreed that a paper would be submitted to the Departmental Staff Council in November to raise the concerns. Jim advised that he would contact Jon Bates to suggest that he drafts the paper. Kenneth said that he would input into the paper also. Allan asked for the draft to be completed by the end of September.

Action Required: Jim O'Neill, Kenneth Knott

Motion A11 - Carried

The conference is concerned that reviews carried out are singular in focus and do not always assess the potential impacts on all staff groups and service delivery. Therefore the conference asks the GEC to ensure future reviews carried out within the FC engage with the unions at the earliest opportunity to ensure that the widest impacts are considered through agreement on the terms of reference used by the review group.

Allan advised that the FCTU and the FC have a Partnership Agreement that states that consultation will take place at the earliest possible stage. He added that often in the past, members have raised concerns before the objective of the review is clear and before there are any concrete plans. Allan expressed concern however that it must be true consultation and that management must fully engage with the FCTU at the right time. Hazel advised that the motion was put forward due to concerns surrounding the SRDP, that changed the way in which staff work with no plan of action and was simply reactive. The group recognised however that for FC reviews, the FCTU must be alerted as early as possible and this should be communicated through the Area Committees and FCTU Office. Allan said that some managers will look to consult with one individual from the Area Committee and emphasised that this is not consultation and should be for information only. He added that information given at one to one meetings with management should be taken to the Area Committees to be discussed.

Motion A13 - Carried

Asset sales are a major concern for England members where the current targets for disposals is higher now than it ever was under the conservatives. Where previous sales have been to balance the books the last round was clearly to contribute directly to shortfalls within DEFRA's own budget. The disposals programme is not achievable or sustainable and should only be used as an option for reinvestment within that Region.

There is no clear strategy for these disposals and it is clear that more work needs to be done by the TUS to raise the profile of this programme. The GEC is therefore instructed to create a publicity/ media campaign centred around a GB strategy to save our public forest estate, building on the work carried out most recently in Scotland over the Scottish Climate Change Bill. Such a strategy, along with a plan for the associated campaign, should be agreed by the GEC before the next round of Branch AGM's in Feb/ Mar 2010.

The motion was deferred to the October meeting. Allan said that he had attended the PCS National Privatisation Forum on 11th June and that he would give a report under agenda item 9.

Motion A14 - Carried

The conference is aware that the current FD review process has a number of staff complement discussions taking place. The GEC is requested to confirm that the staffing level/complements are not the remit of local implementation groups to decide on.

It was noted that this had now been confirmed.

Motion A15 - Carried

This conference does not believe that the move to a single National Office for FC England at Bristol is the correct structural model for the organisation, therefore we call upon the GEC to press for the details of how the move will bring about a reduced carbon footprint whilst ensuring all regional activity is appropriately supported. If FCE cannot set out appropriate and realistic plans to achieve real reductions then the GEC should call for the location of key National Office staff to be reconsidered.

The England National Office was discussed under agenda item 9.

Motion A16 – Composited with A14

The conference is concerned that in the current Scottish FD review implementation process that a number of staff complement discussions are taking place, this is resulting in a reduction in staff from the numbers in place before the review. We were assured that no staff reductions would take place as a result of the review. The GEC is requested to confirm that the staffing level/complements are not the remit of local implementation groups to decide, and ensure that these post numbers should remain open until filled, preferably within the next six months.

Malcolm said that the District Review was not about reducing numbers and that any staff reductions will be due to funding difficulties and not the review. He felt that the motion should not have been composited with A14 and agreed that he would clarify this in the next newsletter.

Action Required: Malcolm Crosby

Section 3: Terms and Conditions

Motion A17 - Remitted

The GEC was asked to look at adding to the 2008 pay bargaining, a special disturbance allowance for those low paid staff who are required to work away from home on a regular basis. This would be an extra allowance to baseline salary in specific circumstances.

If no progress has been made, then the GEC is instructed to look at adding this to the next pay bargaining round.

Allan advised that he was looking into what disturbance allowances were in place throughout DEFRA and said that he would report back to the group with findings.

Action Required: Allan MacKenzie

Motion A18 - Remitted

This conference recognises the fact that it has been a significant period of time since a fundamental review of Travel and Subsistence rates for FC employees and instructs the GEC, in conjunction with other unions, to press for a review so that staff are recompensed fully for the costs that they occur whilst on official duty.

