

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FORESTRY BUSINESS UNITS STAFF COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2009**

### **Trade Union Side**

A Gillies, GMB, FCTU Chairman  
L Villa, MES Unite  
P Bullock, MES Unite  
R Laird, GMB  
N Russell, FCE, Unite  
J Brown, FCE Prospect  
B Hamilton, FCE PCS, Secretary

### **Management Side**

M Ansell, Director FBU, Chairman  
J Livingston, Head of MES  
F MacCulloch, Head of FCE  
L Carty, HR Services  
A Dickerson, FCE  
M Shearer, Secretary

### **1. Introductions**

M Ansell welcomed everyone to the October 2009 meeting of the FBUSC, in particular F MacCulloch, FCE and Lynn Carty, HR who were attending for the first time.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies given on behalf of A Stewart and E Williams.

### **3. Minutes of Last Meeting**

The Minutes of 25 March 2009 were agreed a true record.

### **4. Matters Arising**

Page 6, MES Workshop Cover/Overtime Arrangements

This item had been overtaken by reinstatement of the FC's previous overtime arrangements. Roy Laird stated members were happy but there was a need to consider call out rates further as they were felt not to be beneficial enough to staff. JL would speak to TMEs about call out rates at tomorrow's MESMB but no problems had been brought to his attention. It was agreed that where issues with FC policy on overtime were brought to TUS by members these require to be raised centrally by the TU.

Meeting discussed the items put forward by TUS as matters arising and although not contained as such in the Minutes it was agreed to address these as follows:

Financial Update – to be covered by MA under Item 5.

Commercial Bridge Update – to be covered by F MacCulloch, Agenda Item 6.

To be covered prior to Agenda Item 5:

Business Sustainability Update  
VMDP  
FCE Working Group Update  
Peebles Move Update  
EFQM  
H&S Committee Update  
Customer Survey Update

### Business Sustainability

TUS requested a breakdown of the 5% efficiency improvement required. JL advised 5% was the Government target for England but this had been adopted across the FC for admin travel. FC are currently developing targets for energy, waste, etc across all Countries.

### VMDP

JL outlined the targets set in 2006 for efficiencies within FBU and identified savings which were incorporated into Business Plans. Efficiencies across BUs are materialising with reviews at Chirk and MES Scotland Review over and above that required from VMDP targets set earlier. Information flowing from VMDP advises the FBUSB and others of efficiencies and savings and what the position would have been if these efficiencies had not been undertaken. BH asked if FBUSC had not agreed earlier to issue a joint statement supporting VMDP and MA agreed to look back at what was agreed. JL and MA advised that reporting on this subject was unique within the FC although not an exact science. MA advised that FBUs, their MB and SB all remained committed to deliver the £2 million savings over the 3 year period. MA would arrange for a presentation on VMDP to the next FBUSC meeting.

**ACTION: MA**

### FCE Working Group Update

F MacCulloch advised this had stalled due to the overtime multiplier situation within FC. He was now moving this forward and a draft of his report would be available in the near future.

### Peebles Office Review

F MacCulloch advised that the first meeting of this Joint Working Group would take place on 26 October 2009.

### EFQM

F MacCulloch felt the principles of EFQM were still important but enthusiasm seems to have dropped somewhat. EFQM will be discussed at the next FCEMB.

## H&S Committee

A Dickerson tabled the Draft Terms of Reference which had been circulated earlier. It was agreed the timescale to take this forward should not be rushed and the draft Terms of Reference were there to be agreed at this meeting. It was agreed that Chairmanship would revolve around all members. Flexibility again is required regarding membership to ensure all areas addressed, possibly through the use of both the core Committee members and co-optees. MA sought assurance and this was given by TUS that Safety Representatives would represent all staff and not only union members. Discussing the request from TUS that the Committee should meet a minimum of 4 times per year A Dickerson suggested it was more important to hold meetings where and when required and that contributing to the Safety Committee was not too onerous on its members. MA mentioned the need to consider business sustainability issues also. It was agreed to initiate the Safety Committee with initially 4 meetings per year, 2 of which would coincide with FBUSC meetings. Action now required:

- a) A Dickerson would take on board comments and re-issue the Terms of Reference.
- b) Committee members would try to make best use of time and fit in with other meetings where appropriate, specifically FBUSC ones.
- c) Agreed MS would organise the first meeting, inviting PSSB to attend and thereafter produce a calendar of meetings.
- d) Agreed to rotate the chair with A Dickerson being the initial chairman.

**ACTION: AD/MS**

## Customer Survey Update

MA updated the meeting on the proposal to move to online FBU surveys, initially to be trialled by PSSB next week. If the system used meets requirements this will be adopted by both MES and FCE. Having considered the requirements for both MES and FCE it was agreed that there should not be a single FBU Customer Survey and that separate surveys would continue.

## **5. Business Briefing – M Ansell**

Safety – MA mentioned recent accidents in areas not traditionally associated with safety problems, ie death of a maintenance worker at a windfarm in Caithness, shutdown of a hydro plant due to rock falls near a tunnel, 70 workers killed in a Siberian hydro plant. It was important that safety was FBUs No 1 priority and he welcomed the establishment of the FBU H&S Committee.

