

Minutes of IFCI Ltd. Steering Committee Meeting

Friday 2nd March 2007 at VOICE, 9 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2

Present: Ruth McGrath (Chairman), Barbara Maguire (Treasurer), Anja Murray, Peter Sweetman, Tony Mannion, Tara Ryan, Alistair Pfeifer, Sasha Bosbeer (Woodlands of Ireland temporary substitute for Declan Little; acting secretary)

Apologies: Declan Little, Ken Gill

Observers: Brian Tobin - administrator, Mary Flaherty, Masters degree student.

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the SC meeting of January 25, 2007, were agreed with minor amendments. One amendment was recorded with one member disagreeing.

Proposed: Barbara Maguire. Seconded: Alistair Pfeifer

2. Matters Arising

Correspondence from previous meeting had been dealt with, and contact details for the Soil Association provided to Vincent Salafia.

3. IFCI and facilitation

Mary Flaherty is a Masters degree student and presented a proposal to the Steering Committee to analyse the current conflict management systems within IFCI and produce a short report, as research towards a Masters thesis. The analysis will include a draft questionnaire for stakeholders. Her deadline is mid-April, so requesting feedback will start as soon as possible. The questionnaire was discussed, and some minor amendments suggested. It was agreed that Mary should go ahead with her proposal, and include a cover letter with the questionnaire setting out her mission, which would clarify that this project is part of her academic work. This will be e-mailed to all people on the IFCI database and some interviews will be conducted by phone because of the short time frame.

It was also agreed that the questionnaire be published on the website in an easy-to-use manner. There were some reservations expressed about placing the questionnaire on the website, as to whether this might be construed as a questionnaire from IFCI, but it was agreed that a covering note setting out the context of the questionnaire should eliminate any confusion.

Mary Flaherty will provide a report to the SG, which will not be binding, but it is hoped will be very informative for IFCI.

It was agreed that this process may have the additional, separate benefit of bringing in new people and new improvements to the draft of the Standard.

Action: Mary Flaherty was to be provided with an email contact list for IFCI stakeholders.

The questionnaire was to be placed on the website.

4. Correspondence

Correspondence was received and noted.

4.1 Ruth McGrath indicated that she wished to resign as Chair, citing the volume of work as a primary difficulty. Much discussion ensued, and Ruth agreed to stay on until the AGM in early autumn, provided that a Vice Chair was appointed who would share some of the burden the work with the chair, particularly correspondence and grievances. Peter Sweetman agreed to take on the position of Acting Vice Chair. His appointment was proposed by Anja Murray and seconded by Tony Mannion.

4.2 Declan Little had written to the Steering Group notifying the group of the Woodlands of Ireland substitute for this meeting (Sasha Bosbeer), and also indicating that he wished to resign as Secretary. It was suggested that perhaps some of his work could be shared until the AGM by the Acting Vice Chair and the part-time administrator, Brian Tobin. This would be contingent on the availability of Brian Tobin, who stated he may be available for additional work on occasion, but not on a weekly basis. This was held over for discussion when Declan Little is present.

4.3 George McCarthy had stated an intention to resign as director. However, there must be a minimum of two directors, and a replacement would be required. It was suggested that as before, more directors may be sought, such as one from each chamber.

Action: Alistair Pfeifer was to discuss the matter with George McCarthy,

4.4 Correspondences had been received from;

1) Macroom. This was not considered to be a formal grievance, but did require a response.

Action: This will be addressed by Anja Murray with Ruth McGrath.

2) CLEAN: This was sent as a grievance, but on review, the Steering Committee agreed that majority of the letter actually constituted a submission on the draft standard.

Action: Peter Sweetman will contact the author to reach an informal agreement to separate out the themes and seek a resolution. Where the content addresses the Draft Standard, they will be asked to formulate this as a submission, and it was agreed that a month be allowed for this.

3) Several grievances had been received from FIE in recent months. Peter Sweetman will work with Ruth McGrath to work through the other letters one by one with focus on the resolution sought.

The matter of grievances generally was discussed, as these were becoming very time consuming, placing a strain on the voluntary resources of IFCI, and were often based on misconceptions, or lacked a resolution (particularly in the case of grievances based on events some years ago). Peter Sweetman proposed a format for grievances to address this – a format consisting of setting the grievance, then the case or evidence in support of the complaint, and lastly, the resolution sought by the person with regard to the complaint or grievance.

In addition, there was a need for clarification for stakeholders as to where complaints with regard to forest management should be directed, i.e. in the first instance to the forest manager, then to the accreditation body and lastly to FSC should the matter not be resolved.

Action: Peter will draft a format for grievances.

4.5 A draft letter from other FSC national initiatives in Europe to FSC, in relation to the role of National Initiatives within FSC, has been received by IFCI with a request for support.

Action: The letter will be circulated by e-mail by Ruth McGrath to the Steering Group members, with a request for a response by Tuesday next, as to whether IFCI should support the letter. Ruth will correspond with the UK NI on the letter.

5. Public consultation

Several submissions had been received by the deadline of 28/2/07, although the exact number has not yet been tallied. Each needs to be acknowledged as received.

Action: Ruth, Brian, and Declan will co-ordinate with regard to acknowledgements.

The process of working through the submissions was discussed. As a first step the submissions would best be organised by principles and criteria. It was agreed that the ideal situation would be to have a database of submissions, with a reference as to the origin/submitter. It was recognised that there may be considerable work involved at this stage,

but the work required won't be known until a small sample of submissions have been collated.

Action: Anja Murray will carry out a test with five sample submissions with Brian Tobin, if he is available, to reach an estimate of the amount of work this would require.

Peter Sweetman will scan those submissions not submitted electronically so that all submissions will be available in .pdf format.

Once the submissions have been collated by principle, a TWG will be formed to address the submissions, with a minimum of one representative from each chamber.

6. Website

Two new additions to the website were agreed. The first is Mary Flaherty's project request for information and cover letter will be added to the website as soon as per Item 3 above.

A section will also be added dealing grievances and complaints, which will set out the IFCI grievance, once amended as per Item 4.4 above. Also it should direct people who wish to complain about a specific certification to the certifying body. This will be taken to the next Steering Committee for finalisation.

Action: Tony Mannion will produce a list of the various FSC certifying bodies acting in Ireland for both forest management and chain of custody.

7. Code of Conduct

It was agreed that this topic should be postponed until after the review by Mary Flaherty.

8. AOB

An issue was raised as to whether the members of the Steering Committee represent their organisation or the entire chamber, with the related problem of how to represent a chamber on an issue if the members of that chamber do not have consensus on that issue. This was agreed to be an important issue that needed to be discussed more fully and on which some clarification from FSC may be needed.

Action: As it had not been an agenda item, time was limited and it would need to be returned to at a later meeting.

Draft Standard – Field testing

Alistair Pfeifer has had contact with a helpful member of FSC UK who suggested he could help with procedural issues if necessary later.

Posting of minutes to website

Peter Sweetman suggested that minutes which have been amended should be circulated to all SG members with three days to respond prior to posting on the website.

There was no other business.