

**FORESTRY COMMISSION EXECUTIVE BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE 128<sup>TH</sup> MEETING  
via MS Teams and in Bristol Conference Room  
26 November September 2024**

**Attendees:**

Richard Stanford (Chair)  
Anna Brown  
Amanda Grist  
Tristram Hilborn  
Sam Malpass  
Derrick Osgood  
James Pendlebury  
Paula Rice  
Mike Seddon  
Head of organisational Development  
Interim Chief of Staff (Observer)

Director of Engineering – Vehicles policy  
Organisational Development Manager – Staff survey action plans  
Head of Health & Safety and Technical Training – Health and Safety and Mandatory Training items  
Head of Performance – Corporate plan  
Julia Lovell – minute secretary

**1. Welcome, updates and introductions**

The Chair opened the meeting. Jo Ridgway was not present. Head of Organisational Development represented OD as its lead after the break in the meeting.

The Chair met with the Defra Permanent Secretary. There are currently two reviews within government likely to impact the Forestry Commission: the Heather Hancock review looking at improving delivery and the Dan Corry review into regulation and regulators at Defra. Other topics of discussion with the Perm Sec were: ways of working, capital payments, spending review and business planning.

**2. Minutes of the Executive Board 17 September 2024 and matters arising**

The minutes for the meeting of the Forestry Commission (FC) Executive Board (EB) of 17 September 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**Action 1: from June 10** meeting was carried over for EB to have an update at the January 2025 meeting.

**Action 1:** Diversity and Wellbeing Manager and Jo Ridgway to discuss with the data team providing payroll costs of lost working days by unit and job type in FE.

**Action 3:** was carried over to below, Derrick Osgood and Head of Performance to follow up with Amanda Grist and Paula Rice.

**Action 2:** Head of Performance and Derrick Osgood to work with Amanda Grist and Paula Rice to update KA075, KA 076, EA006, EA007, and EA008 in the Corporate Plan.

All other action points were discharged.

## **6. GIAA Action Tracker**

GIAA were positive about progress against audit actions, 28 closed but 22 new ones to take forward. There is only one overdue action leftover from 2022-23 which is being given priority and will be cleared soon. Derrick noted thanks to all the staff who have worked hard to resolve actions. The Board noted that there is an amber action which has also been raised by GIAA and noted by the ARAC. The Chair thanked everyone for their efforts in closing down overdue actions.

## **7. FC Strategic Risk Register**

The Board approved the proposed transfer of two risks to Defra. One risk and one issue have been closed since the last update.

## **8. Corporate Plan**

The Board noted progress with the corporate plan, two of the three key activities that were not green or blue are outside the control of the FC.

The Board briefly discussed the change process to the corporate plan. It was agreed that changes need to be noted after agreement by the Board, inaccuracies can be updated via correspondence. The Board asked for changes to be presented in a different manner to clarify what is being agreed, with a description of what was the item and what it has changed to. The Board discussed Enabler EA007, identify and validate additional technology opportunities. The Board asked that this is rephrased in simpler terms and reflects the developing IT Strategy. Next phase is a systems audit, which will build into the next corporate plan. EA007 is likely to expand into multiple enablers following a review by a project team to be established.

Derrick Osgood also updated the Board about business planning. Defra are due to start planning 2025-26 for FC on 27 November for two weeks, phase 2 of planning is likely to be in January. This means that the process is behind where it was originally envisaged. FR are adjusting their bid start dates to reflect this delay.

Derrick Osgood asked the Board to agree next phase of the corporate plan to align policies and meeting fora. The Board noted that there should be a distinction between operational processes which may differ across the organisations, and policies which should be corporate across FC.

The Board also approved the first step on HR alignment work and noted the systems and functional vision articulated for information. The Board will next be updated at the 7 January 2025 meeting for both HR and systems. Representatives for Forestry England and Forest Research have been identified for this first step on HR, Forest Services need to provide a volunteer.