It was noted that HR would be carrying out a review on T&S and that the FCTU would be involved in the process. Allan said that he would keep the group informed.

Section 4: Union Policy and Values

Motion A19 - Carried

This conference recognises the excellent work being carried out on a daily basis by local reps within the Forestry Commission. The large increase in the number of personal cases means that reps have become more and more involved with the problems staff face in their daily working lives.

The GEC is therefore instructed to:

- 1. Review how personal casework is delivered at branch and group level.*
- 2. Put in place a comprehensive personal casework training programme to increase numbers of union reps who feel confident in handling cases at branch level.*
- 3. To appoint a GEC personal casework co-ordinator.*

Mary referred to the Group Personal Cases Strategy paper provided prior to the meeting. Mary recommended the following:

- A Training Needs Analysis be conducted by all Branches by 18 September 2009. To achieve this a questionnaire will be devised and issued.

- Assess how best to deliver training.
- We consider setting up a secure mechanism for sharing information on how to handle personal cases.
- We need to develop a casework register that outlines the types and numbers of cases and also the outcomes. Again this needs to be in a secure format.

Mary was concerned with the lack of Personal Case workers and felt that GEC and some BEC reps should be trained in how to deal with Personal Cases. Mary said that despite the FC Values being promoted widely, the number of Personal Cases was still increasing. Allan advised that PCS would provide training at several levels. It was agreed that further discussion was required at the October meeting and Mary asked that it is also discussed with Branches prior to this.

7. Group Organising Strategy

Mary welcomed Jude Ritchie, PCS Scottish Organiser to discuss organising within the group. Jude gave the GEC a background of his work in PCS and also past experiences as an active union member working with Hackney Council. He raised the four main areas from the Group Organising Strategy for discussion:

Face to Face Communication

Jude highlighted the importance of face to face contact between members and their union and hoped that the group would agree to have this at the forefront of the organising strategy. Jude said that in recent years there is typically less face to face communication as subscription charges were no longer being collected by a steward on a weekly/monthly basis and that the group should seek ways of replacing this dialogue and getting feedback regularly from members. He said that where members are spread out and difficult to reach, this poses practical difficulties and felt that this needed a lot of thought and planning.

Jude stated that a large number of members simply view being part of the union as an insurance policy that will help you with individual problems, advising that the group needs to work to change this perception and get the “passive” members to be more active and participate. Jim expressed concern that GEC discussions are often confidential, that makes communicating more widely with members difficult. He requested that the GEC considers “lifting the lid” on negotiations and consultation with members. The group agreed.

Recruitment of non members

Jude said that in very general terms there are two types of non members: those who are anti union or very sceptical of unions, and potential members. He felt however that only a small number of non members fall into the first category (estimating 10%) and there is a degree of flexibility depending on what is going on at the time and what the union is doing. Jude said that the group has to identify the correct strategy to target the rest of the non members, whilst finding the reasons why some are sceptical and overcome this. Antony said that many non members refused to join a union due to the subscription charges but felt that often there was another reason for this. Steve said that recruitment was the most important thing for the group to work on and that they need to actively recruit even just to maintain the current membership and that through staff retiring and a diminishing headcount there is a danger in membership density dropping over time. Hazel said that a problem with recruitment is that generally the union has a good relationship with FC management, which often means there is a lack of issues that make people want to join the union. Hazel also stated that in offices where the majority of staff are union members, new staff typically join whilst other staff in offices with less members don't have that incentive to join along with others. Jim concurred and said that when new staff are invited along to a union meeting it generates a great deal more interest than simply being approached by one person.

Generating union activity

Jude recognised that the group has limited resources and said that he comes across many representatives who have limited time for union activity. He said that if this is the case in the FC, the group should look to focus on the areas with the greatest potential for new members initially. Antony expressed concern that many workplace contacts are not interested in engaging more with the union and generally only distribute mail and updated their notice

board. He added that this is mostly due to limited facility time and work pressures. Antony said that some members link the term 'activist' with union militancy and that this makes them hesitant to get involved and the group concurred.

Identifying local issues

Jude said that the group should also continue to focus on identifying and tapping into local issues, and that even small victories can win a great deal of respect from members. Antony said that the key to identifying issues is communication and that support is needed from the union and management to be able to engage in and discuss them. He added that the FC were fortunate to have that support from management and that most senior staff are actually union members.

