

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF FORESTRY BUSINESS UNITS STAFF COUNCIL TUESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2004 - MES HEAD OFFICE STIRLING**

**Trade Union Side**

Robert Beaney, TUS Chairman  
Jamie Brown, Prospect  
Bruce Hamilton, PCS  
A Gillies, MES Balnacoul  
Eric Williams, MES Wales  
Mike Purvis, MES England  
Andrew Stewart, Prospect, Vice Secretary

**Management Side**

Craig Heaney, Chairman  
J Livingston, MES  
David Killer, FCE  
D Taylor, Personnel  
M Shearer, Secretary

**Agenda Item 1: Introductions**

Craig Heaney thanked everyone for such a good attendance and welcomed Robert Beaney to his first FBU Staff Council meeting.

**Agenda Item 2: Apologies**

Apologies were given on behalf of Roy Laird and Norrie Russell.

**Agenda Item 3: Minutes of Last Meeting**

With one amendment, page 2, 1<sup>st</sup> para, line 10, delete 'Balnacoul' replace with 'Buchan FD', the Minutes of 14 May 2004 were agreed as a true record.

**Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising**

4a - Staff Development and Future Succession

C Heaney advised that an Action Plan would be drawn together by Reporting Officers for the staff they report on. D Killer believed this had been a very useful exercise, with those expressing an interest being invited to attend the recent Supervisor training course. E Williams had been reported on outwith MES and he would now receive the forms for completion. J Livingston advised that within MES many forms had been completed but he had agreed to extend the return date until the 1<sup>st</sup> review of 2004 to allow staff to consider their responses. Querying whether the response had been positive, Robert Beaney was advised that this was generally the case. C Heaney thanked all for their input into the process which would assist in advising management of staff aspirations and ensure that they were skilled for the future.

8 - MES Longman and Inverness FD

Jeff Livingston was asked to provide an update and advised that the plans had now been drawn up and the financial appraisal is being developed. The project, which will be cost neutral due to the sale of part of the land at

Smithton and Longman seems likely to proceed. The team drawn together to develop this project would submit their findings to Hugh Insley and C Heaney in October. Staff at the Longman had been consulted on design, requirements etc. If approval is given the building will be completed in the next financial year. C Heaney was delighted to see the FD and MES involved in a capital project and stated that FE Scotland would build this into their BP for the coming year. Querying further, Alistair Gillies was advised that the result would be an excellent FD and workshop facility.

### **Agenda Item 5: Business Briefing**

C Heaney distributed a copy of the Powerpoint presentation which had reported on BU performance to the EB. He talked through the presentation and also advised on the 2004 Spending Review, which covers the 3 year period to 2007-08. Value for money was acknowledged by savings made via Trading and Parliamentary Cash.

Querying the training for FBU staff and whether this was liable to rise significantly as a result of the staff succession initiative, C Heaney advised Robert Beaney that the target for training within FBUs is 5 days per staff member. D Killer advised of the FCE foremen training recently undertaken and the positive response this has seen from staff. J Livingston is considering a similar exercise for MES Foremen who have moved from the shop floor to a considerable amount of desk work, again those below foreman grade will be able to attend. Robert Beaney advised the position was similar for Forest Rangers.

SR2004 Efficiency savings - C Heaney advised of a projected saving of 2.5% to be delivered in the coming financial year. Areas he had identified for further savings were planning, decision making and sharing challenges. FCE were looking to improve planning through input at the Forest Design Plan stage and building/maintaining roads well in advance of use. J Livingston advised of a 5% improvement in the price of leases obtained by putting pressure on manufacturers via leasing companies. To improve efficiencies within VME a more accurate forecast of what is required will be sought from FDs and from a clear picture of the options available a decision on choice can be reached. The internal planning module being developed within the nurseries will be rolled out to FDs. It is inefficient to alter stocking levels once plants are grown and FDs/countries will require to pay for plants grown in agreement with them. Another area where efficiencies have been identified is in the use of B1 orders, FBUs will aim to look at all future purchasing being through electronic means. This should also allow a better picture of current spending level. FBU objectives and challenges require to be shared with customers. D Killer wants customer to appreciate that FCE are the best service provider and value for money and to this end he is getting FCE area staff involved in FDM meetings. J Livingston advised that within MES managers and mechanics are encouraged to share the objectives of the FD teams they work with/for.

Discussing the proposed new Scottish Operations Unit the meeting agreed that the lessons learned from the setting up of WHAM should be taken on board. J Livingston felt the new unit would help focus the business in the longer term. C Heaney stated that working together and striving for continual improvement is the key. A Stewart mentioned the lack of investment in operators and sees little commitment at present from FD side. Robert Beaney believed this picture was mirrored across the forestry industry and agreed that our commitment to apprentices needs to be matched across the industry.

The briefing ended with a discussion on environmental issues, increased mileage being covered by FC customers over the last few years and mention of the Government's initiative to see CO<sub>2</sub> levels reduced by 10%.

### **Agenda Item 6: FCE - Discontinued use of DRIVE**

D Killer agreed that changes had been made and that MES will now invoice FCE monthly at the rate of 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the total budget. This was down to the confidence FCE had in the system. FCE were using the time recording system (at no cost) to link men to machines to jobs and inputting to DRIVE would therefore be duplication. At P9 a comparison will be made. J Livingston advised the meeting that DRIVE continues to move forward and within FC considerable interest in DRIVE is regularly expressed. DRIVE will adequately monitor the FCE machines within the system. Investment within DRIVE will continue and the MES IT Change Review group consider all requests for improvements from both customers and users.

### **Agenda Item 7: PDC Expenditure**

J Livingston considered the 2.5% reduction which can be returned to FDs was a 'good news' item for the recent edition of Tracks. He also advised that there were no constraints on added value investment within MES but believed that reducing costs to our customers is the best investment we can make. C Heaney advised that the 2.5% unit cost reduction is an aim for all Business Units.

### **Agenda Item 8: Annual Business Statements**

D Killer issued a statement for each country. FCE had seen a sharp rise in work within England via mountain bike routes, etc. FCE were bringing staff up to date on the skills required to undertake these new projects. The agreed Key Performance Indicators included non-SLA items. The £720k non-SLA work reported is principally recreation work. Also the investment in GIS is expected to prove itself over the coming year. Within Wales there is again a large amount of non-SLA work and considerable external income to be gained from the windfarm projects. A new ACE with a geotechnic background has been employed to increase FCE involvement in tip and slip work. Within Scotland the aim is to increase external income via bridges and consultancy work. FCE will be closely measuring change in programmes from the start of the year to what is actually delivered.

J Livingston informed the meeting that the MES Statement is a requirement of liP and is a summary of the BUs overall objectives. A national statement is issued to all staff and local statements are issued to territory staff. It includes the latest forecast, which provides the required efficiency improvement. He mentioned the leasing companies recent interest in expanding their vehicle repair work by MES workshops.

For PSS a similar statement was issued. A net loss was reported as a result of the 3 million plants grown which FD customers may/may not take. Over the coming year work will continue to improve the formal planning process with customers. The current year is a bumper seed collection year and this should bring in in the region of a further £1 million over a number of years. Within Wales direct seeding is being used in an attempt to reduce costs.

**Agenda Item 9: Any Other Relevant Business**

None.

**Agenda Item 10: Date of Next Meeting**

For 2005 the following dates were agreed:

Thursday 17 February 2005, 11 am, Stirling  
Thursday 22 September 2005, 11 am, Stirling