**Action 3:** Head of Performance to reach out to Head of CEO office, Corporate Governance and Programmes about sequencing of the next plan to align with the Defra framework objectives.

**Action 4:** Mike Seddon offered to help Head of Internal Governance and Derrick Osgood narrow down the listed policies to those which are applicable across FC.

**Action 5:** Anna Brown to link Forest Services into the HR alignment scoping exercise with a volunteer.

**Action 6:** Derrick Osgood to provide a further detailed update on the work required to rationalise the FC finance & HR ERP systems at the next EB in January.

## **9. Pay**

Trade unions have outlined that they will not agree any pay offer unless FC puts in a business case to HM Treasury for an increased pay offer within the year. This is not possible. The Board approved the three recommendations and noted the impact of the pay offer against existing budgetary pressures.

The Board noted that there is an absence of an HR representative and that this will be addressed in future.

## **10. Staff survey action plans**

The action plans as a result of the recent staff survey are more consultative and bottom-up. Organisational Development Manager thanked everyone involved in putting these together. The Board thanked her for leading on this work.

## **11. Health and safety update**

Two RIDDOR cases reported since last update. One case of Lyme disease reported by a member of staff following a tick bite. A member of the public fatality has been reported. Though this is technically not a case for Forestry England to report, it was felt that we should report as the commoner had not been identified at the time and the case should have been reported to HSE in a timely manner.

Progress on work programmes was also provided.

## **12. Mandatory training update**

Each member of staff spends about 4 hours on mandatory training over a 3 year period.

The Board were provided with an updated of compliance with mandatory training as of 31 October 2024. Forest Research currently have recording issues with mandatory training so their figures were not reported at this meeting. The Board thanked Head of Health & Safety and Technical Training for this update, it is a much better position to be in and tracking has a positive impact on completion rates.

## **13. Towards sustainable travel**

Agreement in principle to Recommendation 1, subject to:

- Reforecasting of dates for implementation. Specifically the date for the completion of implementation plans. A detailed implementation programme will be developed and then dates revised accordingly
- A template will be developed for an organisational implementation plan
- Note that agreement to move forwards with the actions enables progress to the next stage. Many of the items will come back to the EB for further review.

Agreement in principle to Recommendation 2, subject to:

- Review of drivers impacted in Forest Services who drive more than 4,000 miles per year in a grey fleet vehicle. Information sent to Head of Strategy and Transformation on 27/11/24 to complete review.
- Incorporation of Forest Research data in grey fleet analysis to check this doesn't change conclusions. Request for data submitted to FR 27/11/24. Response awaited.
- Proposals to come back to the EB for review (as part of wider action on travel policy from Recommendation 1).

Agreement to implement Recommendation 3. Proposed wording of grace period extension to be sent to EB members for review.

Other comments from the Board were:

- There was agreement in principle to develop a vision statement for travel emissions reduction. There was a discussion on the wording, which will be confirmed at a later stage.
- The tax implications of travel options were discussed. These must be considered when revising the travel policy, to ensure that any changes which change the current tax situation are identified.
- There was discussion about the different options for a future CAPES scheme. The need to recognise the increased capital cost of the electric vehicles provided through this scheme was accepted.
- The EB proposed the establishment of a task and finish group. Details of this group, including its membership and objectives to be developed.

**Action 7:** Director of Engineering to provide estimate numbers for infrastructure work to help business planning for 2025-26.

**Action 8:** Director of Engineering to establish a travel emission working group.

**Action 9:** Revert to the EB with further detailed proposals, as set out in the action plan.

**Action 10:** Proposed wording of grace period extension to be sent to EB members for review.

#### **14.AOB**

- Armed Forces Covenant

The Board was supportive of FC signing the armed forces covenant.

- Forest Research Chief Scientist

Chris Quine, Chief Scientist of Forest Research, is retiring in Apr 25.