

## **Responses to FCTU consultation on draft Post-filling Proposals**

### **1 - Advertising**

*More use of e-recruitment sites and online agencies with flexibility to use newspapers when thought necessary.*

- The proposal mustn't forget that many staff don't have regular access to a computer at work or home.
- Is this to save money or can it be demonstrated that the changes will at worst not compromise and hopefully improve the chances of attracting high quality candidates?
- Okay.
- Fine.
- Don't have a problem as long as the lack of a computer doesn't disadvantage potential applicants.
- Makes sense for the majority of roles but it should be noted that for some roles there are known publications that people specifically read for certain jobs. Especially important for Forest Craftspeople and Rec. Ranger jobs which were always found in the Countryside Job Search publication.
- It is a big responsibility to expect a manager to know the skill base of all staff, and therefore all external vacancies should be advertised internally as well as externally.

### **2 - Transfer Register**

*Replace the transfer register with a Compassionate Register. HR Services vet all applications to ensure there is a legitimate compassionate reason for the move e.g to accompany partner. When vacancies are identified, the recruiting manager is provided with details of the individual to consider but is not required to take the applicant. Employees interested in a particular type of vacancy can register with our e-recruitment system and will receive an alert whenever a job which matches their criteria becomes available.*

- How are end of specialist tour/secondments going to be handled? Unless they are just being put under the umbrella of "compassionate" which seems unlikely.
- I agree with the aim to avoid bypassing the proper procedures, but would need more examples of what HR would see as reasonable grounds for being on the Compassionate Register.
- What will happen then to the situation were staff who were on the Transfer Register for career development purposes? Will this no longer be available or possible? It is interesting because Wales Branch raised this issue as a motion (Motion 10A) at our recent Conference and it was of course pretty much unanimously rejected!
- Agree.
- Surely there has to be a distinction between a Transfer Register for staff who need to move because of Career Development or just a change of post and a Compassionate Register. We should be more concerned at the fact that many managers will not give opportunities to staff on this register.
- Hope it works better than the transfer register!

### **3 - Whether internal/external postfilling**

*No change, other than the manager must be able to justify their decision.*

- Should the line manager be required to record the reason, not just 'be able to justify'?

- I just question if it is the line manager that decides currently, in my experience when a manager wanted to go externally at the same time as internally he was not permitted to do so.
- This looks Ok at this stage the only aspect that may be added is the Protocol for handling surplus staff this could be mentioned in the section about local manager making a case about filling a vacant or new post?
- Line Manager should justify their decision. There is a perception that internal staff are not regarded as being good enough to be considered for the post hence the external process.

#### **4 - Completion of Pro-Forma**

*Pro-forma redesigned, with link to Competency Framework, and much of the form being pre-populated, depending upon what job title you insert (linked to the job families). To identify the job families, there will be an online questionnaire asking a series of questions which will ultimately give them the specific job family.*

- Do you think it would be beneficial for training on competency framework to be given to those from the TUS in the 3 countries (including myself) who receive these notices from HR?
- Will the 'one size fits all' approach work? Could this impact on the 'essential vs. desirable' elements, which in many ways could be a positive step, as 'previous knowledge' and 'experience' shouldn't really be the deciding factors. Surely it's an individual's 'skills' and 'competencies', which are more important and this too better fits the FC Values of development through 'Learning'.
- There is a risk here that posts may not fit well into the 'families' and it makes the post less individual. I worry that there will be less information specific to the post for potential applicants to see.
- Agree that it would be useful if TUS reps that have to QA these trawls were to be given training.

