



THE WOODLAND LEAGUE

Report of the WLL/IFCI Steering Committee meeting VOICE office, No. 9 Upper Mount St., Dublin November 26, 2005

(Amended version – amended 25th January 2006 after input from IFCI)

Letter from WLL to IFCI, dated 8th July 2005, (in which the eleven points discussed were outlined) is available at www.woodlandleague.org.

Present:

Chairman **Fergal Molloy**, UCD

Brendan Kelly, Stakeholder

Andrew St Ledger, PRO, WLL; Woodworker and Artist; Director Centre for Environmental Living and Training

Ciaran Hughes, Secretary, WLL; member People Against Pesticides; stakeholder

Debra James, WLL Note-Taker

Alastair Pfeiffer, Coillte Teoranta

Tony Mannion, Society of Irish Foresters

Declan Little, Secretary, IFCI; Woodlands of Ireland

Ken Gill, Crann

Ruth McGrath, Chairman, IFCI; VOICE; IPCC

Pat Cullhane, observer, grower, farmer

Rosita Sweetman, observer

Meeting started at 1.45 pm.

The chairman outlined the purpose of the meeting as to discuss reengagement in the certification process with WLL, to listen to what they have to say regarding the process of certification; the WLL were not here to make a submission on the draft plan, although this can be done at a later stage.

Andrew St. Ledger explained that the basis and background of the process of FSC is Sustainable Forest Management, Agenda 21, and the treaty from the Rio de Janeiro process, with forestry principles attached.

The chairman said that he was not specifically aware of the details of the Rio Convention and Agenda 21, but is generally aware of the principles of Agenda 21 and the forestry principles derived from the Rio Convention; forestry principles from the Rio Convention are not legally bonding.

Andrew St. Ledger said the Rio forestry principles concern the sustainable development of all types of forest; the State signed the treaty in 1992; European environmental and forestry legislation is based on this document; (Presented document – Agenda 21 and forestry principles to Chairman); Agenda 21 is based on consensus - bringing all stakeholders to the table to progress development plans, social and environmental stakeholders and a new economic basis other than the economic 'bottom line'; if forestry is only successful on one level, it cannot truly be deemed to be successful.

The chairman asked for a description of where the idea of WLL as a stakeholder is coming from.

Andrew St Ledger explained that the WLL is an umbrella group representing the otherwise voiceless; WLL was formed since the FSC consultations in 1999, gathering stories of disenfranchisement through lack of communication, and of people who made submissions to the process and then have been ignored; the process had lost so much credibility with so many stakeholders feeling they were being ignored, the only option left was to form the WLL; there is no access to information through a website for FSC in Ireland, which the FSC maintain to be vital as a part of the process and other communication have been poor; many concerns that have gone to the Steering Committee have not been heard; some of the voiceless are small farmers who wish to plant broadleaves, and people who have lost woodland amenity without consultation; current standards are not sufficient; WLL also represent ecologists and forest scientists, natural medicine practitioners, etc. (listed groups of craftspeople etc.) who want changes to increase their ability to access small timbers, to encourage small local crafts and economies; WLL have a similar view of forest management that of Muintir na Coille, Cairde na Coille, etc.

The chairman asked was there a difficulty getting material for craftspeople – such as small diameter wood.

Andrew St. Ledger said that the monopoly on forest produce means there are no outlets to access materials that could be of use to the local community; cited a case of when a group were building a roundhouse in Co. Clare, there was huge difficulty obtaining hazel; within Coillte's woodlands, there is hazel, but it cannot be accessed; Coillte attaches no value or importance to hazel; Herbalists, for example, also require more access to woodland to gather herbs; some farmers wish to engage in coppicing of native trees to assist the supply of sustainable native material to the growing market; unfortunately the current industry led policy of the Forest service is obstructing this development.

The chairman asked were there any rules of engagement for the WLL, to which Andrew St. Ledger replied that WLL meetings are in the form of a round-table discussion; WLL is non-hierarchical; WLL listen to, and represent the voiceless; the State owns most of the forests, which are managed by Coillte for the citizens; the

citizens' ownership is part of WLL's mandate; WLL's petition has attracted 1200-1500 signatures; the citizen should have more input into forest policy in Ireland, and the WLL hope to aid this input.

The chairman read the petition statement aloud, ('We the undersigned...' etc).

Andrew St. Ledger said that the economy of Gaelic Ireland was sustained by its forests and placed a value on all species, and this was reflected in the Brehon laws with system of penalties and fines for wilful damage to native trees, underlining their importance to society as a whole.

The chairman said that this was Brehon Law and he was aware of it, but we have to recognise that that was then, and this is now; the population density and standard of living is different.

Andrew St. Ledger said that the WLL want to improve access to the resource, not to go back to the past; in Switzerland, there is recognition of the need for the multi-use of forests; any country needs at least 30% forest cover for maximum benefit; the European objectives include the incorporation of stakeholders' interests with social and environmental concerns; indigenous peoples' traditions need reflecting; a start needs to be made, and that start is open debate and consultation; in Switzerland, there is a recognition of the need for continuous cover multi-use forests since the 1880s, with a strong mix of native trees throughout; this helps explain why forestry and related benefits are a very strong component of the Swiss economy; he asked if the chairman was aware of the facts relating to the 1999 consultations

The chairman admitted he wasn't, but said that this is helpful in the sense that WLL represents the voices of the disenfranchised; he said that he was aware of ecologists that are deeply involved in native woodlands – and asked do the WLL represent these...

