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**THE FORESTRY COMMISSION ENGLAND EXECUTIVE BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE 106<sup>TH</sup> MEETING  
Conference Room, National Office, Bristol  
14 September 2016**

### **Attendees:**

Ian Gambles  
Richard Greenhous  
Simon Hodgson  
PK Khaira-Creswell (by telephone)  
Steve Meeks  
Colin Morton (by telephone)  
Jo Ridgway  
Mike Seddon  
Joe Watts

Richard Barker – Minute Secretary

### **1. Welcome**

Ian Gambles opened the meeting and advised the Committee that he would provide an update on a range of issues before taking the substantive agenda items.

### **3. Updates**

Ian Gambles updated the Board on his meeting with the new Minister, Thérèse Coffey. Key points included confirmation that legislative time would be reserved for issues connected with exiting the EU. However, the prospect of administrative change and a formal direction to reinforce the distinctiveness of Forest Enterprise was something to be considered, along with a refreshed 'mission'. Non-legislative change would also be part of FS's greater alignment with Defra and its delivery bodies.

An update was also given on the Scottish Government's legislative programme and consultation on the future of forestry in Scotland. This would inevitably have an impact in England and primary negotiations were between the Scottish Government and Defra, but the Forestry Commission itself would have a critical role.

Ian Gambles reported that the Defra Extended ExCo had considered the financial pressures for current and future years. This would have an effect on all delivery bodies. ExCo was also being re-formed with more concentrated focus in key delivery areas.

Richard Greenhous reported that Defra was focusing on the immediate priorities for CAP in its discussions with Treasury, rather than long term issues and it was confirmed that post the 2020 legacy of agreements signed before 23 November 2016 would be secure.

Simon Hodgson reported on the Forest Enterprise Strategy Board away day that had considered the future direction of Forest Enterprise and in particular a

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refreshed vision and mission statement. This would help clarify priorities and give focus to change.

### **4. Finance Report**

Steve Meeks introduced Paper 12 and highlighted the key points for the Board to note, including the indicative approval of changes to RDEL and CDEL and the position with the Tax Audit. The National Committee would be updated later in the day.

It was noted that the business planning process was underway with Defra and that pressures on resource allocations was inevitable. Jo Ridgway pointed out that some investments, particularly in improved technology, would provide both improved services and future cost savings.

### **5. Future of the FC Brand**

Colin Morton (by phone) explained the elements of the brand and their significance. The brand belonged to the Forestry Commissioners and would remain with them in any new organisational arrangements. It was considered unlikely that this would be contested by the Scottish Government as they progressed with taking full responsibility for forestry in Scotland. Legacy use would be subject to legal agreement as was the case with Natural Resources Wales.

It was recognised that re-branding had both costs and benefits when organisational change took place and this would need careful consideration. This would need to take into account the existing brand value and how well it was already established, for example the two trees regularly appeared alongside other Defra delivery bodies branding on Defra publications.

### **7. AOB**

The role of Head of Profession for Forestry in England was discussed and it was agreed that James Simpson should take the role and that the issues should be given further consideration by Forest Services, including further defining the role and considering if a separate Forest Services head was appropriate. Head of Profession in other areas would also be considered by Forest Enterprise.

Steve Meeks raised the issue of office accommodation and it was agreed that any changes should be made as part of an overall plan to meet the future needs of the organisation and not on a piecemeal basis.

It was noted that wellbeing was being given an increased profile across Defra and the delivery bodies were being included and encouraged to address this issue.

Ian Gambles closed the meeting.

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