#### **5 - Application Form for Trawl**

*There will be a shortened version of the external application form to complete. The PMS report should still be attached (particularly given that the PMS will move towards reflecting the Competency Framework, making the PMS more relevant in looking at what core competencies the individual has, rather than just how they perform in their current role); Line Manager simply confirm whether or not they will support the application and only need to provide a brief report if they do not support the application.*

- Not sure why it is necessary for the Line Manager to submit a brief report "if they do not support the application". If the Line Manager does not need to do this when he is supporting an application-based on the competencies that have been identified in the PMS report- the opposite would also seem to apply- ie "do not support based on the lack of competencies identified in the PMS report.
- Accept
- I feel that if the Line Manager doesn't support the application, presumably because they don't think that the applicant is suitable/qualified then the application should not go ahead.
- I do not see the reason for the removal of the line manager's comments and support for an application. Having been involved in postfilling for many years I have found the line manager's input often very valuable. Often they provide very important comments and additional information which the candidate has not included. I don't understand where the comment in the "Impact" section - "...report may be of little value" (see comment above) - also what is meant by "significant burden.." surely it is an important part of any line manager's role to have an input in the process to support suitable candidates they manage. It is not as if it is a daily requirement for line managers to complete these forms. When is the PMS to be Competency Based? - no sign in the near future.

- Need new PMS training to get this rolled out—no sign of this yet, so I would query this at this stage.

## **6 - Intranet Job Details**

*Weekly lists or a smarter method using e-recruitment. With e-recruitment, all employees can register for a particular type of work or geographic area and if any vacancies are to come up which match that criteria, the employees are able to click on the link and apply.*

- Happy to support the move to reduce frequency of notices. I think there are dangers in relying on people to register for a particular type of job. Circumstances change from time to time and you should not need to be constantly revising your list. There is also the chance of someone seeing a job that they had not thought of but might suit. Personally I scan these notices to give me an overview of what is happening across all 3 countries, which has been very useful in answering some queries from staff and in negotiations with management.
- This to me sounds like a good positive step.
- I think this system may be exclusive and people could miss the opportunity to change career direction
- Disagree - staff may miss new job opportunities which fall outside the work topics they have registered for, recommend all staff still see all opportunities, they can then decide whether to look at them.
- Would prefer a weekly list but don't like the idea of registering for a particular job, too restrictive when circumstances change.
- No problem with reducing the number of e-mails as long as all jobs are advertised to all staff in time for them to apply. Some staff are not able to identify specifics of a job they want until they see it advertised so they must be able to see all that is available. Is there a facility for staff to be advised of jobs at their home e-mail addresses if required? As there is often only a few weeks to apply for posts when staff are not in work they may miss out.
- Fine.

## **7 - Scoring at sift/interview**

*No change proposed at present. A more complex weighted scoring system was not considered to be worth introducing at present.*

- Accept.
- Could be improved upon but content to wait.
- Fine.

## **8 - Sift/Interview Board**

*Once managers are trained, there will only be 2 board members – recruiting manager and 1 other independent manager. The recruiting manager will take on the role of Chair and responsibility for the final decision. No HR membership. This change to be phased in, starting from lower pay bands. No limit on payband of Board members, although has to be appropriate e.g. not normal*

- However, I am unsure as to the implications of removing a member of HR from boards. I have always found them to be useful members of any boards I have done and would not like to see this changed
- Does "No HR Membership" literally mean never-there may be occasions when it is considered desirable/appropriate/necessary. Have some doubts about true independence of a 2 man board.

The boards are likely to be from the local Forest District /Region team. e.g. for a District Forester post in say NYM the board is likely to be FMD + RD - which is unlikely to be seen as independent for someone in SEE applying for the post when faced with opposition from local staff.