Andrew St Ledger replied that certain ecologists are involved in native woodlands, in an organisation that claims to be State (Governmental) Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations; if you examine the wording there is a conflict; WLL have difficulty accepting them as independent to promote forestry for the benefit of all, Woodlands of Ireland cannot benefit those who are outside the door, they are supported by the Forest Service/Coillte Cartel; all aspects of forestry are controlled by the Forest Service, Coillte, for them to create the impression that they are NGO, the WLL don't accept this.

Declan Little said that, as a State/NGO partnership, Woodlands of Ireland is not a 'state body' with a constitution that follows any particular policy; WoI get funding from the National Parks and Forest Service, nothing from Coillte; WoI represent the views of everyone who has an agenda; the expertise/energy is not within any organisation or stakeholder; there is no bias whatsoever; people on the board of WoI include state agencies and particular NGOs; Woodlands of Ireland (WoI) also receive funding from the Heritage Council (in addition to Forest Service and NPWS); also representatives on the SC of WoI come from any NGO or individual that wishes to put their name forward for election at the AGM.

The chairman asked if there is a training programme for ecologists. Declan Little said that WoI provide training for ecologists; he asked if there were ecologists within WLL?

Andrew St. Ledger replied that ecologists and scientists aligned with the WLL feel that they are not taken on board by other forestry organisations; the independence of an NGO calling itself a State/NGO partnership is questionable; the idea of an NGO is that they represent independently the views of those who have no power; NGOs in Nordic countries are all funded equally by the State which has no interference with the NGOs; it is considered desirable to have open debate in a mature society.

Declan Little said that Woodlands of Ireland is a State/NGO partnership that runs a free training course; if you apply through the scheme, no one is excluded.

Ruth McGrath asked to move on with the agenda; background to the WLL and WoI are not relevant.

Andrew St Ledger asked if Woodlands of Ireland has responsibility for native woodland management plans, to which Declan Little said they did not; WoI had no input to the Coolatin Woods management plan; WoI was asked to look at the work done on foot of a complaint received by Michael Starrett, Chairman of WoI and CEO of the Heritage Council.

Andrew St Ledger said that the rhododendron problem in Coolattin Woods (the 80 acres or so that remain), was dealt with by grubbing out *all* the undergrowth; the management plan that had input on the decision to do this was on Woodlands of Ireland headed paper; a complaint to the Heritage Council regarding concerns that the grubbing out of all undergrowth was not best practice was replied to by Michael Starrett on Woodlands of Ireland headed paper.

Declan Little said that Woodlands of Ireland replied that they had been to look at the site; that the job had been done to the highest possible standard; they had taken out the rhododendron, and there was no issue whether the site looked terrible, it will be OK in a couple of years' time; over 70% of the undergrowth was rhododendron.

Andrew St. Ledger explained that this was not in the public domain – it should have been.

Ruth McGrath said that this was all irrelevant to the meeting; the meeting was already 45 minutes long, and that only one person had been talking; point 1 had not been dealt with yet; need to move on.

The chairman explained that he wanted to clarify who WLL represented; WLL seems to be a loose and open organisation of other NGOs/individuals; He then said that they were to discuss the points on the letter from WLL dated 8th July.

Point 1. Independent mediator

“We see it as vitally important that the process have an independent mediator/chairman that has no vote in motions. This person will need to be

compensated for their time.” From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

The chairman questioned whether there was a problem with him being chairman.

Ciaran Hughes responded that the biggest problem is not with the chairman – it was with the selection of the chairman; there was no input from WLL, no consultation on the choice of Chairman; Andrew St. Ledger said this is a prime example of the process being obstructed; the WLL only received word of who the chairman was a few days ago; WLL would prefer the problem was noted on the record.

The chairman noted that he has been chairman of a number of things over the years; he has been employed as a member of the Forest Service and the Wildlife Service in the past, and has chaired many meetings.

Ciaran Hughes said that the WLL would request the objection noted on record and the lack of consultation also noted.

Andrew St. Ledger said that Brother Anthony Keane of Glenstal Abbey was on notice to act as Chairman if WLL was given an opportunity to nominate one.

Discussion moved to the forest services role in IFCI. The chairman said that this is nothing to do with the Forest Service.

Andrew St Ledger said that the Forest Service are the regulators of forestry for all treaties, Rio, the Forestry Act 1946, a regulator that issues licences, and that was the overseer of the destruction of, for example, Coolattin; Coillte manages the forest resource on behalf of the public; Coillte has two hats - one private and one public; the 2003 European court case in respect of grants obtained as a private entity were illegally obtained and had to be repaid, because Coillte was a public body.

The chairman asked that the objection to the method to select the chairman is noted in connection with Point 1.

Ciaran Hughes noted that point 1 applies not just for this meeting, but for the FSC process meetings in Ireland in general.

Andrew St. Ledger noted that an independent chairman was needed for negotiating the standard; government organisations should not become voting members, but can participate on an independent basis in the entire process.

Tony Mannion said that the cost is the issue, the available funding does not cover expenses for an independent chairman; that person would be the link between IFCI and stakeholders; (Discussion of whether Tony Mannion had said 'share-' or 'stakeholders' followed – Tony Mannion said that Andrew St. Ledger should “stop this waspishness”); the problem is a question of money; the ideal situation has been talked about many times; if IFCI had funds to the tune of what we would need, we could employ such an independent chair; when IFCI set up in 1999/2000 we had a coordinator, that person did the day-to-day work; in total, IFCI has received only between €30 – 40,000 in funding; Don’t have the money for a coordinator.

Andrew St. Ledger asked how much funding has been spent in this process in total, and was told by Tony Mannion that that information is available in the company's accounts, at the company's office.

Andrew St. Ledger re-asked how much money has been used in this process, not just through the accounts of IFCI – i.e. how much money have other organisations given to their members in IFCI? The social/environmental chambers got 5,000 punts to put together a submission (showed the submission to chairman); that was the only money the social and environmental chambers got.