Mary referred to the Group Organising Strategy provided prior to the meeting. The strategy was drawn up to provide the group with a focus for its activities in 2009 and 2010. It represents the group's contribution to the PCS National Organising Strategy and is indicative of their commitment to building a stronger, healthier union. Sam said that the Group President, Group Organiser and Assistant Group Secretary will work closely together to lead on the strategic work of the group and to liaise with PCS Regional Organisers. He referred to the overall objectives:

- **Recruitment:** Increase membership density by 15%.
- **Representation:** Maintain a contact in every workplace within the commission, and to increase activism to ensure that all roles are properly resourced.
- **Campaigning:** To support the PCS national campaigns and to develop a culture of greater local activity.

The group agreed that they must take every opportunity to recruit new members and that active members must be given clear leadership on how this is achieved. Sam said the group needs to be more vigorous in recruitment by looking at what works elsewhere, current best practice techniques and following up on those who resist the initial recruitment proposition. The group recognised that the last few years have seen growth in membership and that there are now over 900 members. It was noted that although their goal is to recruit any and all non-union members, particular attention will be paid to certain groups. In 2009/10 we shall:

- Continue to take advantage of our mapping data to target other groups, such as young members and FTAs.
- Initially, particular emphasis will be placed on Silvan House as a "testing ground" and the Group Organiser and Scottish Organiser will work closely with the BEC to work on recruitment techniques and best practice on following up non members.
- Encourage more face to face contact between reps and potential members.

The GEC endorsed the Group Organising Strategy and it was noted that progress on the strategy will be discussed at each GEC meeting and amended according to any progress made or problems that may arise.

8. England Review & Cambridge Closure

Allan provided the group with an update on the future of the national office arrangements. He said that there had been a staff meeting held on 2nd June and referred to the response from Sarah England on the questions asked at the meeting:

Leave

I appreciate that this is an unusual scenario, which is not covered in the Staff Handbook. However before we can decide how best to deal with this situation we need more information about the extent of the issue. We have already issued a note to staff asking them to let us have details of their leave entitlements, including banked leave and their likely plans. As soon as we have assessed the returns we will let you have our proposals for dealing with this matter.

2nd Preference Interviews, Calculations & Letters.

John Scotney has already carried out a number of meetings with colleagues who wish to go over their figures and any queries arising from this will be dealt with as quickly as possible, together with any outstanding questions.

After the 2nd Preference Interviews colleagues will be given a written note of their preference decision clearly stating their choice as soon as practically possible after 31st July 2009. I should stress that not all decisions are required by the 31st July. The only final decision that we really need is whether colleagues are opting to move to Bristol or not. This is for business continuity purposes. Other choices such as redeployment or exit can be handled later.

I have asked HR in Silvan House for a copy of the form of words that will be used in the notice letters. I will pass this onto you as soon as it is available.

Assurance of continuity of work.

We will be looking to keep all colleagues who remain in Cambridge employed until the closure date. We are confident that there will be sufficient work for those colleagues staying until the end. There will of course be a need for colleagues to remain flexible in their duties as we move into the later stages of this year and next, as some work will inevitably transfer to Bristol sooner rather than later.

Q&A

We will revisit the Q&A and do our best to improve the content as requested.

Definition of Civil Service

I can confirm that the Police, Local Authorities and the NHS are not part of the Civil Service and as such would not be of any concern to colleagues taking severance payments should they apply for employment with these bodies. I should point out however that all of these three examples do have similar pension schemes and it may be possible to transfer your pensionable service into their pension schemes.

Agency Staff

I do appreciate that some recent job vacancies may have looked like a possible chance for colleagues to try out in a new role by way of a development opportunity. We will of course keep this in mind for any future vacancies that arise but colleagues will have to understand that with sections likely to lose experienced staff, managers will be under increasing pressure to fill vacancies with staff who can step into the role immediately.

Line Management

I recognise colleagues concerns and we will be working very hard with managers of our teams to ensure that proper line management roles and responsibilities are carried out fully and correctly.

Allan reported that the FCTU had welcomed the response and that they would continue to engage in the process. He expressed concern however that staff morale is low and that there are financial concerns for staff mainly due to the relocation package and mortgage interest factor.

