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**THE FORESTRY COMMISSION ENGLAND EXECUTIVE BOARD
MINUTES OF THE 104TH MEETING
Conference Room, National Office, Bristol
24 February 2016**

Attendees:

Ian Gambles
Richard Britton
Richard Greenhous
Simon Hodgson
PK Khaira-Creswell
Steve Meeks
Mike Seddon
Rebecca Binns (on behalf of Colin Morton)

Josh Roberts – Minute Secretary

Andy Goodsir (Item 6)

Apologies were received from Jo Ridgway, Sarah England and Colin Morton.

1. Welcome

Ian Gambles opened the meeting at 10:00. Ian then updated the Board on recent discussions he had had with Defra Executive Committee regarding how Forestry Commission staff might handle possible questions concerning the European Union referendum.

2. Minutes and Actions

The minutes of the meeting on 22 October 2015 were reviewed and agreed as a true record.

Action 1: PK Khaira-Creswell reported the progress with her action to investigate legislative options for PFEMO and said she would circulate a Paper to the Board in the near future.

Action 2: Josh Roberts was asked by the Board to check with Sarah England the progress of her 3 actions, namely: on working through the HR delivery options arising from Paper 22/2015; the figures for inter-cost-centre moves by FC staff in relation to turnover within the FC; and communicating the findings of the analysis in Paper 24/2015.

Rebecca Binns reported that advice and guidance had been issued to inform staff of enhanced holiday pay without receiving further feedback from staff.

Simon Hodgson reported that the action to re-assess any Christmas tree linked campaigns was completed.

It was reported that the action to progress quality management and delegations was making good progress, with a workshop on producing submissions soon to be held with senior staff in Defra.

Mike Seddon reported that following discussions with the Cross-border health and safety group they were supportive of the conclusions reached by the England Executive Board to strongly discourage use of hands free phones while driving,

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including ceasing to retrofit phones to vehicles. Mike reported that John Tewson as Chair of England health and safety group was working to implement those recommendations.

3. Finance report

Steve Meeks updated the Board on the financial position of FC England as at the end of January 2016 by highlighting the main points in Paper 01/2016.

Action 3: Richard Greenhous asked if Steve Meeks could find a way to include an opening budget and an approved budget on the accounts to make the effect of Defra in-year budget adjustments on the financial position of the business more transparent.

The Board noted and welcomed the Defra decision to re-align the Administration/Programme split of Forestry Commission England's RDEL from April 2016 in line with our recent submission.

4. Business case for the transfer of Safety, Health & Environment and Learning & Development

Mike Seddon introduced Paper 02 reminding the Board of the high-level Target Operating Model which had been presented at the meeting in June 2015.

The Board discussed the Paper and some of the uncertainties it contained such as with associated costs, particularly the transition cost, as well as some of its assumptions. The Board agreed to approve the principles and direction of the Paper subject to further analysis and amendments following the meeting. It was noted in particular that some of the proposed cost savings in the draft paper, notably the sharp reduction in locally commissioned training and the assumption regarding the future of the HR Business Partner post, were not agreed. The redraft should confirm the expected extent of cost pressure from the preferred option and indicate a range of possibilities for offsetting it, with detailed decisions about and delivery of cost saving measures to be delegated to the FEE Executive after approval of the business case at BSG level. The Board agreed that the Paper should be recirculated for approval by correspondence following the modifications it had recommended.

Action 4: Mike Seddon to make amendments to Paper 02 and recirculate to the Board for approval by correspondence.

5. Establishing Corporate Services: Accountability and Resourcing

Steve Meeks presented Paper 03. The Board discussed the governance and resourcing for the programme including staffing and finance. The Board agreed the Paper.

6. Information Services update

Andy Goodsir was welcomed to the meeting via telephone before presenting Paper 04. The Board welcomed the Paper and endorsed the proposals for taking forward this business critical work. The Board asked that Andy Goodsir work with Steve Meeks, Simon Hodgson and Richard Greenhous after the meeting to

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incorporate the amendments highlighted during those discussions. The Board asked that the Paper be presented again for review once the amendments had been made.

7. Grey squirrel control on the Public Forest Estate

Mike Seddon introduced Paper 05 and provided the Board with an overview of the operational work Forest Enterprise England were involved in regarding managing the impact of Grey Squirrels in England.

The Board discussed the work leading up to the meeting with the British Association of Shooting and Conservation (BASC) to develop a protocol for the safe use of volunteers on the estate as part of our wider suite of grey squirrel control. The Board were supportive for the upcoming meeting to lead to implementation of a protocol on the Public Forest Estate quickly. Mike Seddon agreed to work closely with BASC and Forestry Commission staff to ensure that a safe resolution could be brought out as soon as possible.

The Board discussed the recent attention from various stakeholder organisations on the issue of free shooting to control grey squirrels and highlighted the number of Parliamentary Questions which had been raised recently on the matter, particularly from Lord Inglewood.

Action 5: PK Khaira-Creswell to work with Forestry Commission Chair Sir Harry Studholme to arrange a meeting with Lord Inglewood as soon as possible.

The Board discussed several emerging schemes which the Forestry Commission could possibly form partnerships with under the UK Squirrel accord, including one in South West England and one in Herefordshire.

Action 6: Mike Seddon to follow up with Forest Management Directors the potential to engage with emerging partnerships.

The Board thanked Mike for his update and Paper, and noted that there was a need for enhanced communication of the range of squirrel control effort that the Commission was supporting, both on the PFE and through FS, including grants.

Action 7: Mike Seddon to work with Paddy Harrop and Colin Morton to develop a communication pack on Forestry Commission supported squirrel control efforts.

8. Communications Quarterly Report

Rebecca Binns highlighted to the Board the recent changes to her team and that this report represented a good baseline for measuring the impact of those changes on Forestry Commission communications. Rebecca then introduced Paper 06, highlighting the main points for the Board.

The Board thanked Rebecca for her Paper and observations.

9. Any other Business

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Simon Hodgson introduced an item on Grown in Britain, bringing to the Board's attention the current position and projections of the business model for the initiative as well as providing an overview of its financial position.

Simon Hodgson also provided the Board with an overview of the current situation regarding an over-availability of planting stock in private sector nurseries.

Ian Gambles closed the meeting at 13:00

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