Ruth McGrath said that that money was to VOICE; IFCI didn't receive that; That document has not been given to IFCI.

Andrew St Ledger said that that's the only funding that has been made available to NGOs; in the UK there was an extensive publicity campaign informing the public about FSC prior to the process there, in UK magazines, billboards, etc in direct contrast to here, where the process has been conveniently hidden from view; what is the total of all monies contributed to this process?; the full amount is still unknown; it is an example of the obstruction to the process, the funding; there has been advertising in Crann magazines – where did that money come from?

It was noted by Ken Gill and Declan Little that the advertising in Crann magazines was Coillte funded, not IFCI.

Tony Mannion noted that Tom Roche was the central person in the beginning of IFCI, and was funded by the World Wildlife Fund, which is funded by the EU, and that this was pre-IFCI, and that he was to set up the National Initiative.

Ruth McGrath said that that was his remit – Tom Roche did what he was asked to do; it can't be said that his remit should have been broader than what it was.

The chairman asked who a suitable chairperson would be and who would pay him.

Andrew St. Ledger said that the importance of sustainable forest management to the State and the EU is built-in to our commitment to its ideals; the State should pay for this. In order for the state to fulfil its Sustainable Forest Management commitments to the EU and UN it needed a performance based evaluation system, which is where FSC was needed to be obtained by Coillte to prove SFM was happening on the ground, this is why the state should fund evenly all of the stakeholders representatives to engage in producing a consensual forest standard.

Ruth McGrath asked if the WLL were saying that the State should fund it but not the Forest Service.

Brendan Kelly raised the issue of the figure of €30-40,000 – the former treasurer should have an exact figure.

Tony Mannion said to check with Companies' Registration Office; he is no longer treasurer; all the accounts of IFCI are in CRO and have been checked over by an auditor; IFCI have a clean bill of health in this matter.

Andrew St Ledger said that transparency and accountability are the bedrock of Agenda 21 and thus FSC; the accounts should be available from IFCI at each meeting; as a public process, there should be a database with all information on the process, including accounts.

Declan Little asked who should run this database.

Andrew St. Ledger said that because forestry has been given extra priority, the public needs more information; we do not know fully how much money has been absorbed by the process. We're funding ourselves, as individuals, to be here. The state should fund this.

The point has been made that information should all be available; it was accepted that this should be the case in the in future.

The chairman said that this should finish by agreeing that IFCI only has responsibility for money it has received; it can't track back over the past.

Tony Mannion said that no other funding than what has been accounted for has been received by IFCI.

The chairman asked for it to be noted that in future it would be a good idea to keep information on funding in public domain.

Ciaran Hughes said that the WLL would like to see a commitment on the part of IFCI that when money becomes available, there will be an independent Chairman hired.

Tony Mannion said that if that's the desire and the need IFCI should put a budget together; A secretariat was employed in 1999, that person was paid; Tony Mannion agreed to commit to either a Chairperson and a Secretariat or both in one – budget to be made in the new year to see what funding was necessary.

Point 2. Funding

“We see it as important that the issue of who funding comes from is looked at. We feel that the Forest Service/State should not fund the process, as it leaves the process in a vulnerable position should decisions be made that are against the wishes of the Forest Service/State. Perhaps Lottery funding should be investigated.” From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

Ruth McGrath said that the Forest Service is part of the State, yet the WLL object to state funding, yet the WLL said earlier that the state should pay; IFCI had looked at Lottery funding, and it was unsuccessful.

Ciaran Hughes said that the WLL wouldn't object to funding from the Heritage Council, for example, or another state organisation – Forest Service money would create a bias; Coillte money creates a bias.

IFCI asked whether Heritage Council funding would create a bias towards other kinds of forestry; a broadleaf agenda?

Ciarán Hughes said that the Heritage Council have a 50% natives/50% broadleaves agenda; equal agenda.

The chairman said that the lottery issue is a difficult one; experience looking for lottery funding has shown it to be difficult.

Ruth McGrath said that IFCI have looked into it, and they don't fund this type of work, because they are limited to funding certain types of projects funding that fall outside what IFCI do.

Andrew St Ledger said that if the process was investigated, aspects of forestry such as sport and the community are compatible with lottery funding; Agenda 21 brings these elements together; perhaps the application was worded badly.

The chairman said he didn't know that IFCI had applied for lottery funding; the lottery was set up for specific purposes; government departments have input; agreed it covers a multitude of interests.

Declan Little said (on the independence of IFCI from Forest Service) that the Forest Service refused to become part of the IFCI Steering Committee; Woodlands of Ireland made proposals regarding FSC to the Forest Service, but they will not have any input.

Andrew St Ledger pointed out that Crann's funding comes from the Forest Service. The chairman asked does that compromise CRANN's independence. Ken Gill explained that Crann send in to the Forest Service looking for money, but once that money arrives they have no input, they are not involved. It could be seen how it would appear that, if Crann do the wrong thing, the Forest Service won't give them the money. But the Forest Service does give them the money, and Crann do what is necessary. Ken Gill said that Crann are not compromised by this funding.

Andrew St Ledger said that Ken Gill was not with Crann in 1999 - asked how long has Ken Gill been on the Steering Committee.

Ken Gill responded that he was on the Steering Committee for year and a half.

Andrew St Ledger asked was Ken Gill given a brief on what this process was about.

Ken Gill said that reason he's involved is because of a conversation he had with Andrew St. Ledger some time previously; he went to a Crann meeting, and said Crann was not in the FSC process but should be, there was no one directly involved; he went along to a Crann board meeting, and they said go along to the AGM, and he was appointed to the Steering Committee.

