

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

**8 September 2009**

<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), Donald MacLeod, John MacBeth, Tommy McGrory, Susan Darcy, Liz Stewart</p>	
<p><b>1. Welcome and Introductions</b></p>	<p>James welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>	
<p><b>2. Apologies</b></p>	<p>Official Side: Alison McSheaffrey Staff Side: Allan MacKenzie</p>	
<p><b>3. Minutes of the Last Meeting</b></p>	<p>Legacy Scheme Payments still causing problems. James confirmed he had met with RPID who are putting pressure on their case officers. Gordon Inglis is monitoring legacy schemes on a weekly basis and on a positive note the cases were decreasing.</p>	
<p><b>4. SRDP</b></p>	<p>SRDP was discussed at length particularly focussing on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook Review – 2 main areas of interest to FCS. One being the Statement of Intent and the other the delegated power of approval for applications under £250k. Approval has been received to apply new rates to previously issued contracts. Letters will be issued for all current contracts asking for opinions/objections. It is expected this process would take approximately 2 month. Any new contracts will contain a standard clause, and therefore no further action would be required.</li> <li>• TUS expressed concern over the need for training. Business Plan training has now been rolled out. 5 training courses (1 for each Conservancy) for Case Officers are to be run between November to March 2010. The courses are for FCS staff however to ensure consistency RPID &amp; SNH may be involved. It is the overall aim to devise a generic standard suite of training courses for all organisations.</li> <li>• It was pointed out that a lot of small schemes arrived just prior to RPAC deadline. It was agreed that this was not ideal and it was ok to close early providing schemes were accepted on a first come first serve basis.</li> <li>• The TUS felt that the admin role within the data cleansing checklist was not as expected, it was felt that the information check was more of a technical nature rather than admin. James pointed out that a 2<sup>nd</sup> check is essential as large amounts of contracts are being issued with errors. James unaware of problem previous to meeting and asked for more</li> </ul>	

	<p>specific feedback at the OPs/Office Managers meeting on 7 October.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was felt that an effective grant calculator to cover everything in Rural Priorities would be a beneficial tool. The problem with manual calculation is that the schedule of work cannot be viewed until the proposal submit stage. James aware of need however specification could take a while to implement.</li> <li>• A business case has been put forward for an electronic document Management System, which should eliminate the need for shuttling of paper files between offices in Rural Priorities. It is hoped that the system would be place in approximately 9 months</li> <li>• Twitter – the idea is to subscribe to Twitter and follow SRDP. You will then automatically be sent email updates of the scheme.</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Staff Morale</b>	<p>Staff morale is at a particular low at the moment, mainly due to the increasing frustrations with SRDP, and little evidence of improvements. All resulting in poor job satisfaction. Although some improvements have been recognised particularly with customer complaints, other areas such as Data Cleansing, IT system and loss of FC identity are still causing many frustrations.</p> <p>It was agreed that James would arrange for representatives of the G&amp;L Team to visit Conservancies to gain hands on knowledge of the problems. It was also felt informal visits to Conservancies from Bob McIntosh and James would be beneficial.</p>	<b>James to arrange G&amp;L visits</b>
<b>6. Staff Survey</b>	<p>Concerns were raised over confidentiality. It was assumed that the results would be published nearer the end of the year.</p>	
<b>7. Finance Update</b>	<p>Paul advised that last years annual accounts were concluded in July and that the overall results were excellent.</p> <p>Current year's expenditure/income targets were still on course with very little change. 2010/11 budgets were still to be finalised and he didn't expect a spending review till after the election next year.</p>	
<b>8. HR Update</b>	<p>In Alison's absence James/Paul gave a brief HR update which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will no longer be a formal retirement age from April 2010.</li> <li>• Review of staff leave to harmonise leaves years, all to fall April to March, with a ruling on the amount of leave which must be taken in any one year. This and the above will be negotiated with National TUS.</li> <li>• As part of HR efficiency drive an E Recruitment Systems has been introduced to assist managers when recruiting and to speed up the process.</li> </ul>	
<b>9. AOB</b>	<p>3 out of the 6 Ops Managers posts will be JEGS'd following a request from the TUS.</p>	

<b>10. Date of Next Meeting</b>	March 2010	
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