

**MINUTES OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND  
STAFF COUNCIL MEETING  
SILVAN HOUSE**

**15 SEPTEMBER 2008**

<p><b>Present:</b> <b>Official Side:</b></p> <p><b>Union Side:</b></p>	<p>James Simpson (Chairman), Paul Snaith, Ann Alexander, Kathy Brown (Secretary)</p> <p>Brian Allison (Vice Chairman), Malcolm Crosby, Donald Macleod, Tommy McGrory, Liz Stewart, Susan Darcy, John MacBeth</p>	
<p><b>1. Welcome and Introductions</b></p>	<p>James Simpson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. Malcolm Crosby was attending due to recent changes within the TUS and to support Brian Allison in his new role as Vice Chairman. He had been formally elected into this role by the TUS at their earlier meeting. James congratulated Brian on this. TUS pointed out that National Office didn't have a representative on this group and it was agreed to approach staff for a volunteer.</p>	<p><b>Action Kathy Brown</b></p>
<p><b>2. Apologies</b></p>	<p>There were no apologies.</p>	
<p><b>3. Minutes of the Last Meeting</b></p>	<p>An update on the figures previously provided by Jean Lindsay on student placements was requested.</p>	<p><b>Action Helen Patterson</b></p>
<p><b>4. SRDP</b></p>	<p>James Simpson gave an update on SRDP via a PowerPoint presentation. Copy attached.</p> <p>Malcolm Crosby thanked James for the update and explained their main concern was that the action plan was not shared with affected staff. James explained that most of the action was relatively new within the last 4 weeks. The following points were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was pointed out that staff require more training rather than better training.</li> <li>• Staff were having problems interpreting eligibly and rules of SRPD. Advised that staff should continue to ask their line manager for guidance or request this from National Office. All Conservancies should know who their Specialist Advisors are. RPAC areas to produce their list of Advisors. The need for a Q &amp; A was raised. This is currently being written into the guidance.</li> <li>• Concern regarding the number of necessary IT Fixes. These included; the ability for Case Officers to work in more than 1 RPAC area; Systems Administrators being able to make changes to statements: no facility for multiple agents. Management Side were aware of these needs and they are highlighted as Areas for Improvement.</li> <li>• The Standard Cost Review in 2009 didn't affect the SFGS rates.</li> </ul>	

	<p>The rates paid would continue to be those in place at the time of application. It was felt that the complexity of the application process for Rural Priorities could be off putting for some potential applicants especially those with relatively small landholdings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TUS was concerned as to the implication SRDP had on the Conservancy Admin Staff. They felt there would be a significant drop in both the quality and quantity of workloads. The feeling was that staff would lose the knowledge and ownership of cases. Management side felt it was perhaps too early to tell of any effects and it was best to wait and see what implications the RPAC meetings and claim procedures would have. This is something for the agenda for the forthcoming Office Managers meetings. A Staff Council Meeting should take place in February for further updates/discussions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action Ann Alexander</b></p>
<p><b>5. SEARS</b></p>	<p>James Simpson gave an update on SEARS via a PowerPoint presentation. Copy attached.</p> <p>Co location was the main topic discussed following James's update. He pointed out that Bob McIntosh now chaired the SEARS co-location group and that Trevor Blackburn was FCS's newly recruited PB3 SEARS Programme Officer. The main points raised following the presentation were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Galashiels – the lease had been renegotiated for a couple of years as the footprint of the new site doesn't match our aspiration for all the organisations which might co-locate.</li> <li>• Fort Augustus to be used as shared office in the future</li> <li>• Lorne Office could possibly move to SNH office at Cameron House.</li> <li>• Golspie Office is now well through the construction phase– It was highlighted that there are 3 servers within this office. FCS having its own. James explained that different SEARS members had different IT Security Protocols which was causing real problems with something even as simple as sharing open plan office space.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6. FINANCE UPDATE</b></p>	<p>Paul Snaith circulated a financial monitoring update to everyone and highlighted the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of the £90.3 million budget a spend of £87.4 million was forecast. Resulting in a £2.9million underspend. The reduction of grant expenditure for this year being the main reason for this.</li> <li>• We no longer have the 'Cup facility' so the £4million underspend on grants needs to be spent this year by bringing forward non-capital items from next year. We would then have an additional £4million to spend on grants next year.</li> <li>• FE forecasting an overspend of £1.1million at present but working to bring this to zero.</li> <li>• It was asked if there would be any implications with the grant payments moving from FY to Calendar year. None was envisaged.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>7. AOB</b></p> <p><b>FES Review, possible impact on Grampian Conservancy</b></p>	<p>Concerns were raised over the possible impact this would have on the Grampian Conservancy Office. Staff were aware that Local Implementation Groups had been set up to take forward various local issues, including accommodation. Management side advised that FCS staff should have a</p>	

<p><b>Scottish Government Asset Review</b></p>	<p>representative on these Groups and that this was always the intention. FES was currently recruiting a PB2 and PB5 and therefore local groups were on hold until these posts had been filled.</p> <p>The TUS asked if the Management Side were aware of this review. Paul Snaith advised that Scottish Ministers had commissioned a review of all assets held by the Scottish Government. This was done by way of a questionnaire requesting details of all land and buildings owned, condition etc. Laurie Tyson completed this on behalf of both FES and FCS. A 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the review is underway, FCS being represented by Charlie Taylor.</p>	
<p><b>8. Minutes</b></p>	<p>It was proposed that the style of the minutes for the meeting change and that bullet points may be the way forward. This was agreed and will be reviewed at the next meeting.</p>	
<p><b>9. Date of Next Meeting</b></p>	<p>The date of the next meeting is to be set for February 2009.</p>	<p><b>Action Kathy Brown</b></p>