- My only concern was that of the removal of HR Personnel from interviews. But think I now understand that this person would be replaced by a third board member as and when they are not available
- Will be very interesting to see how it develops. Perhaps there needs to be safeguard of a review after (say) 6 months. Previously there have been some staff on boards who have only been briefed by other trained staff, will this continue?
- I didn't think that this proposal is what was agreed in a recent e-mail sent out a few months ago? I understood that an HR staff member would still sit on a Board, but that there was to be a more flexible arrangement to have HR staff from a wider range of pay bands, specifically allowing staff in lower pay bands (below PB4) sit on Boards? Is it not important to retain HR staff on Boards?
- Main concern is removal of HR member from the board. Although from the viewpoint of a manager with recruitment responsibilities, HR are sometimes seen to complicate the process. In that they with regular experience know what they should be looking for in terms of the application. Managers may not be so thorough if they don't do trawls or recruitments regularly. Especially if the manager is desperate to fill a post and there is only one applicant and he gets the nod too easily.
- I am happy with all the suggested changes except that of removing HR from interview panels. I feel they add an important aspect to the interview panel in that the other two panel members tend to be from the line of work that is being interviewed for ... it's useful to have someone who views the post in a different way and questions why you are looking for a certain type of person. Also someone who understands employment law/FC HR procedures & policy etc
- Whilst it will be positive step to reduce the number of board members I am concerned with the loss of the HR member. Firstly this appears to mean that myself and the rest of my team who are involved in interviewing are going to have to keep up-to-date with all the various statutory and other changes that regularly happen with employment legislation. This is what HR are employed for!. I suspect the answer back on this will be that we can ask the question but as I have found out you need to have the knowledge to be able to ask the question. Secondly I am concerned with standards. An HR member will cover a number of Districts/Regions and will ensure a common standard across these areas. If the HR member is good (which fortunately the English ones are) they will build a picture of the needs and pressures in each area which does help when it comes to choosing the right individual. Overall this particular change will be a retrograde step and actually does not support the main themes 2, 3, and 4.
- I'd be concerned at dropping from three people to two as there is the potential for one person to have undue influence. Will this address equality issues. Should every panel seek to have a female member?
- When interviewing, and especially when completing the paperwork at the end of interview sessions, it's very helpful to have an HR member there to provide advice. They don't necessarily have to participate in the interview process. The HR member is often seen as the 'independent' board member. If there is to be no HR person, boards should be made up of randomly selected staff at the appropriate grades that have had training in selection. This would mean ensuring that person specs were well written and selection criteria were as objectives as possible - surely a good thing.
- I would prefer that the board members were not from the forestry commission to ensure objectivity and fairness. Often staff can anticipate in advance who will fill a post and I am sure this puts many off applying which is totally unfair. I feel that independent board members with obviously knowledge of FC requirements would be a fairer system. At present it is not what you know but who you know and who likes you. Same goes for performance bonuses.
- The rumours of this change are already unpopular with members. Managers I have talked to think it will be too much work when they are doing busy jobs. What are HR for if not to manage the postfilling process, this should be one of their priorities. HR board members will be doing it

- Disagree with the suggestion to remove HR member from boards. Understand the payband issue for board members, presently we have same grade HR members on boards due to shortage of trained staff at higher grades, suggest that this is ok but not sure that it should apply to all board members.
- I support all these proposals, except the removal of the HR member from the board. In the past, the TUS successfully argued that the recruiting manager should not chair the board, and that this should be done by the HR member. This was specifically to ensure that the recruiting manager didn't hold too much sway, and couldn't be accused (rightly or wrongly) of "picking his team through favouritism eg by choosing one of his own staff over someone from another location. If this argument is not accepted (and it is decided to move to a two person board) then I would have reservations about also removing the confirming authority, which would be losing a second 'check and balance'.
- I think that the removal of the HR person removes objectivity from the process. These proposals place too much reliance on training that often doesn't take place. For example just recently a manager was given the 20 year old video to view for an evening prior to sitting on a board. There are also procedures to be followed when completing assessments/scoring and HR are best placed to provide guidance and oversee this.
- I am uneasy with this proposal as it will bring more pressure to a manager's role in recruiting. I personally rely heavily on direction from HR during the recruitment phase and with the amount of varying responsibilities I have I would worry that I might miss something and what the consequences of that could be. Aside from that I do think that someone from HR should be present as this brings balance and fairness to the recruiting procedure.
- I am uncomfortable at the proposed removal of the HR representative on the board. This 3rd person helps to provide a balance to the interview panel and reduces chance of dominate chair over influencing 2nd member of panel.
- HR staff should always be involved in the postfilling process. The proposed change will put too much additional work and responsibility on individuals who may not be doing this very often. If HR are always involved, as a present, there will be an experienced parson who does the work on a regular basis and will know the process well. Postfilling is surely a fundamental role of HR. If this proposal is taken forward there will be problems in future in getting board members to take part in postfilling interviews. Boards should continue to have 3 members - to allow a more balanced view on candidates. Apart from HR (who must be of at least the same payband) all other board members must be of a higher grade. It is unfair to candidates who are applying for jobs to be considered by staff of the same grade who may have less experience than themselves. If they are of a higher grade this will be more acceptable to candidates - same grade board members does not show candidates the respect they deserve. Obviously if it was for an HR post all board members would need to be of a higher grade.
- Worrying on a face-fitting or not situation. HR are seen as honest broker.