Andrew St. Ledger stated that both Caroline Lewis and Denis Heenan had represented Crann before Ken Gill, and that it should be required that a brief should be given to new members of the steering committee – it was clear that this was not the case with Crann.

Ruth McGrath and Declan Little said that that is up to the individual NGOs, and not the responsibility of IFCI; Ruth McGrath pointed out that Caroline Lewis is still on the Steering Committee, representing An Taisce and Friends of the Irish Environment.

Andrew St Ledger said that Crann is a *chosen* NGO – chosen to receive state money, and compromised because of it; since the start of the FSC process, Crann has been able to produce a full colour magazine.

The chairman said that the meeting shouldn't go down that cul-de-sac; the point is that Crann received money from the Forest Service; Crann do not appear to be influenced by their funding.

Ken Gill explained that the grant is a grant with no strings attached; can't remember a single meeting when it was said 'what would the Forest Service think of this?'

It was asked whether the WLL suggested that the Forest service should provide a brief. Andrew St. Ledger replied that he was not suggesting that.

The chairman said that there is no evidence to indicate that CRANN or Woodlands of Ireland have been compromised in any way by the funding that they receive from State organisations.

Andrew St. Ledger noted that Ken Gill was not briefed by Dennis Heenan; none of the negotiations that had gone before Ken Gill's involvement were passed on; this is an example of the shoddiness within the process; in future the situation should be where a person coming onto the board should be briefed, so they are fully aware of what they are doing.

Ruth McGrath said that the insinuation is that people were influenced by the funding they received.

Point 3. Terms of Reference

“We need the terms of reference of IFCI clarified. From Developing FSC Standards – A Survival Guide: “To avoid confusion about the relationship of the standard to the FSC, the ToR can state that the process is linked to FSC and is not a unique national process that some members are linking to FSC while others are not. It is important that the ToR state that the intention is for the standard to comply with the FSC's P&C, although obviously the standard may be used for other purposes than certification under the FSC. In addition to the ToR, some Working groups have asked all participants to sign a letter of commitment to the process and to the aims of FSC. The ToR also need to state the relationship of the Standard Committee and any subcommittees to the FSC Working Group.” In parallel, the Memorandum and Articles of Association should be altered to clearly demonstrate the commitment of the IFCI to the FSC principles. Currently, they state only a commitment to the production of an FSC based standard.” From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

The chairman said that the terms of reference are clarified in Articles or Memorandum of Association which are freely available from the Companies' Registration Office.

Andrew St Ledger said that, to avoid confusion the M&AoA need to be changed; some articles link to FSC, others do not; to state that the company is to develop an FSC standard for certification is not enough; we could go for another ten years discussion of a standard that could never be accredited; for the public as well, the terms of reference should have been made clear, or else we could end up with a standard that is not compliant with the FSC Principles and Rules.

Tony Mannion said that that's not correct.

The chairman that the M&AoA can be changed if it is important but it seems unimportant.

Andrew St Ledger said that Rio and other treaties that Ireland has signed up to are not reflected in the FSC Coillte signed up to nor are commitments to abide by EU environment laws; FSC Int. are very concerned with what's going on in Ireland; when WLL met FSC Europe Director Liviu Amariei (who was here to remove the fourth chamber added by the economic block when FSC requires only three chambers) he told us personally current standard Coillte are certified to is not compliant with FSC P&C; in other words IFCI cannot be fully accredited.

Ciaran Hughes asked if IFCI are willing to consider changing the M&AoA.

Tony Mannion has said that IFCI have amended the M&AoA before as agreed by the membership; there would need to be an EGM to change them; a problem...if WLL wants to influence the M&AoA of IFCI, they must be members and they are not; IFCI are not refusing to change the Articles of Association, but the issue seems unimportant.

Brendan Kelly said that the WLL want the M&AoA to state that the standard would be developed according to FSC.

Declan Little, Ruth McGrath and Tony Mannion all said that the M&AoA do say this.

Ruth McGrath said that the Memoranda of Association are 25 pages, and she said that she would have assumed that the WLL would have done the work and prepared for this meeting.

The chairman also said that the WLL should have done the looked at the M&AoA and then make suggestions. It was asked whether IFCI had a copy of the M&AoA so that the WLL could point out where they wanted changes made. Ruth McGrath said she would get them.

Heated debate ensued, in which Ciarán Hughes offered to defer the matter of the M&AoA, and to send a prepared document to IFCI. Ruth McGrath then changed her mind and said she didn't want to get the M&AoA from an upstairs office, but Andrew St. Ledger said he would still like to see them, insisting it is important to the process.

Andrew St Ledger said that the FSC principles must be incorporated in full; if the Terms of Reference are not compatible with these, the process could last ten years with never a reflection of international agreements; the M&AoA should be furnished by IFCI; as we are in Voices office there should be a copy here; can Ruth McGrath get these?

The chairman said that if there are inadequacies in the M&AoA, the WLL should present them.

Ruth McGrath said that changing the M&AoA is not the decision of the Steering Committee, it is the decision of the members of IFCI.

It was reiterated that the M&AoA should be obtained for the meeting. Ruth McGrath said that she would get them, and left the room to obtain them.

The meeting broke for a few minutes while Ruth McGrath obtained her laptop.

When the meeting reassembled, Ciarán Hughes stated that the M&AoA do indeed commit to developing an FSC based standard; but the M&AoA should commit following the FSC principles and rules, and not just to developing an FSC standard.

Declan Little contested that this was implied in the M&AoA. Ciarán Hughes said that implying this was not good enough. The M&AoA weren't shown at the meeting.

