

**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND
JOINT STAFF COUNCIL MEETING
11 SEPTEMBER 2006, SILVAN HOUSE**

Present

Official Side: Bob McIntosh (Chairman), Hugh Insley, Paul Snaith,
Kathy Brown (Secretary)

Union Side: Malcolm Crosby (Vice Chairman), Gordon Donaldson,
David Robertson, Alistair Gillies, Hazel MacLean,
Andy Stewart

1. Welcome and Apologies

Bob McIntosh welcomed everyone to the meeting. He circulated a copy of the Directors Report from the last National Committee Meeting.

Apologies were received from James Ogilvie, Jean Lindsay, James McDonald, Keith Miller, Fiona Barnett, Ashley Woodhouse, Edward Shephard, Colin Watret, Graham Coupar and Robert Beaney

2. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting held on 15 December 2006 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Malcolm Crosby explained that David Robertson was continuing to work on his best practice paper which summarises the consultation process undertaken in the office move for Central Scotland Conservancy. This was not completed earlier as it was thought to be superceded by On the Ground.

Malcolm Crosby pointed out that Health and Safety was seen as a major issue particularly at popular mountain biking sites. Hugh Insley explained that this was something that was being looked at on a National level and was currently work in progress. He went on to say

that FE had met with the Chief Executive of the Scottish Ambulance Service and had supplied them with up to date 24 hour contact details for every District. Discussions on access had also taken place. Malcolm Crosby was concerned about the effect this may have regarding On Call and asked if an instruction had been issued centrally. Hugh Insley said that no central instruction had been issued and that Districts had dealt with this individually. Gordon Donaldson agreed to send Malcolm Crosby a copy of the Email issued by Cowal and Trossachs.

Action: Gordon Donaldson

Malcolm Crosby explained that he had met with Jean Lindsay and they had agreed on a spreadsheet for recruitments and complement changes. He will forward a copy to Andy Stewart. This has now been taken over by a central review of Postfilling procedures.

Action: Malcolm Crosby

3. Spending Review

Paul Snaith gave a summary of his Comprehensive Spending Review paper, highlighting the main differences between it and a Spending Review. He went on to explain that Scotland's funding is determined by applying the Barnett Formula across the Whitehall settlement. He also said that it was too early to foresee the results of these reviews but gloomy messages about the next settlement had been coming out of Treasury and suggestions are that we can expect a reduction in funding or at best a flat rate settlement with no inflationary increase. He also highlighted the fact that staff costs made up 35% of FCS expenditure, and will need to be looked at closely. Any proposed changes will be dealt with under the TUS agreed negotiation/consultation procedures.

Lengthy discussion then followed on the implications of this. Gordon Donaldson asked how any extra monies would be distributed should we receive a better settlement. Paul Snaith advised that this would be up to the Management Board but he envisaged the possibility of reinstating any projects that had been previously cut. Timber pricing was also discussed but it was felt that any increase would be

consumed by other increased costs. Hugh Insley pointed out that Renewable Energy looked most promising in terms of income and that FCS was actively looking at this area to boost income, albeit that this was a longer term solution.

Malcolm Crosby then asked if the £81.3m total resource figure included WIAT costs. Paul Snaith confirmed that WIAT money was part of the integral budget. It was pointed out that the majority of WIAT staff were Fixed Term Appointments and the TUS asked if this could change. Hugh Insley said that he envisaged some migrating onto permanent staff, but that given the current situation it made good sense to retain some Fixed Term Appointments. It was pointed out that we should not go beyond the figure of 35% for staff costs and that Fixed Term Appointments made up a small proportion of this.

Malcolm Crosby then asked if there was any flexibility to carry monies over at End of Year. Bob McIntosh said that in theory there was a mechanism in place for this but recent events have shown that the 'cup' method was not totally secure and that these monies could not be guaranteed. He then went on to say that there were several advantages in FCS being considered within the ERAD portfolio and that in the past FCS had been able to achieve additional funds through this mechanism.

It was thought that September 2007 would be a likely timescale to receive the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Hugh Insley explained that FCS would not be in a position to undertake discussions with the TUS until end of November at the earliest.

4. Update on Grants

Bob McIntosh gave an update on the Forestry Grants issues, explaining that due to the large volume of applications received the SFSGS was closed prematurely in April 2006. He pointed out that the total grant budget now stood at £32m. He went on to say that the consultation on the proposed changes to the SFSGS was now closed, which allowed time for some refinement. He explained that Land Management Contracts were being developed as the principal delivery mechanism for a joined up and outcome-focused approach.

There was still a huge amount of work to be done on LMCs and discussions with SEERAD were still at an early stage. It was thought that the new LMC package would be launched in autumn of 2007 at the earliest. There were still a number of key issues to be decided. It was pointed out that there was £27m in the budget for grants next year and it was unlikely that extra funds would be received.

Malcolm Crosby then asked for an update on the Health agenda. Bob McIntosh said that FCS was making contact with senior health officials, which was welcomed by all.

Discussion then followed regarding the effect that the new forestry measures, GLADE and LMCs would have on staff and the importance of keeping the TUS informed of progress. The intention was that GLADE would be introduced in Scotland within the next 12 months.

5. On The Ground

Papers were tabled on the day. Paul Snaith explained that to date there had been fairly limited discussions with the TUS. However a meeting was being organised by ERAD to involve the TUS from all On The Ground bodies. He pointed out that staff should now be receiving regular updates through the newsletters issued by Tracey Slaven and that the Workstream Support Documents would be published on the intranet fairly soon.

Positive advantages of the scheme could be seen, especially within the smaller organisations. There was concern over possible changes within the staff handbook but it was pointed out that as all departments were classed as 'Civil Servants' there shouldn't be any significant changes. The question of central HR and BSD services was also raised but is unlikely to affect us since the FC already has central services serving out of GB. Tracey Slaven is drawing up figures for Efficient Government but there is no central expectation that On the Ground would deliver significant cash savings.

6. Update on the Scottish Forestry Strategy

Hugh Clayden gave an update on the progress of the Scottish Forestry Strategy, outlining the revised structure, following public consultation. He indicated that the draft would be submitted to the Minister week commencing 11 September with a launch date of 9 October at Hopetoun House.

Bob McIntosh thanked Hugh for the presentation.

7. FE Repositioning of Estate

Hugh Insley pointed out that as FCS's objectives had changed over the FC's lifetime and there was now a case to review the Estate with an aim to repositioning in order to fulfil our current objectives. FE would be carrying out an evaluation exercise to categorise the estate. Any income raised from sales would form part of a revolving fund for reinvestment elsewhere on the estate.

Discussion then followed regarding the mixture of Estate and Private Sector forestry. Hugh Insley said that there were some concerns within the private sector as the closure of the SFGS coincided with the announcement of Carbon Targets. Particular concern was over purchasing of farmland. He estimated a spend of around £3-4million p.a, but due to varying land prices was unable to convert this into hectares. Malcolm Crosby asked that staff be kept informed of progress in this area.

8. Any Other Business

It was decided that the 14 December 2006 remain as an option for the next FES Staff Council Meeting and for a Joint Meeting to take place in Spring 2007, date to be confirmed.