### **9 - Appeal for internal candidate who is not invited to interview**

*No appeal against non-selection. Whilst not recorded, the recollection is that there were under 10 appeals last year, with only 1 being successful.*

- Reservations about no 9, but no concrete evidence.
- Surely an appeal is still a necessary process? Management, Sift Boards are only human and can't be, or aren't, always right all the time! Surely it must remain an individual's right to log an appeal against a decision and thus establish if that decision can be upheld or not?
- I'm always concerned at a reduction of rights. Can time for the process be reduced instead?
- This gives a streamlining of the process but need to ensure that unsuccessful candidates can have feedback as to why they were not selected.

- I think that the appeals process should remain but agree that the timescale for making an appeal could be reduced. Candidates could be encouraged to consider factoring time for an appeal into their preparations.
- I have concerns over this proposal. I would like to know what the 10 appeals means in percentage terms compared with how many interview invites were dealt with last year. I do think there should always be an appeal process, if nothing else it affords the candidate the opportunity for detailed feedback. I feel it is better to discuss and understand the reasoning behind the decision rather than be left indignant and disgruntled. By having an appeal process it also eradicates the concerns over internal wrangling and 'jobs for the boys'.
- Again, it is a big ask to expect those laying out the job application forms to ask the questions in order to get all the information, and to expect the candidate to understand the job fully enough to present all the right information. The fact that there has been one successful appeal indicated that the appeal system is useful and works well. Some managers will be grateful for being forced to take a short break between sift and interview to ensure they have made the correct decision. Maybe a compromise would be to have a maximum of one week for appeals to be made.

## **10 - Sift Form**

*There will be one assessment form for all candidates. It will be part completed at the time of sift. The same assessment form is then completed at interview. All Board members enter their sift assessments online before the sift meeting.*

- Accept
- No objections.
- The initial evaluation of candidates is very important and needs to be done properly with time given to the process - this procedure would go towards ensuring this happens. However - again the formalisation proposed may make getting board members more difficult.
- Form should be reviewed by HR to ensure that appropriate standards are met.

## **11 - Behavioural Interview**

*A behavioural interview training programme has been devised with external suppliers. It is proposed that at least one person on each board will have gone through this training.*

- Behavioural Interview I don't know what this is!
- I would also suggest that selection for all posts above PB2 should be through a 2 stage process of external assessment centre followed by internal interview. The criteria for the assessment centre should mirror the Civil Service PSG requirements.
- Having better qualified board members is positive but this gives increased pressure on busy managers.
- Only if the board members are properly trained in this area.
- Where this is used, all board members should be trained.

## 12 - Interview Documentation

*Each board member completes their assessment form (see Sift Form above). An agreed score is reached and the chair inputs the scores on the system. There is no pen picture, because the completed assessment forms could be stored online and accessible to the candidates (if requested). Ultimately either the 2 assessment forms are put online, or the chair simply inputs the agreed score and agreed comments against each box on a single assessment form.*

- Ensure candidates get pen picture, seeing all assessment forms from board members would be good.
- Agree.
- The process should certainly be electronic - however as already stated this should be an HR job - reinforcing the requirement that an HR person is on the board. This proposal would put too much work on the chair who may not be involved in postfilling very often.
- If all goes online then fine; but not if just the bare pen pictures can be useful so these should be kept.