Point 4. Scrapping the Draft Standard

“We see it as vitally important that the IFCI Second Draft is scrapped, as this does not give priority to, nor does it follow, the FSC Principles and Criteria. Thus, as the draft stands it cannot be accredited, and all future drafts will be weakened by it. A new draft needs to be prepared under the new three chamber structure.” From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

The chairman questioned why the draft should be scrapped.

The WLL explained that the draft as it stands does not give priority to FSC; FSC P&C do not appear on the Draft Standard; the naming *Second* draft implies consultation happened before it was written, which is not the case.

Brendan Kelly explained to the chairman that first there is a consultation document, then there is consultation, then there is a Draft Standard, then there is consultation, then there is a second draft, and so on; it should not be called a second draft because there was no consultation; the draft does not follow FSC P&C, and all future drafts will be influenced by it; as it stands, the draft is weaker than the plain FSC P&C; therefore the next draft will have to be argued from a document that is too economically biased; this draft is not an advancement of the process, it is a setback.

Declan Little said that this was all about semantics; whether it's called the first draft or second draft doesn't matter; it was decided initially not to include the FSC P&Cs so as not to make an unwieldy document; it was agreed the next draft would include FSC P&C which will go to public consultation.

Ciaran Hughes said that a meeting earlier this year with a Director of FSC Europe, the director admitted that FSC *thought* that the IFCI Second Draft *had* gone through public consultation; this was because of the naming of the draft; Coillte's certification was carried out under this false assumption.

Ruth McGrath said she had spoke to Gemma Boetekees, former FSC Europe Director; it doesn't matter what the draft is called; first, second draft did not matter. The draft has been produced, sent to public consultation, and submissions taken on board.

Alastair Pfeiffer said that The Woodmark Generic standard is used to certify Coillte, as there is no agreed FSC standard in Ireland; it takes into account FSC P&C, it takes the nearest neighbour's standard and makes up a generic standard, a checklist; this will be the case until such time as there is an agreed FSC standard for Ireland.

Ciarán Hughes said that the Woodmark Generic Standard that Coillte are certified to is based by-and-large on the IFCI draft standard.

Brendan Kelly asked if the IFCI are refusing to consider scrapping the draft standard.

IFCI replied that they would not consider scrapping the standard.

Ruth McGrath said "You, Brendan, were at the meeting in Tullamore on 14 September, 2002 or 2003, when that point was put to the members of IFCI, that the draft standard be scrapped, and a new standard produced, the members voted unanimously not to do that. The IFCI wants to move forward."

The chairman clarified that this issue has to go to the entire membership.

Brendan Kelly said that it is the job of the Steering Committee to represent the wishes of their members; they are not representing the wishes of their members.

The chairman said that the IFCI reckon that they would not get agreement of the membership to scrap the second draft; IFCI agreed with this - "The membership have spoken on the issue".

Point 5. Verification of independence from the State

"We need verification of IFCI's independence from the state. The State's and Governmental organisations' roles in the process needs to be clarified, with due regard to FSC rules. From Developing FSC Standards – A Survival Guide: "Government organisations cannot become voting members of the FSC, but FSC Working Groups are encouraged to welcome and involve government officials with specific expertise in national Working Groups either as participants or as observers." In our opinion, the Heritage Council's position in IFCI needs to be examined, as does the position of Woodlands of Ireland. We would welcome them in an advisory and observatory role." From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

Andrew St Ledger explained that the matter of verification of independence from the State should be clarified regarding the FSC rules – State organisations should have no vote on FSC, but should be involved because of their expertise in an advisory and observatory role.

It was suggested by Declan Little that this was not the case (referred to *Developing FSC Standards – A Survival Guide*); state organisations can be involved; WLL should contact FSC to find out if the above refers to FSC International or the FSC national initiative.

Point 6. Name Change

“The name of the process, Irish Forestry Certification Initiative Ltd., needs to be changed. There are many groups and individuals that have been alienated from the process. A name change such as this would help de-alienate these people.” From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

It was suggested by the WLL that a name change would go a long way to de-alienate people who have been alienated by the process.

Tony Mannion said that it has taken seven years for the process to get where it is today; name change is nothing but a red herring.

The chairman asked what name the Woodland League would want.

Ciaran Hughes said that the WLL are only suggesting a name change; the WLL are not in a position to change the name; that is a decision for the membership of the IFCI.

Brendan Kelly said that the WLL have come in here to get responses to our points; letter was sent on the 8th July to IFCI containing our suggestions, they have had much time to structure their responses.

Chairman suggested that ‘A rose by any other name is still a rose’; name change won’t change people’s views on the matter.

Tony Mannion said that a name change would require resources that are a scarcity; there needs to be progress, not returning to the past.

Andrew St Ledger said that in the process since 1999 funding was allocated to IFCI to develop an accredited standard; how much progress has been made in the 7 years?

Brendan Kelly asked for a simple answer, “yes” or “no” from IFCI as to whether they would consider a name change, so the meeting could proceed.

Ruth McGrath asked the WLL to stop saying things like “say 'yes' or 'no' and move on”; entitled to have a full discussion on points and then move on; doesn't see how a name change is going to achieve anything; remarked that there was this hope that the name change from Windscale to Sellafield would change the perception of the nuclear plant, but it had no effect, it made no difference to the reputation; people think what they think, a name change won't achieve what the WLL think it will.

The chairman said that the matter is noted; a name change would have to go to the membership, which is a long and exhaustive process; doesn't move the process any further.

Brendan Kelly said that that's no answer to the question.

Andrew St Ledger said that the WLL could end up with concurrence if we felt other issues were being addressed; if the reputation of IFCI was improved by the running of a proper process.

