

IFCI Steering Committee Meeting 31st May 2005, Tailor's Hall

Present, Barbara Maguire, Tony Mannion, Alistair Pfeifer, Declan Little, Liam Lysaght, Ruth McGrath, Caroline Lewis, Donal Whelan.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were ratified after the inclusion of the attendance of Alistair Pfeifer.

2. Matters Arising

(a) Composition of the current SC: proposals for new Chair and Treasurer

The matter of an independent Chair was discussed, and while it was agreed that while it would be preferable to have an independent Chair, it was proving difficult to identify a suitable individual who would be in a position to act as an independent Chairman, especially if payment is required. A number of people were approached in recent weeks but none had accepted the role.

It was decided to appoint an interim Chair until the AGM, during which a new Steering Committee would be elected. Ruth McGrath agreed to take on the role of Interim Chair until the forthcoming AGM. Barbara Maguire agreed to take on the role of Treasurer.

It was noted that Declan Little and Caroline Lewis were now officially Directors of the Company.

(b) Outcome of the EGM – issues and tasks

The main outcome of the EGM was debated in brief, which was that the IFCI had voted to adopt a three-chamber structure. It was also noted that it had been agreed that there would now be four members per chamber and that a majority from each chamber was required at SC level during voting. These criteria to be included in the M&AoA.

The need for representation of Woodland Owners was discussed, and Donal Whelan stated that it was vital that the Woodland Owners be represented. It was agreed that the Woodland Owners should have representation on the Steering Committee as members of the Economic Chamber.

It was pointed out that there may be some small Woodland Owners who are coming from the social perspective of forestry as a means of keeping people on the land in rural Ireland, and so would have an agenda broader than that merely of economic interests. The example of Ray Gallagher, Western Forestry Co-ops was cited. The primary objectives of the Co-op are social in nature, and it is imperative that the appropriate chamber to which it is affiliated is decided upon, along with many other members of IFCI Ltd. It was suggested to examine the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Co-op (and other potential member organizations) to determine the main objectives of an organisation.

The Environmental Chamber stated that it was important to ensure that IFCI didn't adopt a three-chamber structure that addressed concerns about economic interests being over-represented, but subsequently allow stakeholders with a primary economic interest to dominate the Social Chamber.

A meeting of the Legal Sub-Committee is now required to look at the membership in terms of the allocation to chambers now that there were three chambers. The Legal Sub-Committee will comprise Declan Little, Liam Lysaght, and Tony Mannion and will look at issue of Chamber affiliation

Action: A meeting of the Legal sub group will be held to review membership affiliation ASAP.

It was stated that the Social Chamber should seek members from other groupings such as Trade Unions. In the past membership of the Social Chamber had tended to be very limited thereby representing a very narrow agenda. It was agreed that there was a need for a broader diaspora, providing more ongoing participation. The following groupings were suggested for consideration, fishermen, orienteering enthusiasts, Cycling Ireland, and Scouting Associations. A short article about IFCI and seeking representation in special interest magazines such as scouting magazines.

Action: Alistair Pfeifer agreed to provide some stakeholder lists that might be of use. Declan Little agreed to write a short piece as publicity to be disseminated as widely as possible.

AGM

The Company Annual Return Date for accounts is the end of September; hence the AGM will have to be held in time to allow for the filing of accounts with the Companies Registration Office.

The AGM will need to be held at the end of August, and the date was provisionally set for 27th August. Documentation notifying members of the AGM will need to be circulated by the end of July taking into account the holiday period.

The outgoing Treasurer noted that he would need to discuss with Mr Coggins as to whether he would undertake the auditing of the accounts. East & Co, the previous auditors, had voluntarily dissolved their partnership, and Mr Coggins had retained the IFCI accounts.

An SC meeting will be required towards end of July in order for Directors to sign accounts so that the AGM could be notified to members 21 days in advance. The date of 26th July, 2005 was agreed for this SC meeting.

