

2 December 2010



Tel: 0131 314 6409 | Fax: 0131 316 4822

unions@forestry.gov.uk

RESPONDING TO CHANGE

Some 12 months have now elapsed since I first sent out my note to you about 'Facing up to Change'. In it I shared with you some of my thoughts about what changes I felt could face us and how we could tackle them. What I did not envisage was the sheer scale of those changes.

We could not have foreseen that the collapse of the financial system, brought about by bankers and speculators would have to be paid for by the cutting of public services, our jobs and our terms and conditions. We have all seen the headlines in the press; DEFRA our funding body for FC England, Research and much of GB Shared Services is passing on cuts of 25% and 33% on administration; Wales have had their budget cut by 6%; Scotland by 11% and we await information from our senior managers as to how they will adapt when faced with these enormous cuts. Make no mistake with this level of cuts, we are talking jobs cuts and this is unacceptable.

Some of us will have expected our senior managers and especially the DG to be fighting for the staff and FC's right to exist and continue "business as usual" but they are not in a position to do so. By virtue of the civil service code, our senior managers are not permitted to have any political opinion, must not engage in political activity, must be seen to be impartial and must support government ministers.

However, everyone else including you as private individuals, as residents of political constituencies and as tax payers have the freedom to do something to put across our message. We can -

- Join a trade union;
- Keep informed, check your union website regularly;
- Support campaigns and campaign groups to get our collective voices heard.
- Write to our own politicians, parliamentary or local;
- Visit MPs surgeries;
- Sign petitions;
- Influence our families and friends.

It is extremely important that you sign up to taking action now because the Public Bodies Bill if passed will give far too much power to this government, particularly to junior ministers and that power can then be catastrophically wielded without debate or democratic integrity and would not have any scrutiny by Parliament.

www.fctu.org.uk

The FCTU is a partnership of PCS, Unite, Prospect, GMB and the FDA.

Also the government wishes to give greater powers to local people to get us all to invest in the 'Big Society'. You and I need to see more evidence of how this would work in practice and also how the public services we see being delivered today are sustained into the future.

There is a strong desire from Westminster to dismantle the Public Forest Estate in England by offering a new type of ownership. Today we were made aware that Director England has issued a [note to staff](#) and we can now see what this means in the short term and the long term. We must come together as unions and fight this and I believe the general public will support us in this fight. Since the leak to the Sunday Telegraph recently we have seen the rise of public condemnation of these proposals, through petitions, social networking, campaign groups, letter writing and media coverage. This has led to a temporary backtracking by DEFRA ministers but has not stopped the desire to sell every last hectare of the Public Forest Estate in England.

Many supporters of the FC will testify to the high regard in which the organisation and its staff are held.

We deliver what people want whilst -

- maintaining timber supplies,
- meeting climate change needs,
- combating pests and diseases,
- encouraging leisure pursuits,
- providing assistance to private woodland owners,
- increasing biodiversity and
- protecting wildlife and their habitats.

Remember as an individual you can be involved in campaigning but you cannot be seen to represent the FC and you must not use FC equipment in this. All you have to do is to decide what it is you want to do to help to save the FC and prevent the dogma coming from the coalition government from destroying the one thing that many people in Britain hold dear - Your Forestry Commission.

Don't forget that when you speak up you are speaking up for those in the FC who do not have a voice.

a. J. MacKenzie

Allan MacKenzie
FCTU Departmental Secretary
Via email

To Do List:

- Join a union
- Become active
- Write to your MP
- Sign a petition
- Engage in social networking
- Join local campaign groups
- Talk to forest users
- Tell friends and family.....