Point 7. Membership fee needs to be removed

“The membership fee, however nominal, needs to be removed as a matter of principal for an open process. The EU recently ruled that fees to participate in development processes is illegal. We feel that this could apply to an FSC process. In any case, environmental developments should be free and open to all.” From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

Andrew St Ledger explained that the EU has ruled that fees to participate in processes, for example the planning process, are illegal; the WLL feel that IFCI could fall under this; there is a chance that IFCI is in breach of EU law; therefore, the fee to join should be removed.

The chairman said that he thought it was open to all. Ruth McGrath said that the process is open to anyone to make a submission; there is no fee to make a submission.

Andrew St Ledger explained that it is participation, not submission, which was being discussed; the €5 fee, even though it is nominal as noted, should be removed

Ruth McGrath said that someone has to pay for the lights, the stamps, etc.

Andrew St. Ledger said that for such an important process, there should not be quibbling over funding; we have heard so often that 'we don't have the funding'.

Ruth McGrath explained that if the State does not want to give IFCI funding nobody can make them; the only way we make money is the membership fee.

Declan Little asked are WLL pro FSC. The chairman said that that's a rhetorical question. Ciarán Hughes responded that IFCI have their opinions about whether WLL are pro FSC or not; what the WLL say here is not going to change the Steering Committee's mind. The question was reiterated, and Ciarán Hughes responded that if the WLL were not pro FSC, they would not be at this meeting; the WLL want a properly run FSC process.

Ciarán Hughes raised the question of how much money was obtained from the membership fees. Ruth McGrath responded that in 2003 the income for the year was €585, and almost €2000 had to be paid to an auditor to audit the €585; IFCI have to have a membership fee to cover costs.

Ciaran Hughes commented that it was strange running a process relying on such a negligible amount of money.

IFCI responded that that's the situation; can't run without membership fee; the year they got no funding for this process membership fees helped pay NGOs expenses; it is important to have membership fee, to make an issue out of it is petty

The chairman stated that the fact that there is a fee inhibiting public participation might be the case if it was €200, but €5 is not even the price of a packet of cigarettes; a €5 fee is not excluding anybody.

Andrew St Ledger responded that that's not the point being made; going back to access to information on the environment, and the planning fee - there should not be a fee, because the environmental and the social aspects of the process are human rights, and the idea of a fee to access human rights is not acceptable; and will the Government will not give money to the process? The principle of the fee does not allow for inclusion; the WLL know of several voiceless stakeholders who have not been responded to - submissions can be sent 'til the cows come home, to no avail.

Ruth McGrath said the government *may* not fund the process – cannot be relied upon; reiterated that there is no fee for a submission; not a Governmental planning process, you only pay a fee for becoming a member of the organisation; IFCI never charged anyone a penny for sending documents to people (referring to Brendan Kelly and Ciarán Hughes), or for the photocopying or time; People are not being asked to pay for information. Declan Little asked could the WLL not see that a €5 fee doesn't affect the process.

Andrew St Ledger said that the information should be readily on a website – FSC international consider a website very important. Ciaran Hughes asked for clarification of the circa €1900 spent to develop an IFCI website; heard there were problems with that; IFCI still have no website. Ruth McGrath said that the person who did the work never billed us; couldn't track them down. Ciarán Hughes thanked them for the info.

Tony Mannion said that if it becomes an EU Rule that the fee is illegal, then the issue can be looked at. WLL noted that the principle of the matter was important; also noted that while people here may see €5 as nominal, other people's means may not be as good. Chairman said that the principle is accepted, but if you want to join anything you should be prepared to pay. Andrew St Ledger said that if the principle is accepted, it is understood why WLL oppose the fee.

Point 8. Abuse

“[The WLL will not tolerate] abuse from any chamber, in particular the economic chamber, and especially if it continues unchecked by the chair. (Ref: Dr. Ann Behan's letter of resignation from I.F.C.I. Ltd.)” From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

Brendan Kelly said that from the beginning, NGOs have been interrupted and received verbal abuse, particularly from the economic chamber, and are not given the mental space to work. Ciarán Hughes said that Dr. Ann Behan resigned, citing abuse as one of the main reasons.

Declan Little said that abuse works both ways, the IFCI has been abused by WLL members; the abuse Ann Behan felt IFCI members also felt. The chairman made the point that “what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander”.

Ciarán Hughes asked if the IFCI are then in agreement with the WLL in that abuse has no place in the process (unanswered); there has to be respect for each other; mutual respect should be regarded as a cornerstone of a working relationship; do IFCI then agree with this point that there is no place for abuse in the process?

All agreed that there is no room for personal abuse in the process.

Point 9. Lack of clarity regarding accounts

“[The WLL will not tolerate] Lack of clarity regarding accounts. Transparency and clarity are the building blocks of Local Agenda 21, and we must not forget that FSC is derived from Local Agenda 21.” From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

Ruth McGrath made the point that it is odd to say this unless it refers to *past* lack of clarity. WLL said that there is no accusation in that statement; this is how the IFCI should be run from now on.

The chairman said that clarity is needed for every organisation; there is a formal arrangement about companies, etc; public accounts go to the CRO office.

Tony Mannion stated that the WLL writing down that point that down is "nothing short of scandalous"; nothing was *ever* wrong with the accounts; IFCI know what's behind that remark, the remarks on public forums, the accusations, including embezzlement of funds; IFCI ask WLL to withdraw the allegation inferred in that statement; unless the WLL's allegations can be backed up, they should be withdrawn; (references to remarks made by Brendan Kelly and Ciarán Hughes on public forums were made, though Tony Mannion noted that Ciarán Hughes has withdrawn some remarks in the past).

Ciaran Hughes said that he has withdrawn any remarks he has made where he has been wrong; this is irrelevant to the meeting; remarks made by individuals are not under control of the WLL; the WLL have never made allegations regarding the misappropriation of funds in *any* organisation.

