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**FORESTRY COMMISSION EXECUTIVE BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE 129<sup>TH</sup> MEETING  
via MS Teams and in Bristol Rooms G4 and G5  
7 January 2025**

**Attendees:**

Richard Stanford (Chair)  
Anna Brown  
Amanda Grist  
Tristram Hilborn  
Sam Malpass  
Derrick Osgood  
James Pendlebury  
Interim Chief of Staff (Observer)

Head of Health & Safety – Health and Safety and Mandatory Training items  
Julia Lovell – minute secretary

**1. Welcome, updates and introductions**

The Chair opened the meeting. Jo Ridgway, Mike Seddon and Paula Rice sent their apologies.

Two Forestry Commission have received new year's Honours. Lucy Brenkley, Active Forest Co-ordinator for Chopwell Wood in Gateshead, receives a BEM. Gareth Hopkins, Apprenticeship Programme Manager, is awarded an MBE.

SoS is visiting a nature recovery scheme site next week in Bootle.

**2. Minutes of the Executive Board 26 November 2024 and matters arising**

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

Actions points were discharged.

**3. Health and safety update**

The Chair noted that health and safety is still sometimes described as a blocker rather than an enabler. It should be viewed as enabling staff to carry out dangerous activities in a safe manner. The Chair asked for re-engagement of staff to land this message.

There were no staff RIDDOR reports since the last meeting. Details of one RIDDOR event, which is to be reported by a contractor, were shared. Forestry England will work on the investigation together with the contractor to make sure any lessons learned are shared.

**Action 1:** A post on Roots Re: health and safety as an enabler.

#### **4. Business continuity procedure and template**

The Board endorsed the business continuity procedure and template and supported commencement of plans and rehearsal. The Board thanked everyone involved in this programme of work and welcomed volunteers for a rehearsal exercise.

#### **5. Executive Board Terms of Reference Review**

The Board terms of reference had not been reviewed since January 2022. The Chair has asked that the terms should incorporate:

- how the EB is held to account on the corporate plan to the Board of Commissioners to deliver the FC Strategy
- which sub-boards of subject matter experts need to report to the EB for assurance purposes
- this can guide the discussion on membership and attendance of the future EB meetings
- This this work should dovetail with the wider review of boards across the FC, which will be independently reviewed this year

**Action 2:** Julia Lovell to redraft the Executive Board terms of reference for endorsement at March 2025 meeting as a holding position, noting that further changes will be need made post the wider review.

#### **6. In-Year, Business Planning 2025-26 and forward look to 2026-27**

The Board received an update on finance and the current interaction with Defra. In-year CDEL and RDEL are a challenge, with the expectation is that the bridging funding will be agreed. It is likely that the challenge will continue into the future; we expect the pressure on finances to continue for 2024-25. There is currently no certainty for phase 2.

The Board also briefly discussed finance between organisations and prioritisation of infrastructure programmes and projects. Decisions will be made as applicable to balance out the portfolio.

The Board endorsed business planning tied to meeting government targets within revenue as Defra are not a ring-fenced department. There will be a workshop which ties up FC delivery to government priorities.

#### **7. HR Review**

This item was not minuted.

#### **8. ERP**

Forestry Commission's assimilation into the Synergy programme has been delayed. The Board discussed FC's corporate services structure and endorsed one solution across the agencies. The Board agreed that the solution will need to take account of:

- Business requirements of each part of the FC
- Current systems and processes

- Timing of contracts
- Which systems meet those needs and
- Advantages or disadvantages, nuanced by business need of each system.

The Board briefly discussed the timing. The work should be phased and not rushed to make sure the solution works for all parts of the business. It will not be possible to implement a new system until 2027, with an aim to make a decision on the system at the September 2025 board. The Board agreed that the work needs to be delivered at pace by an independent external expert to give the programme objective attention.

The Board endorsed the system will encompass the whole FC a founding principle. The programme schedule will encompass:

- Identify business requirements
- Exploring the market for potential solutions
- User testing
- Migration, training and implementation.

**Action 3:** Derrick to work with Amanda and Paula to identify a suitable method of reviewing an ERP replacement to report findings by Sep 25.

## **9. FC Risk Register**

Capital grants risk has been closed. The spending review risk has worsened because FC committed spend without commitment from government.

## **10.AOB**

There was no other business and the meeting closed.