

**FORESTRY COMMISSION ENGLAND
NINETY FIFTH MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE
NATIONAL OFFICE BRISTOL
15 NOVEMBER 2018 AT 12.30hrs**

Minutes

Present:

Sir Harry Studholme (Chair)
Mary Barkham
Ian Gambles
Julia Grant
Richard Greenhous
Simon Hodgson
Steve Meeks
Mark Pountain
Clive Tucker

Also present:

Jenny King - Secretary

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Shirley Trundle had sent her apologies, Julia Grant was attending the Committee via teleconference.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Committee requested amendment to the minutes of the 20 September 2018 relating to item 3, Matters Arising, Sheffield Street Trees programme and item 7, centenary. The Chair agreed to make the amendments and circulate to the Committee.

3. MATTERS ARISING/UPDATES

CSEP

Steve Meeks confirmed that that disaster recovery and resilience arrangements would form part of the GIAA Audit Plan for 2018/19.

Sheffield Street Trees Programme

Richard Greenhous updated the Committee on the latest developments with the investigation, including that the Forestry Commission had reviewed the Streets Ahead contract and whether it followed good practice. The Forestry Commission will seek legal advice from Defra (Gov Legal Dept) following the receipt of further legal advice that the Sheffield Tree Action Group had commissioned and promised to share, on

the validity of the exemptions to the felling licence regime applied by Sheffield City Council. The Committee agreed that the Forestry Commission report needed to be completely clear about the scope of the investigation, which was limited to the felling licence regime only and not any wider considerations such as *vires*.

Urban Tree Manual

The manual has now been published and endorsed by the Tree Champion.

Agriculture Bill

The Agriculture Bill is progressing through the House of Commons. The Forestry Commission will work with Defra to consider any amendments to the Bill and seek to ensure that it still provides what is required to facilitate the delivery of government's forestry policy priorities.

Centenary

The centenary programme was launched successfully in October and the minister is enthusiastic about the programme.

4. FINANCE REPORT

Paper 28/18

Steve Meeks drew attention to the key elements of his report, the main change since September being on capital and a significant reduction in the forecast for the Woodland Carbon Fund. The Committee discussed the reasons for the reduction together with details of the Woodland Carbon Guarantee as announced in the Autumn Budget and ways to align the Guarantee with existing woodland creation objectives. Planting was discussed; government was on track to meet the 11 million trees manifesto pledge, however more radical approaches would be required to meet the aspiration to increase woodland cover to 12% by 2060.

The Committee discussed business planning and the anticipated Spending Review 2019 (SR19) and agreed that business planning and the SR19 preparations should be viewed as two separate exercises. The FC needed to develop a compelling narrative to Defra on how it would contribute to the 25 Year Environment Plan and Our Future 2030.

5. EU EXIT

Paper 29/18

Richard Greenhous presented the paper and the Committee discussed Defra and the FC's preparations for EU exit. Richard reported that the Withdrawal Agreement would end the Common Agricultural Policy but plant health and FRM would continue.

The Committee discussed areas where EU exit work would have an impact on the FC beyond the scope of the paper including on FR staff from the EU, learning from other EU countries' research, and on contractors on whom the forestry sector relied.

The Committee noted that in response to a Defra group wide request for additional resource to dedicate to Day 1 Readiness on a short term basis, the FC was able to

identify 8 individuals who could be released short term without an unmanageable impact on business as usual.

6. FUTURE FORESTRY COMMISSION

Paper 30/18

Steve Meeks provided an update on the Future Forestry Commission project, the key work streams and the timelines for implementation. The Committee discussed the recruitment of Commissioners and the need to ensure that successful candidates were able to cover a broad geographical area. Steve reported that the recruitment was on track to appoint Commissioners by April 2019 and that an appropriate induction process is being developed.

Steve Meeks took the Committee through the suite of draft Board and Committee Terms of References (TORs), and introduced an additional draft document demonstrating which functions would be delegated to the three new boards by the Forestry Commission Board of Commissioners.

The Committee noted that the draft TORs were being circulated to the NAO and GIAA, as well as relevant teams within Defra, for comment before being put to the Board of Commissioners in December for approval.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

Simon Hodgson delivered an update on Health and Safety, reporting on the FC's priorities for the year, the HSE's visits to the Public Forest Estate and continued collaboration with FISA. The presentation showed an increase in the number of injuries reported, and the Committee heard that the FC was working to increase the reporting of accidents on the Public Forest Estate. While work to prevent injuries on the Estate was not showing a reduction in accidents, it was agreed that further work was required to analyse the types and seriousness of the accidents being reported. The Committee discussed office based injuries, health and safety as a feature of inductions and injuries resulting from more flexible ways of working.

8. FOREST HOLIDAYS and CITF UPDATE

Paper 31/18

Simon Hodgson updated the Committee on Forest Holidays and Camping in the Forest trading and site development. Simon reported that Forest Holidays had decided not to seek planning permission for any development at Mortimer Forest or Fineshade.

The governance review requested by the Secretary of State had commenced. Sir Harry and Ian had met the team at UKGI who were carrying out the review, which was expected to report in mid-December. Simon Hodgson and Mat Maguire are also scheduled to meet UKGI on 27th November.

9. APPOINTMENT AND REAPPOINTMENT OF FWAC MEMBERS Paper 32/18

The Committee agreed the re-appointments and new appointments in the tables attached to paper 32/18 for a three year term, or lesser period where this would exceed the maximum permitted 10 years.

It was confirmed that the co-opted FWAC members, if satisfactory, would be formally appointed as part of the current re-appointment exercise.

10. AOB

FE Strategy Board

Mark Pountain gave a brief update on the morning's FESB meeting. Points of note were the presentation given to the Board by Think! sponsorship, an update on 'Destination Forestry England', and updates on FE finance and the dashboard.

Tree planting

The Committee agreed in principle to the idea of marking the final National Committee meeting in February 2019 by planting a tree in a suitable location.

Cavanagh/ Witley

Clive Tucker gave a brief update on the judgement on the Cavanagh case and that the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) would be looking to release a statement in the next few weeks. The NTSG was also in the process of updating its guidance. The Committee discussed the impact the judgement could have on pre-emptive felling by landowners. The Committee agreed that a decision was needed on how the NTSG should be carried forward after the completion of the devolution of forestry.

Date of next meeting

21 February 2019.

The Chair closed the meeting.