

NINETIETH SNH BOARD MEETING, 2 SEPTEMBER 2003, BATTLEBY

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Members Present

John Markland, Chairman
Michael Scott, Deputy Chairman
Peter Chapman
Simon Fraser, Chairman, North Areas Board
Keith Geddes, Chairman, Audit and Risk Management Committee
Isabel Glasgow, Chairwoman, West Areas Board (withdrew for item 7)
Nick Kempe
Janet Sprent, Chairwoman, Scientific Advisory Committee
Sue Walker

In Attendance

Ian Jardine, Chief Executive
Andrew Bachell, Director
Ian Edgeler, Director
Colin Galbraith, Director
John Thomson, Director
Jeff Watson, Director
Jane Clark, Head of National Strategy
Alan Mowle, Head of Corporate Services (for items 1-7)
Iain Rennick, Head of Secretariat, Press and PR
Kate Alexander, Acting Board Secretary
Andrew Lyell (for item 5)
Bill Band (for item 7)
Jenny Simmonds (for item 7)
Peter Hutchinson (for item 8)
Dougie Pollock (for item 8)
Richard Davison (for item 8)
John Burlison (for item 9)
Lesley Cranna (for item 10)

Apologies

Alice Lambert
Jeremy Rowan-Robinson, Chairman, East Areas Board
George Anderson, Head of Press and Public Relations

****CLOSED SESSION****

ITEM 1: DECLARATION OF INTEREST (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS)

1. There were no declarations in relation to the items in the closed session.

ITEM 2: MINUTES (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS)

2. The minutes of the closed sessions of the 1 July 2003 and 15 July 2003 Board meetings were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 3: CURRENT ISSUES (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS)

Matters Arising

Representations from the Public

3. Nominations had been received for a Board sub-group to examine the issue of representations from the public at Board meetings. The sub-group would comprise: John Markland, Michael Scott, Janet Sprent, Gordon Mann, Michael Williams and John Henderson. The sub-group would be supported by Jeff Watson, Iain Rennick, John Burlison and Karen Wright. The first meeting would be held in September.

ITEM 4: RELOCATION UPDATE

4. A Direction from Scottish Ministers requiring SNH to relocate its Edinburgh based posts to Inverness had been received on the day of the meeting (2 September) and was tabled. The Direction was given under powers within Section 11 of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act, and as such the Board was required to comply with it. This provided the basis on which the Board could issue a Direction to the Chief Executive in his capacity as Accountable Officer.
5. The Direction required SNH to submit a Project Plan for the relocation to Ministers by 31 October 2003. This could include proposals for the retention of some posts in the Edinburgh area. Preliminary proposals had been submitted to Ministers recommending that 25 posts should be retained in Edinburgh on a permanent basis and 25 on a temporary basis.
6. A letter to the Chairman from the Minister for Environment & Rural Development, Ross Finnie, had also been received. This gave an assurance in principle that the necessary extra costs of relocation would be met separately from the natural heritage budget.
7. It was understood that the Scottish Executive would be releasing a Press Release announcing the Direction later in the day. It was important that staff should be informed in advance of any press coverage and that SNH

should issue a brief press statement of its own, preferably as part of the Executive's release, indicating the Board's acceptance of the Direction. The Chief Executive should also write to all Edinburgh-based staff informing them of the Direction and its implications.

8. Progress was being made in establishing the Relocation Group and Relocation Project Board, with the latter including Board representation. The Project Board would be responsible for approving the Project Plan for submission to Ministers. The Relocation Group were working to organise a staff visit to Inverness, which would involve input from Highland Council and Highlands and Island Enterprise.
9. There was a shortage of temporary office accommodation in Inverness. This would make it more difficult to begin to locate newly recruited staff to Inverness.
10. The Trade Union were continuing to oppose the move through legal action, their petition to the Scottish Parliament and press coverage.
11. The Chairman tabled a paper providing ideas on where the Board might wish to be involved in the relocation process. The areas provisionally highlighted were: agreeing criteria for HQ location; agreeing selected location; agreeing requirements for HQ building; fundamental change; discussion with key contacts and partners; staff support; sale of existing properties; agreeing content of relocation package; agreeing content of redundancy package.
12. Relocation would be a major challenge, and it was not considered appropriate at this time to consider any major restructuring of the organisation. There was, however, a need to look at how work was going to be carried forward over the next few years. As part of this process, the Corporate Plan had been looked at to consider which actions were most at risk.
13. At an appropriate stage, a survey of staff should be carried out, to find out what type of jobs may be required for spouses and partners.
14. The Board agreed that:
 - it accepted the Direction from Ministers and the letter from Ross Finnie. Responses would be sent to both, and copied to the Board;
 - the Chairman, on behalf of the Board, would write to the Chief Executive to direct him to implement the relocation to Inverness. This would be copied to the Board;
 - the Chief Executive would write to all Edinburgh-based staff to inform them of the Direction and its implications;

- a short press statement should be issued, preferably as a joint press release with the Scottish Executive;
- the role of the Board in the relocation process would be discussed further at the November meeting.

AP14/03: Chairman to write to Ross Finnie indicating that the Board accepted the Direction and the reassurances he had given on the funding of the move to Inverness.

AP15/03: Chairman to write to the Chief Executive to direct him to implement the move to Inverness.

AP16/03: Chief Executive to write to all Edinburgh-based staff informing them of the Direction and its implications.

ITEM 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Bats

15. The interim report of the joint SEERAD/SNH pilot study into the prevalence of European Bat Lyssavirus in bats in Scotland had been received. The study showed that between 6% and 19% of bats had a positive antibody test to the virus. This confirmed that rabies is present in Scotland. A question and answer briefing and internal Staffing Notice were being prepared and the information would be made publically available by press release in October. These results did not alter the health and safety advice issued to staff, bat-workers and the general public, which remained valid.