## 13 - JEGS post

*If you are able to secure a higher grade for your post following a JEGS exercise, then you are automatically appointed to that post*

- I can see this issue being hugely controversial, where many staff will see this going against the true and open fairness of opportunities for all staff? This in my opinion needs very careful consideration. For this to be accepted then an individual's role can't really be seen to have changed significantly, which I suspect in many cases it must do to have been able to qualify for an upgrading. If not then won't we be going down the route of promoting staff in situ, which currently Management can't do, surely leading to all sorts of Management/staff (in particular Union) conflicts? I believe that if a member of staff has developed their own role I feel, to some extent, that that member should retain the job if it is regraded, but there is a fine line between fairness and open equal opportunities on both sides of this scenario. I imagine that if this were to be accepted as the new process then we will probably see a large increase in the number of requests for a JEGS evaluation. The problem is I can see higher pay band jobs being regraded and staff in situ being further promoted than I can see happening in the lower pay bands! Cynic - no! Is it really true that no member of staff has ever failed from retaining their role through a regrading process?
- Totally agree.
- This means a loss of opportunity for other staff. On the other hand if the post holder always gets it is it waste of resource? From the postholders point of view it is rewarding their efforts and it will also encourage staff to request a jogs without fear of someone else getting the regraded post.
- If accepted then expect a flurry of JEGS requests! Having said that if someone has grown and developed their post then it should be rewarded. A better system would be ensuring that posts are correctly graded at the outset.
- This is a totally logical and sensible suggestion. Maybe this could be expanded into a replacement method for the current promotions board interview system?
- Agree, as you have grown the job.

## **14 - Confirming Authority**

*No Confirming Authority but the recruiting manager, as Chair, has the final decision. Once the Board has agreed its decision that will be implemented by HR Services. A sample of postfilling exercises will be audited by HR to ensure standards are being maintained. Whilst in some cases the Board may wish to notify the successful candidate asap, we need to be very clear what the process is and who does what.*

- Agree but need some check on consistency of boards, ie a HR member.
- Agree. This would reduce the time taken to inform successful candidates of the outcome. Must be robustly audited.
- Very worrying—what are HR folk for. If this becomes an online thing then there should be no reason for delay. Some staff in HR tell me that they do insist on candidates being interviewed and have on occasion refused to confirm post. Why remove all checks and balances?

## **15 - References**

*Whilst the reference check will remain, there should be a finite time for those to be requested and received, e.g. 1 request if no response after 10 working days, 1 reminder, then wait 10 working days.*

- Okay.
- Haven't we had problems before because references weren't taken up? Most references are fairly bland for fear of litigation but information can be obtained over the telephone that is helpful when determining a candidate's suitability.
- References should always be taken up. Once a person has been recruited even when on probation, if they are not satisfactory for any reason, it is very time consuming and stressful for line managers to be involved in any process where candidates are not confirmed in posts. If referees are not to be chased very hard why bother to ask for them at all?
- Agree.

## **16 - Equality Impact Assessment**

*EQIA of the new policy, procedures and the e-recruitment system by HR*

- This is just politics! Surely it is about the right person for the right job whether they be male/female, black/white, Christian/Muslim, etc, etc, etc? We must resist these ridiculous pressures of political correctness and tick boxing madness. As long as there is no discrimination, whatsoever, of any form then everyone has the choice to apply for a job should they wish to do so. Otherwise we end up, bizarrely, with 'positive' discrimination!
- Okay.
- Not more political correctness please. Let the best person be chosen rather than the need to tick boxes. We are very much in danger of positive discrimination.
- Fine.

## **17 - General**

- On the whole I am in agreement with the proposals.
- What is the impact, if any, on HR Silvan House staff numbers.
- Following my comments on this to you last week I've only just realised that I didn't make any comment/reference to FCW 'Recruitment & Selection (Post Filling) Process' document that has been agreed and adopted by the FCW Management Board. I assume that you know about this,

but not sure if you've had a look at it? The NOC has made our comments, etc, and are in the main happy with the document. I assume, and in fact Trefor has said that he would expect to adopt the FC Document as he doesn't want FCW relating to two different documents. Which seems to make a lot of sense.

- Otherwise sounds very interesting and should reduce workloads and mileages travelled by a considerable amount
- Overall not too bad.
- I am happy with the new proposed post filling procedures
- For junior grades training should be given on how to complete a trawl application and on attending interviews. It is apparent from being on boards that some staff are at a clear disadvantage and have been given no help or guidance from their line managers.