

FORESTRY WORKERS NATIONAL WORKERS ORGANISING MEETING
HELD AT TRANSPORT HOUSE HOLBORN LONDON ON WEDNESDAY
16th APRIL 2008

Present

Robert Beaney Scotland Chair
Edwin Rowlands England
Andy Patmore England
Tim Gill England
Tom Grimwood England
Raymond Smith England
John Broatch

Chris Tucker Wales
Andrew Phillips Wales
Audrey White Scotland
Lawrence Villa Scotland
Susan Murray Unite

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked if the committee accepted the proposed agenda, the agenda was accepted.

Apologies-: Chris Kaufman National secretary, Ivan Monkton GEC representative, John Cryer Unite Parliamentary representative & Jeff Dymond Scotland.

The minutes of the October 2007 minutes were accepted as a true account of the meeting.

Matters arising-:

- A question was asked, has John Cryer met with the back bench politicians yet, The chair responded by saying that this has not yet happened but a meeting had taken place with Joan Ruddock the Minister responsible for forestry England, The minister had taken on board points raised at the meeting by the TU side and would be responding shortly once she had had an opportunity to speak to those within the department.
- Gangmasters, Ray Smith asked if there are any leaflets available regarding Gangmasters, the chair replied and said that if Ray had access to the internet there was a lot of information there.
- Andy Phillips raised a point about GLA site visits. The chair replied by saying that the assessors are thin on the ground.
- The 100% campaign in Wales was no further forward.
- Members welcomed the new entrants list.

Country reports

- **England**, Tim Gill reported that the Cambridge office and staff were going to be re-located, the present lease expires in 2010 but changes could take place before that date.
- Staff in the York office could be re-located in the DEFRA building in York.

- Staffing Strategy Policy is now with the executive board in Bristol and awaiting their comments.
- NOC's reorganising of this committee could take place.
- Not able to replace John Broatch yet on the NOC.
- Disposal programme, there is a move to try and raise as much money as possible from land & property sales.
- Wales, Chris Tucker reported that there has been an appointment of Director for Wales and this is Trefor Owen.
- Staff Council meeting was held last week where it reported that Wales are 10 members of staff below compliment, FC Wales are not now looking to reduce numbers but are in fact looking to create new posts or retain posts.
- The apprenticeship system is going ahead, this is a positive move.
- There are reserves of cash available to spend on projects.
- Disposals, there are plans to sell off old buildings that are no longer functional.
- MES review, still not 100% clear about the long term requirements for Wales.
- Biomass Woodchip power station, FC Wales to provide low value timber for the station plus additional waste material. Test are being carried out on brash collection.
- Scotland, The chair gave an update of the situation in Scotland.
- The SNP have given a commitment to forestry Scotland, £25m available for forestry in Scotland but not all of this is available to the FC.
- Lots of reviews taking place at the moment this is making staff feel uncomfortable.
- Machine operators review is still ongoing and there is a recommendation to reduce the number of machines in the Scottish fleet, as well as the working hours to 37 with 5 hours a week Overtime as standard, any overtime above this will only occur in special circumstances. This move is to replace the long hours culture that has been happening and to standardise practice throughout Scotland, although shift patterns can be agreed locally, they will have to conform to the principles once they are agreed. Unfortunately the likely outcome of this review is that there could be redundancies.

- The TUS have pointed out that there is no point having a admin review until it is clear what are where the District office are going to be situated.

At this point the Chair asked Audrey White to give an update on the Project Scotland situation, Audrey reported that the reduction in funding has meant that there has been a need to reduce the number of staff engaged in the project. The money is controlled by local councils and they will decide where the money goes. Managers feel at the moment confident that there will be money available to continue with project. Audrey said that there is a lot of un-happy people around who are involved in the project and their future is hanging by a thread. Audrey asked if it would be possible for our national secretary to write to Lantra expressing the committees disappointment regarding funding and to see if pressure can be put on to ensure that the project has a future. The Chair thanked Audrey for her update and stated that he will contact the national secretary with her request.

Health & Safety, Susan Murray joined the meeting for this topic, Susan provided the committee with some up to date H&S material. The Chair reported that there is support from the FC's senior H&S officer for a training course. The officer is confident that the executive committee will give the go ahead. The TUS will be looking for a TU reps course all contained in a package. Chris Tucker intervened by saying that he is in receipt of all the reps names in Wales and that the Director for Wales has proposed that the reps come together at the earliest possible date.

Harassment & Bullying, Andy Phillips provided the committee with a paper that outlined how he saw the problem of H&B within the FC. The paper gave the committee some food for thought. Susan Murray intervened by saying that she had used the FC 's policy on H&B as a news item in the recent Unite H&S newsletter. Tim Gill outlined the position in England and stated that the Director and the HR business partner for England had both agreed the there should be zero tolerance as regard to H&B.

Pay 2008/9, a long debate followed on this subject, the chair asked the committee to consider several topics under this item and stated that the discussion that followed he would prefer at this stage not to record the recommendations for this years pay claim. He would put together the thoughts of the group and discuss them with our national secretary. They would then be in a position to forward the Unite members claim to the secretary of the FC unions.

FC's Asset sales by DEFRA. The committee were in receipt of a letter that the chair had written to the Prime Minister. A debate followed and in summing up the chair outlined his disgust at the proposed action by DEFRA. At this stage the chair had not yet received a reply from the PM.

European Advisory Committee on Forestry & Cork, Edwin Rowlands had provided this committee and the RAAW national committee with a written comprehensive report of the workings of the group. The chair thanked Edwin

for keeping the committee up to date with what is happening on the European front.

Other Matters, It was suggested that we should extend an invitation to Sue Gillingwater who looks after day to day matters in the TU office in Edinburgh. The Chair said that he would speak to Sue with a view to her sitting in on a discussion at our next meeting regarding the TU office in HQ.

Training Sub-committee, the chair stated that the national committee was looking to form a sub-committee to look at training within area that is covered by the national committee. The national committee was looking for a member from our committee to take up one of the positions. John Broatch was nominated by the committee, John thanked everyone for the nomination.

It has been confirmed that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday 26th November starting at 1000hrs. Please make the necessary arrangements with your district and regional office.

A question was asked about the Unite members position when other unions that represent Civil Service employees were calling for a campaign for action, The chair said that he would seek clarification from the national secretary.

The following is a statement by the National secretary-:

Whilst we are naturally sympathetic to groups of workers who are being offered below inflation pay increases, particularly this year in the public sector and civil service, we would not seek to contrive a dispute where the membership has showed no desire to pursue one with the employers. In the case of the FC our members accepted decisively in a vote the Commission's final offer and it would be counter productive to foment action for which our members feel no enthusiasm. It would simply be handing the initiative to the employers and leaving our own "troops" demoralised for any future battle when there is a real sense of grievance.

The Chair thanked everyone for a long and lively meeting and wished everyone a safe journey.