Allan said that there will be a number of challenges ahead for FCTU England to deal with, one of which is the Public Forest Estate Study. Allan said the study is to inform the lead forestry Minister about the future long-term sustainable role for the Public Forest Estate and make recommendations about any necessary changes to improve its ability to deliver relevant priorities in the Government's Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests. Allan said that information regarding the study was available on the Intranet and that several internal and external communication meetings will be taking place throughout England. He said that the FCTU needs to be involved as much as possible in the process, attend these meetings and obtain feedback from the public. Jim said that the group need to look at the list of attendees to initiate lobbying, in particular ConFor contacts. Allan said that he would look into this and that a meeting with between the ConFor Chief Executive and FCTU would be held in July to discuss the PFE study.

9. PCS Privatisation Forum

Allan reported that he had attended the PCS National Privatisation Forum on 11th June, which was primarily looking at the threat of privatisation and outsourcing. Allan said that Mark Serwotka's opening remarks stated that no matter which Government is in power, there will be a huge number of cuts across the organisation and that every department will be affected. Allan referred to the papers from the forum and asked that the GEC take these back to Branches for discussion. It was noted however that a scaled down version of the papers would be circulated at a later date.

Allan said that he gave a presentation on the Fight For Our Forests campaign in Scotland to the 200 people present, for which he provided a detailed timeline of events and how the campaign was carried out. He said that this was one of the few campaigns that was truly successful and that lessons learned would be catalogued for future threats.

10. Flexibility Savings

Allan said that following discussion with the FCTU Departmental Committee, he had written to HR asking if any significant savings were identified when the FC took the decision not to pursue any form of efficiency saving flexibility during the pay remit. Allan said that there had been considerable discussion about the FC's use of contractors (consultants/agency staff) and that the FCTU applauds the new skills that they bring to the organisation. However, the letter stated that members are concerned these appointments have not only been ongoing for a number of years but that the opportunity for the transference of skills has not been taken up or full time employment been offered to individuals. Allan said rather than being restricted to a particular area of the organisation, the issue is widespread and in some instances is difficult to be identified. The committee were also concerned that the completion of the procurement process for the contracts currently in place may not have been as diligent as it could have been and so could leave the FC exposed. Allan informed the group that they had intended to enter into a dialogue to try to identify the extent of contractor services currently employed in the FC as a whole and to identify where possible any further efficiency savings but said that this would now have to be taken to the country directors.

11. Group Constitution Review

The item was deferred to the next meeting.

12. Group Directory Update

It was agreed that the update would be carried out by email.

13. Personal Case Co-ordination

The item was discussed under motion A19.

14. Recruitment & Mapping

Recruitment was discussed under agenda item 7.

Sue said that PCS are the one union that has maintained a mapping process, that she formulated with the Branches and added that it works extremely well. Sue explained how the process works and said that she manages the movements between Branches and that BEC Secretaries ensure that members are listed with the correct workplace. Sue referred to the FCTU Density Analysis paper that now includes an overview of members from all unions. Sue said that the figures were broken down by union, area, age, grade, gender and appointment type. It was noted that overall membership density has dropped to 53.4%, however this was mostly due to an increase in headcount. Sue advised that the mapping process will be completed on a monthly basis.

15. Grievance Procedure

Allan said that the new Grievance Policy and Procedure was issued on 1st June but said that the reason for the issue was unclear as the FCTU had not finished consulting with HR. Allan said the FCTUDC were concerned that the FC had spent a great deal of time and effort to ensure that the Discipline Policy and Procedure was effective, but had not given Grievance the same attention. Allan reported however that he had met with HR and that he was assured the documents could be changed to meet the requirements of the FCTU. Allan advised that he would report back to the group with any progress.

16. Group Newsletter

It was agreed that the next newsletter will include articles on the FD Review, Fight For Our Forests Campaign and the Partnership Agreement.

17. Another Other Competent Business

17.1 Distinguished Life Membership

The GEC agreed that two long serving members Steve Osborne and Dick Gossling should receive Distinguished Life Membership in respect of all the work they have done for their Union all of their working lives. This would mean inviting them to the 2010 Conference to receive the award and that a motion would have to be moved recommending. The group agreed.

17.2 JEGS

Allan said that every year the FCTU is asked to put forward posts for JEGS but said they had not this year as it was too early with the number of reviews that would have an impact on jobs. The group discussed the list of posts that were to be evaluated and a reminder that this was confidential.

18. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 6th & 7th October 2009 in Silvan House.