Declan Little said that he would find it difficult to sit around a table with people that made any such accusations; Brendan reported to the ODCE, and they found no wrong-doing.

Brendan Kelly said that as far as he knew, the ODCE investigation was still on-going; he had received no communication to say that the case had been closed.

Ruth McGrath said that IFCI had contacted the ODCE, and they had closed the case finding nothing wrong with the accounts of IFCI; the ODCE investigation is complete and the ODCE ruled there was no case to answer; the allegations must be withdrawn; how can IFCI sit round a table with people making such allegations?

The chairman said that the point is that an allegation about embezzlement was made; was there anything in writing...

Ruth McGrath said that a person, member of WLL, sent an email to a public forum accusing IFCI of embezzlement.

Chairman stated that people's reputations shouldn't be sullied; a feeling on WLL certain incorrectness is taking place; a line in the sand should be drawn under this.

Brendan said that the allegations were made before the WLL was even formed; allegations have nothing to do with WLL; let's be professional about this; stop accusing the WLL of things they never did; Brendan made the allegations and complaints while he was a member and director of IFCI, not WLL.

The chairman said it would show good will if the remarks were withdrawn.

Tony Mannion said that there are three people at the meeting (referring to Debra James, Pat Culhane, Rosita Sweetman) who are complete strangers to this information; unfair, they go on with these allegations of lack of clarity or a word; nor fair on anyone trying to do business; this shouldn't be dragged up from the past then put here on the table; shouldn't have to defend the good name and reputation that have been impugned; the WLL should withdraw these statements (referring to points 8, 9, 10, 11 from the WLL letter of the 8th July); the five words "Woodland League will not tolerate" is insulting.

Ciaran Hughes explained that this letter (of the 8th July) was agreed at a meeting of the WLL; cannot change I without consulting those within the WLL network; perhaps the wording was not the best, but it was what was agreed; will contact those within our network about rewording that paragraph; the allegations that IFCI refer to are not relevant to WLL; gave commitment that the WLL will approach those in the WLL network about rewording that paragraph; need to get agreement from them before anything can be changed.

Ruth McGrath asked if the WLL would write a letter condemning the actions of those that made the allegations of embezzlement.

Ciarán Hughes said that it is not relevant to the WLL, and the WLL will write no such letters.

Brendan Kelly said that if IFCI feel so strongly on the allegation, there is the recourse of the courts; IFCI have threatened to bring others to court over issues.

Tony Mannion said that it has been looked into; nobody has the money to take it to court.

Point 10. Refusal to accommodate times of meetings

"[The WLL will not tolerate] Refusal to accommodate NGOs with regard to meeting times. A reasonable number of meetings must be held at weekends." From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

The WLL noted that most meetings are held during the week; to attend, people working voluntarily in NGOs have to give up a days wages; economic chambers, and

some NGOs, pay their representatives to attend; this type of money is not available to the WLL, and many other NGOs.

The chairman asked how many meetings there were per year, and how many are held at weekends.

Ruth McGrath said that there have been six Steering Committee meetings in 2005; two of these have been at weekends; she's in two NGOs and she doesn't want weekend meetings at all; doesn't suit everybody to have to give up their weekends.

Ciarán Hughes pointed out that the two weekend meetings, including the one on this date, were because the Woodland League requested a weekend meeting; the first one we didn't get enough notice to attend; noted that this wasn't the fault of IFCI, was the fault of the postal service.

Tony Mannion asked about evening meetings. Ciarán Hughes noted that to get from Galway to even Tullamore (where most IFCI meetings are held) takes at least two hours; cannot leave work until after five during the week; would be unfeasible to attend an evening meeting; just not possible to attend all weekday meetings; we understand weekend meetings doesn't suit everybody, particularly the economic chambers; we want an agreement that, say, 50% of meetings will be held on weekends; the WLL are not unreasonable.

Ruth McGrath noted that all AGMs and EGMs are held on weekends.

Pat Culhane said there needs to be goodwill on all sides of this; without goodwill and compromise the process cannot proceed.

The chairman suggested that at each meeting, the date for the next meeting should be decided; other NGOs should be able to come.

Point 11. Funding

"[The WLL will not tolerate] Refusal to accommodate NGOs with regard to funding, where applicable. When available, funding shall be given with a minimum of hassle and evenly distributed. Sweden is a country with an excellent environmental record because it actively and directly funds NGOs. They consider the views of genuine NGOs important and an investment in the future. Other countries should follow their example." From the letter to IFCI of the 8th July – read out by chairman.

Ciaran Hughes said that the WLL are talking about funding to attend meetings to cover expenses; being reasonable, the WLL understand funding isn't always available; hence the two words in the paragraph "*when available*", important that IFCI note that; we are not making any accusations.

Declan Little said that NGOs attending have been given expenses to attend; IFCI try to facilitate NGOs with the meagre funds they have.

Andrew St Ledger said that most applications of possible funding with strings attached, if the NGO accepts (money) they will have to accept projects, i.e. EENGOF

goes to particular efforts, e.g. Race Against Waste; Agenda 21 means funding is supposed to go to groups with no restrictions; a company who obtains the benefit of ECO label makes money on forest sales affecting communities up and down this country.

The chairman made the point that Crann and Woodlands of Ireland are getting money from the State with no 'strings attached'.

Andrew St Ledger said that the Forest Service is the regulator of forestry in Ireland; Coillte are the managers of the forestry; Coillte/Forest Service are essentially a cartel; are you not concerned at the conflict of interest?

The chairman said that the issues on funding of NGOs go back years; it is a Governmental issue; we really can't influence the Government.