The outgoing Treasurer noted that in the unlikely event that the Mr Coggins did not wish to undertake the accounts inherited from East & Co, a new auditor would need to be appointed immediately. Accordingly it was agreed that the outgoing Treasurer was empowered to appoint a new Auditor should this occur. This was proposed by Declan Little and seconded by Caroline Lewis.

The Secretary noted that amendments to the Memorandum and Articles are required to be submitted to Companies Office. Also, the Memorandum and Articles of Association should be consulted as to whether also such changes were required to be submitted to the Revenue Commissioners.

Action: Amendments to Memorandum and Articles of Association to be submitted to relevant bodies.

Election Procedures.

The possibility of electronic voting was discussed. It was noted that security and verification were key, and this may require the use of a secure portion of a website, and this was difficult

Alternatively the use of email voting was suggested. E-mails votes could then be compared to emails already provided by members for verification procedure.

It was agreed that every member be allocated a reference number unique to that member so that it could be verified that they are the member in question when voting.

Actions: An email address is to be established to which votes can be sent.

The Legal Sub-Committee are to look at procedures for electronic voting with reference to the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The Secretary agreed to circulate the current ballot paper to the SC for comment.

Correspondence

Liviu Amariei of FSC had met with the Woodland League after the IFCI EGM in Tullamore, and had subsequently sent an email to The Chair and the Secretary about the outcome of this meeting. The Chair read out the email, which suggested that IFCI re-engage with Andrew St. Ledger and Ciaran Hughes. This was subsequently discussed.

It was noted that both persons in question had not been asked to leave the process; they had chosen to withdraw from the process of their own free will.

It was also noted that efforts had already been made directly and via FNN to engage with the Woodland League, of which Andrew St. Ledger and Ciaran Hughes are both members, and sought comments and submissions had been sought from them, but they had chosen not to do so.

It was noted that FSC had asked that the IFCI establish and adhere to formal procedures subsequent to a meeting

with Gemma Boetekees in 2002. It was felt that the IFCI had addressed the procedural requirements of FSC and could do no more. The view was expressed that irrespective of what was done by IFCI the Woodland League would never be satisfied.

In addition the IFCI had a grievance procedure in place, but the Woodland League had chosen to walk away from process. It was noted that it was open to them to lodge a grievance in the normal way but had chosen not to.

Andrew St. Ledger and Ciaran Hughes disagreed with subscribing as members and paying a nominal fee, despite the fact that the membership had been established on the recommendation of FSC itself and had been adopted by all other IFCI members.

It was generally felt that the door had been left open, and they had chosen not to enter, but had chosen to walk away, and in addition had vilified the process, the IFCI and individual Steering Committee members. It was noted that Ciaran Hughes had placed an article in Irish Forestry and Timber (Jan/Feb 2005 issue), which vilified IFCI. Most of the SC expressed concern about engaging with Andrew St. Ledger and Ciaran Hughes or the Woodland League, as it is doubtful if they even support the FSC process.

In addition, it was noted that the IFCI have not received any approaches from the Woodland League, about the issues that were raised with Mr Amariei.

Action: Declan Little undertook to reply to FSC, noting the comments of the SC.

Draft Standard

A number of issues remain to be resolved. The FSC SLIMF guidelines need to be examined, as these may have application in Ireland, as Irish forests are often small. It was stated that although there were still key outstanding issues, there was nonetheless a lot of agreement on issues.

The Economic Chamber stated that there is also the issue of harmonisation with the UK FSC standard, as this is major market with many similar attributes to the Irish forest industry. Vastly differing standards in the two jurisdictions would be impractical and have serious economic consequences.

The Environmental Chamber stated that there was also a need to harmonise baseline environmental standards between Ireland and UK.

Action: It was agreed to continue with the TWG as before until the AGM, to advance work on Draft Standard.

By 17th June the Env Chamber are to have discussed key issues, which the TWG will pursue.

Action: Declan undertook to register the website prior to the next SC meeting.