

24th July 2008

Our Ref: 5/7/2
Your Ref:

Mr G Millar
Head of HR Services
Forestry Commission



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Edward Shephard
Secretary

Dear Graham,

POSTFILLING REVIEW PROPOSED CHANGES 2008

Thank you for your emails of 30th May and 16th June seeking our views proposed changes to the FC's post-filling procedures. You will recollect that I did forward you a set of the comments from those members who responded to our consultation (these are again appended for ease of reference) but I also undertook to write you a note summarising our key points and concerns.

Overall the tenor of the responses to the proposals from our members was positive—supported I believe by a general view that a review of the procedures is now timely. Further, in recent years I have been aware of a general current of concern regarding the application of the post-filling procedures, and in particular with the perception of a lack of consistency and transparency in their operation. Consequently any steps that can be taken to counter this perception and bolster confidence in the procedures are to be welcomed.

The responses from our members indicate that the most significant area of concern in the proposals is the suggested removal of the HR member from selection boards. The general view of members is that this is an area where HR can and does add important value and expertise, as well as a degree of independent scrutiny and validation to the process. Further, in discussions with colleagues we are also concerned that the loss of the HR member on the board is only one of a number of the proposals which each remove an aspect of independent scrutiny to the procedures; the reduction in the size of selection boards from three to two people, the ability of recruiting managers to select the second board member and the replacement of the confirming officer role with a post-appointment audit of a sample of exercises, will all have a similar impact. The concern therefore is that the combined effect of these will be to remove a number of the safeguards to quality assure and equality-proof that are currently in place, and that this will in turn exacerbate the current perceptions that I mentioned above. Our view therefore is that HR currently plays a vital role in ensuring the quality and validity of the post-filling selection process and that this role should be maintained for the foreseeable future.

It is possible however that the continuing need for this role in the future could become more limited for those managers who are trained, experienced and confident to administer their own selection processes, and we should be willing to explore this possibility provided that all members of selection boards are properly trained for the task and that at least one member of the board remains independent of the recruiting unit and manager.

The only other notable point of concern related to the suggestion that the daily intranet vacancy list could be replaced with a more targeted system using e-recruitment. Whilst we are content with this more targeted approach, please may I ask that the system is initially set-up for all staff to receive all notifications, and that they are then given the option to tailor the criteria to those that they wish to receive; rather than initially requiring staff to opt-in to receive any at all.

Finally I should be grateful if you could send me a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment for the proposed changes.

I hope these points are of help but please do let me know if you require any further clarification. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Shephard', written in a cursive style.

Edward Shephard