Financial – Countries remain under increasing budgetary pressure and FBUs need to respond by becoming increasingly efficient and generating external

income where feasible. FBUs have to reduce costs, consistent with an uncompromising approach to safety. BP meetings have been scheduled with both Scotland and England and a date for FC Wales is imminent. FBUs need to achieve cost targets, meet KPIs and VMPD commitments.

Organisational – MES Scotland Review was presented to FESMB on 15 September. The report was accepted in principle, subject to confirmation at BP discussions. JL will update further on this. FCE require to resolve their Head Office review.

Business Sustainability – FBU results overall at P5 are slightly below target and it is important that these are monitored carefully to ensure targets are achieved by year end. MA mentioned the Micro Renewable project being investigated by M Crosby and the funding available to England via Department of Climate Change for which REBU will be drawing together a funding application.

### Renewable Energy Projects

- Hydro Tender Scotland
- PfR Negotiation (Scotland/England)
- Wind Tender Scotland – to be issued soon
- DCO Hydro – planning permission request submitted re Abhainn Shalachain
- Negotiation – nearly complete, additional £7m-£8m per annum income gained
- Hydro England/Wales
- Business Sustainability – as mentioned above
- Organisation, TAX and VAT – discussions ongoing
- DECC/FC – group considering barriers to RE development
- Wind England

General – VMDP priority to deliver as we enter Year 2. SLTB business needs to start delivering results. External benchmarking is a requirement for all BUs. FBU Annual Report accepted by EB.

Forest Renewables – Significant RE potential identified across FC with the majority of the potential in Scotland. FC Scotland therefore considering setting up a wholly owned subsidiary “Forest Renewables” to develop this and secure the potential income. A Steering Group was considering the options, including borrowing powers which were an important potential driver.

### **6.a. FCE Briefing – F MacCulloch**

Safety – 4 near misses to report and pleased staff are confident enough to report these. Two dumper incidents and 2 excavators reported to have touched. Reporting of near misses allows FCE to tighten up safety and hopefully avoid a serious incident. Safehands had carried out an external audit of the removal of a Bailey Bridge. Only minor issues arose. A safety day covering roadside flailing has taken place. A safety day covering the use of excavators is planned for the spring.

Bridge Unit – Ben Sharrat appointed. A Market Research report had been carried out and proved to be optimistic. Six bridges have been sold this year

to date. The Bridge Unit's main focus at least initially is the FC internal market.

Staff – lots of movement reported: J Simpson secured post; Graham Stirling joining FCE, J Moffat moving to Cowal & Trossachs, G White appointed Design Engineer, R O'Donnell appointed as windfarm engineer in Wales, G Price moving to FCE from MES, L Matheson secured post in FCE Highlands, J McSween retired and trawl for his replacement issued, trawls for PB3 posts in Scotland now closed. CE Wales moving to Aberystwyth next month and CE England considering a move to Bristol in the near future.

Finance – P6 concluded but figures not yet available. Programme in Scotland increasing. First FCE area to be benchmarked will be bridge construction.

### **6.b. MES Briefing – J Livingston**

Finance – fuel price stabilised and budgets would be altered accordingly. Small savings gained on leases were offset by the increase in machine prices. Machine productivity improving but reliability is still disappointing. Expecting capital to be made available by Wales later in the year to advance machine purchases. Business Plans for Scotland and England have been submitted and are being considered. A decision is awaited on how finance leases will affect MES.

Safety – MES reported a window winding accident at one of its workshops. All MES risk assessments are being reviewed. MES adopted the health and safety bulletin used in other parts of FC and this would be issued regularly.

Telematics – disappointing result reported to FBUSB.

Disposals – market slow to date this year.

MES Scotland Review - report agreed in principle by FESMB subject to finalisation at business plan meetings. Action still required:

- Revise Huntly workshop specification.
- Condition report for the workshops that are being retained in the long term.
- Conclude the harvesting machine replacement cycle report with a sensitivity analysis of machine residual values and the effects of leasing.
- Decision on proposals including staff changes which have been submitted in the Scotland and England business plans.
- Conclusion of independent vehicle consultation report with an assessment of main-road vehicles.

The review report has yet to be prepared and agreed and this and this will probably require one further meeting of Review Group.

Agreed it would be useful if Briefings could be provided with the Agenda ahead of the meetings.

**ACTION: MA/FBU Heads/MS**

**7. Forest Renewables included in Director's Briefing.**

**8. Any Other Relevant Business**

- a. Trawls – matrix as agreed with HR will apply to FBU posts.
- b. HR – current issues – eRecruitment, new occupational health provider Atos from 17 August, Pay Award through for October, Helen Paterson and Mike Cowan heading up the HR Services team, Mandatory Retirement Age. Items with L&D: MDP training ongoing as is Diversity training.
- c. Role of FBUSC – F MacCulloch made the observation that the FBUSC was receiving little or no feedback or input from Local Staff Councils and that this should be actively encouraged.

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

Meetings scheduled for 2010:

24 March 2010  
6 October 2010