

Single Environmental Body Wales

8 December 2012

Further to the announcement on 29 November stating that the Welsh Government will be setting up the Single Environment Body, and that it will include Forestry Commission Wales, the FCTU held a meeting to discuss how best to represent union members through this period of change and uncertainty.

We agreed that a multiple track approach would be needed and that a summit of union representatives from the affected organisations should be held to talk through all the current issues affecting members, in scope of this being brought together.

Firstly we will look at the terms of reference for the new body to try to ensure that forestry is a key priority within those terms and that the professional standing of forestry staff be maintained.

The second strand will be to establish our negotiation agenda to ensure that the positive aspects of existing terms and conditions are maintained wherever possible and are used as baselines for future enhancement.

The group also considered that members should be asked a series of questions to aid the constituent unions in obtaining a clearer mandate for use in the forthcoming negotiations and discussion in the setting up the shadow body in Spring 2012. It was agreed that the unions need to communicate with a single voice and insist upon setting the mechanism for engagement with the new body. However, those present felt that the invitation for a single trade union representative to speak on behalf of all members would be democratically impossible and that more representatives, or the equivalent in facility time, be afforded to the unions. A clear definition of roles and responsibilities of union representatives would be required prior to any involvement in the implementation of setting up this new body.

The call for a summit was strong, that it should take place early in 2012 and that the Full Time Officers from the constituent unions should liaise within their union and with each other to ensure that the summit can take place as requested.

In responding to the forthcoming consultation, it was felt that we would need to see the content and context of any documentation and respond accordingly. In this context, it is vital that we continue to seek answers to the legitimate operational questions that affect our members both inside and outside Wales. This may result in multiple responses from each section of the union network.

The meeting considered that a fundamental aspect of this process would be engagement with union members to ensure their ownership of the unions' chosen position when facing the new management of the shadow and, eventually, the newly vested body.