Ruth McGrath said that with regard to State funding we have no control over that; thought the WLL were referring expenses to travel to meetings etc; not larger funding; IFCI are not a funding authority.

Andrew St Ledger said that state commitments to Sustainable Forest Management must be assessed *outside* the State, by those qualified in the FSC process; the FSC ECO label sends a message that Sustainable Forest Management is happening in Ireland, when it is not; if there is absolute transparency, clarity and balance, the WLL will accept any funding of the IFCI process; expenses should be given to NGOs without any hassle.

Winding up the meeting

The chairman asked for people to give final comments

Pat Cullhane commended the courage of the chair - he has come out of it well; there are lots of issues - WLL is genuine about changing forestry for the better; we could do with more broadleaf afforestation in future; hopefully this will lead to a broader sense of cooperation between this and other groups.

Declan Little said he was glad we had meeting; stated that there has been bad communication in the past due to bad relations between certain people now in WL and IFCI; if WLL are genuine it could work; allegations are unhelpful to the process, it would be helpful for the process if the individual involved withdrew the allegations, as it is difficult to sit across the table from someone who has made allegations; we should be open but it will not work where it is compromised at that level; IFCI will go through the letter (8th July) after the meeting to assess what has been said on the issues and respond to the WLL; we would appreciate no public judgment until we get back to you.

Andrew St Ledger said that's a fair commitment on both sides.

Ciarán Hughes said that the WLL will need to consult with the people in the WLL network on the outcome of the meeting; but the WLL will not go public with it until a response is received from IFCI.

Andrew St. Ledger asked Alistair Pfeiffer to explain the background to FSC agreement in UK, which initially had difficulty accommodating many disparate views; Alistair has a UK background and is undoubtedly familiar with what became known as the Forestry Accord; in the light of the meeting, it would be helpful.

Alistair Pfeiffer proceeded to inform the meeting that there were similar problems in the UK process as there are in Ireland, but much more players; an accord was established with different groups feeding info to a forum which thrashed out the differences via a truly independent chair which led to progress being achieved; a time frame and funding were established first and when the deadline loomed representatives from the three chambers went to a hotel to thrash out the finer details and come out with a FSC standard which was genuinely reflective of the diversity of opinions which the accord accommodated; promised to bring more specific details to the attention of WLL and IFCI in the near future of exactly how the UK accord worked with a view to seeing if it would be helpful here.

Declan Little said that IFCI will inform their members, as well as FSC International, that the meeting has been reasonably good.

Tony Mannion said that the business of certification is a voluntary one; the national forest cover is 62% certified at the moment; 14,000 or so forest owners must be brought to the table; we will try to produce a standard equitable, reasonable and fair; It is not about raising the bar for forestry; it is a question of whether harmonisation is attainable with the standards in other countries.

Alastair Pfeiffer said that a huge amount of effort has gone into this, and if as much effort as has been put into administration goes into the standards themselves, we can certainly move forward; FSC had nominal input into the standards in the UK; brought the two together with the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme; in drawing up the Woodland Assurance Scheme there was plenty of banging together of heads, came out with a standard with lots of compromise; the process has to get to a certain point before we can do that; the draft standard is now going into consultation with stakeholders for their input before finishing the whole thing off.

Ciaran Hughes said that the WLL agrees with bringing more people to the table; we want to bring smaller, overlooked, NGOs to the table; WLL *wants* to bring more people to the table; Only one real benefactor from the FSC process – Coillte; a couple of other forestry companies have certification, nothing compared to the level of Coillte.

Andrew St Ledger thanked everyone for attending, and the Chairman; this is an opportunity to include representation for the economic social and environmental interests to create a standard for Ireland to guide future forestry, to improve the benefit of forestry for more stakeholders; Ireland's history is that we have lost the forest; the State would never allow Forestry to spend money on *good* land; they were up against it, and took on the model of plantation to get the country up to speed with forestry; we can help amend this with this standard; there's a window of opportunity; forestry was left to the State, the company Coillte manage it on behalf of the state; the idea of consultation is new in Ireland; there has never been a great opportunity for

debate; hopefully we can help guide Ireland to the wisest use of what should be our greatest resource.

Brendan Kelly expressed that he thinks we can work together in relative harmony; WLL represent some of the 14,000 new foresters coming on board that Tony referred to; from a citizen's perspective, WLL have helped resolve some of the issues; WLL want these issues resolved in a roundtable discussion whenever possible with balance between the economic, social and environmental interests, with no impediments placed on the part of anyone; we want all the past done away with, and agree on a proper forest management plan/standard.

Ruth McGrath said she was in accord with most; process needs to move forward; but the issue with regard to allegations is a big issue; a WLL member emailed a public e-mail about my election to a board unrelated to forestry, questioning my suitability because of IFCI; must put *everything* in the past, and that must include those allegations.

The chairman wrapped up by saying that the WLL put their points across well articulated and advanced, and I hope WLL got a response by the Steering Committee; the Steering Committee was here to listen to submissions and arguments before taking them to their members; I hope progress will be made in the next year and a half, it will take that amount of time to get the process going; the process towards certification will be decided by forest owners; farmers have to be assured they will get some economic benefit from it; Sustainable Forest Management - the three chambers: social, environmental and economic; the social aspect is a new concept, recognised only since 1992; I think that we are progressing; it's going to take longer but it's better than having a process that is half baked; We are all working for the same objectives, although coming to the table with different backgrounds, affiliated to different ideas, etc; if we're to move forward, you start with new building blocks, which are understanding and listening to the other person; it must be that way or we come up against cul-de-sacs; if the WLL decide to come back having had a response from the IFCI, you start with a new platform and put the past behind, withdrawing allegations or fortifying them, but don't leave it hanging in the air; this poisons relationships; safe journey to all.