

# MINUTES OF THE ENGLAND STAFF COUNCIL HELD ON 13 MARCH 2008 AT THE TGWU OFFICE, LONDON.

## Present: Official Side

Paul Hill Tout, Chairman  
Brian Mahony  
Richard Britton  
Sarah England  
Pauline Marchington, Secretary

## Trade Union side:

Tim Gill, Vice Chairman, UNITE  
Tom Grimwood, UNITE  
Mick Hoban, PCS  
Steve Holdsworth, PCS  
Steve Smith, Prospect  
Edward Shepherd, TUS Secretary  
Julie Saunders, PCS  
Andy Patmore, UNITE  
Tim Medlock, UNITE  
John Winterbourne, PCS

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

Apologies have been received from Simon Hodgson, Crispin Thorn, Ron Melville and Robert Beaney.

Martin Johnson has sent his resignation from the TUS.

## 2. MINUTES

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING

### Woodfuel

Paul Hill-Tout said the successful candidate is Angela Dungan and she takes up the 3 year fixed term post, in Bristol, on 14 April. Angela joins the Forestry Commission from a Renewable Energy company. She has a background that is well placed to connect the wood fuel sources with potential markets. This post and those within regions are being funded through increases in timber receipts and money from RDA partnerships. Paul Hill-Tout said Barry Gardner had written to the Chairs of all the RDAs asking them to take the Woodfuel Strategy seriously and to support the FC.

Mick Hoban asked if the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the Woodfuel Challenge could be confirmed. Paul Hill-Tout he would report back.

ACTION POINT PAUL HILL-TOUT

#### **4. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Tim Gill said the report is a good insight of what is going on.

##### Tree Safety

Mick Hoban said at a recent Regional Tree Officer's meeting he attended there was a lack of understanding on this subject amongst the group. Paul Hill-Tout said FC leads the ETWF strategy as a whole but is not directly involved with individual trees. However, issues need to be resolved on liability and risks of street trees. Sir Harry Studholme is working hard on this. The conference planned for 29 May has a good attendance.

##### Grey Squirrels

Paul Hill-Tout said it has been an intensive period on squirrels with 3 debates in the Parliament so far this year. The Government has not changed its policy on squirrels but further strategic thinking on Red Squirrels is being taken forward.

##### Urban Green Spaces

Paul Hill-Tout said the FC had done a lot of work on Urban Green Spaces but cannot do any more expansion without long term funding.

#### **5. COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW**

Paul Hill-Tout gave a presentation on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending review so far for 2008/09 and there was a useful discussion.

#### **EWGS BUDGET MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT**

Richard Britton said this paper was designed to clarify and summarise the situation what we had to do, and reassure staff in G&R work. The impact so far has been relatively low key, with few customer problems reported.

This recent situation has also highlighted that certain late applicants may still have represent unrealistic expectations for implementation and claims in relation to Prospectus terms. For next year we are currently planning set on 'business as usual', and aim to get the next Prospectus out in May.

#### **6. UPDATE ON HR STRATEGY IN ENGLAND**

Sarah England said the 2 Operational HR Advisor posts will be trawled soon and interviews will be held at the end of April.

Sarah England referred to the TRA list provided.

Ed Shephard asked how many FTA there are in England. Sarah England said she would let ESC know and that these figures would then become a regular update. NB subsequent not – there are 67 staff on FTA as of end of February 2008.

Sarah England continued, saying the draft for the Work Force Planning has been to the EEB and is now with Paul Hill-Tout to take consider.

Ed Shephard asked if managers actually wanted to be empowered by changes in the People Strategy? Paul Hill-Tout said he was keen to foster more empowerment and he considered it a reasonable role to take on with the appropriate training and support as the strategy comes into operation.

## **7. REGIONAL ARRANGEMENTS REVIEW OF OFFICE ACCOMMODATION**

John Scotney joined the meeting.

Tim Gill confirmed TUS agreement to the proposals to merge offices in SW but leave NW unchanged

For Yorkshire and the Humber Region Mick Hoban explained that meetings of staff affected had taken place in December 2007 and February 2008. Whilst appreciating the Executives Board's wish to raise the standard of accommodation for staff at Wheldrake staff at Wheldrake and Clifton Moor were not happy with the proposal to move into a new leased office made by the Executive Board. They wished to know if there was any possibility of the proposal being reviewed.

Paul Hill-Tout said the business case in SW England is strong and that FC would be looking at funding opportunities. As a start we would develop plans, cost the project and seek planning permission. However the case for building at Wheldrake is much poorer and would not be funded. However he added that he respected staff concerns and would welcome a reconsideration of all other options

John Scotney said Crispin Thorn had invited him to go to York on the 14<sup>th</sup> April for a meeting which could now be used to discuss a way forward.

Paul Hill-Tout took the opportunity to inform ESC about arrangements at National Office Cambridge. There are ongoing negotiations between Forestry Commission and the Landlords and as soon as developments are known the staff at Cambridge will be informed.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Steve Holdsworth asked if Paul Hill-Tout was visiting all the Regions. Paul Hill-Tout confirmed he is in the middle of visiting each Region and had so far visited 4 Regions in 4 months and hoped to have this first round completed by August/September this year. It is proving to be a very worthwhile exercise and so far, he had met around 25 to 30 staff at each Region on a one to one basis or in small groups

## **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

3 July 2008