

IFCI SC meeting, 6th March, 2006. VOICE Offices

Present: Ruth McGrath, Declan little, Tony Mannion, Ken Gill, Alistair Pfeifer, Donal Whelan, Barbara Maguire and Caroline Lewis.

Apologies: None

1. Welcome

The Chairman formally opened proceedings and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last Steering Committee (SC) meeting were adopted, in addition to the IFCI minutes of it's meeting with the Woodland League (WL) held on the same day, i.e. November 22nd, 2005. There were no amendments in either case.

3. Matters arising

Crann will contact FSC regarding its membership status.

4. Correspondence

(a) FSC re accreditation: The SC welcomed the news that IFCI was being accredited by FSC.

Action: On the authority of SC the Secretary and Chairman will respond to FSC with accreditation contracts signed and preconditions addressed.

Proposed: Tony Mannion. **Seconded:** Ken Gill

(b) Mason Hayes and Curran - Legal Bill re Brendan Kelly's removal as Director of IFCI Ltd.: A bill was received re above on Jan. 11th last.

Action: The Secretary will write to the Solicitors and state that IFCI Ltd. will pay when funds are available. Further itemisation of the bill will be sought.

(c) WL minutes of meeting with IFCI Ltd. – cover letter dated Feb 22nd, 2006

Action: The Secretary will write to FSC about some of the content in the cover letter attached to the minutes, as there are concerns about some of the statements contained in it.

IFCI Ltd. will not engage with Mr Brendan Kelly nor any delegation from the Woodland League or any other organisation that includes Mr Kelly since he has not withdrawn the allegations made against IFCI Ltd. and individuals on the SC in the past. Indeed, he has repeated these allegations on the natureireland website and continues to do so.

5. Accounts and Funding

IFCI Ltd. currently has €1200. Coillte has committed €6,000 to IFCI Ltd., which should be processed soon.

A proposal was submitted a proposal to the Forest Service seeking c. €41,000 for public consultation, etc.

It is believed that further funding should be forthcoming from the business sector on foot of progress and accreditation from FSC. A secretariat and FSC contact person would be a priority if sufficient funding were committed. It was stated that WWF might be a source of funding for the FSC contact person or indeed the Heritage Council.

Action: The 'Promotions sub-group' needs to be reformulated to access funding. This group will be formalised at the next SC meeting.

6. Website

Declan Little liased with the website designer in recent weeks, providing information, text and images so that the website could be activated. This was done (after the SC viewed the material and endorsed same) and can be viewed at www.irishforestcertification.com

Action: It was agreed that a form should be designed to accept submissions against the Standard, ensuring that submissions during the public consultation process are made against the text of the current Draft.

7. Affiliation

(a) The SC endorsed the decision made previously that the NARGC is more suited to the Social Chamber. The decision of the SC to invite NARGC onto the Social chamber is based on their constitution as provided by the NARGC.

Action: The Secretary will write to the NARGC informing it of these decisions.

(b) Donegal Forestry Forum: The SC did not decide on the affiliation of DFF. More information is required.

Action: The Secretary will write to DFF seeking information on its constitution/terms of reference and what community groups are represented on it.

(c) Irish Deer Society: No decision was made as this matter was not discussed and will be held over until the next SC meeting.

8. AOB: Draft Standard

The analyses of broadleaves commissioned by Coillte and carried out by Henry Philips report was assessed by Caroline Lewis of FIE. In her opinion the report is seriously flawed. Critiques of same are on the FIE website.

Action: Caroline Lewis will list the concerns she has and approach Henry Philips either directly or via other members of the SC.

The issue of including Scots pine with the broadleaf category was also discussed as Coillte did an economic analyses of same on its estate using various % scenarios. However, as the analyses was done using the same methodology as in the Philips report it was decided to revisit the Scots pine issue once the methodology used in the Philips report was reassessed.

The SC members will access the FIE report first. If the report does contain errors, IFCI may look at the possibility of commissioning it again with input from FIE and others. This issue is crucial to Principle 10 (Species mix) and informed debate based on well-researched data is required before the Draft Standard can go to public consultation. In the meantime the SC decided not to be put the Draft Standard on the IFCI website.

In the debate that ensued, it was also mentioned that the restocking of sites, which is currently not subject to grant aid, would be a major problem for the public and private sector where broadleaves are concerned. The Forest Service 30% broadleaf policy will, in the view of Economic Chamber members, make forestry uneconomic. However, it was also pointed out that there are many ways to meet broadleaf targets such as riparian, amenity and farm woodlands, landscape planting, etc. Therefore, realistic targets for broadleaves should be arrived at based on sound empirical data. It was suggested that given the current situation *vis a vis* grants, the upcoming Rural development Regulations (RDR), etc., that the Standard could reflect specific broadleaf targets within the current five year period of the Standard and subsequently revise this figure upwards, if applicable, i.e. could aim for a target of 10% and increase it thereafter in the next review. This is particularly relevant as the RDR may alter forest policy in the intervening period. However, a view was expressed by some on the Environmental Chamber that a broadleaf target which did not even aim for Forest Service policy would seem to make participation pointless. In any event, the gap between current broadleaf policy, i.e. 10% in the current Draft, 30% Forest Service policy and the 50% Heritage Council policy needs to be bridged by realistic proposals developed by all sides in the debate.