

GOLA FOREST CONSERVATION CONCESSION PROGRAMME

MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

27 JANUARY 2006, FREETOWN

Attendance:

Mr Alex Hipkiss, RSPB Project Supervisor (Chair)

Mr Bartholomew Kamara, Director of Forests

Mr DD Siaffa, Executive Director, CSSL

Paramount Chief Kanneh, Koya Chiefdom, representing local communities

Mr John DeMarco, Project Leader, Secretary

Mr Alistair Gammell, RSPB, invited participant

The meeting was held in the Agriculture conference room, Youyi Building, Freetown.

1. The meeting started at 2:10pm with a prayer. (The meeting started late, as a presentation on Gola was made to members of parliament in the morning.)

2. **Minutes of previous meeting.** The minutes of the previous meeting of the Planning Committee (September 2005) were read individually. The following points of discussion arose from the minutes:

Salary and staff issues. It was agreed that there are some inconsistencies in the salary structure, including the gap in salary between the two project managers. It was agreed that the Project Leader should make recommendations as soon as possible on adjustments to be made in salaries, including merit increases for some particularly deserving staff, including the CSSL manager. It was also suggested by RSPB that we should start soon to plan the staff needs and salaries for phase 2.

Meetings with Councils. The Director explained that he was intending to go around and meet with all the Councils, but the budget has not yet been approved. He hoped to start this in April. The Chief pointed out that there are inconsistencies between the Forestry Act and the Local Government Act. The Director said this is one of the issues on which he wants to educate people. It was agreed that GFCCP would coordinate with the Director to arrange meetings with the three Councils in the Gola area.

Taxa specialists and training. A question was asked whether the taxa specialists would train people while here; the answer is yes.

3. **Progress report.** The progress report since the previous meeting was presented by the Project Leader. The following issues of discussion arose (not necessarily in the order discussed):

Result 1.

The Director reported that someone had been to his office, wanting to exploit forest in a strip bordering the Gola forest. The Project Leader was to meet the Director to get more information.

Mention was made of the idea of a buffer zone, and how wide it should be. The opinion of the project team is that we should be very careful about trying to impose new restrictions on people's activities outside the reserve boundaries, as they feel like they are already giving up a lot.

Result 2.

There was discussion on the capacity limitations of forestry staff. It was agreed in principle that at some point, a selection can be made to maintain those staff who are performing better.

The issue was raised of forestry staff managing the future national park. The Project Leader suggested that we can be flexible, and imagine a park management team under the government that includes both government and contract staff.

Result 3.

On the issue of dissatisfaction among communities, the Chief commented that in some cases, people are dissatisfied with their chiefs, but that may not indicate a problem with the Gola programme.

Questions were asked about the importance of the livelihoods programme. The Project Leader explained that the project team feels that the livelihoods activities can form a useful complement to the cash benefits to the communities, in order for more people to feel some benefit from the programme. Are we spreading ourselves too thinly, given how vast the livelihood issue is? The answer is that we intend to do something low key that will build slowly, but eventually may have an impact.

The community guest house at Belebu was discussed, and it was agreed that the project should meet with the village and give them advice on how to manage it. It was pointed out that project staff should make use of the guest house and pay for it.

The proposal from the project to employ seven part-time demonstration farm workers was approved in principle, but the Project Leader is to produce a revised staff budget showing whether it is feasible. It was pointed out that we don't want to create a lot of positions that will suddenly have to stop in the next phase.

Result 4.

On the issue of enforcement of logging, it was suggested that it is especially important to have people who are vigilant in Nomo and Malema chiefdoms.

The Director explained that he had approval to build stores to keep confiscated timber, and that something similar could be done in the Gola area.

On the issue of boundary marking, the Director suggested that there should be more permanent markers, for example metal plates or iron bars.

On the reported case of the boundary team making an error in Koya chiefdom, the Chief reported that it turned out to be the correct line.

On the case of illegal logging in Malema, an investigation will be made before reporting to the Director.

Result 5.

The Director of CSSL talked about the chimpanzee education programme to establish a learning centre in the East, which will include information about Gola. The exact location is still under discussion.

4. Items for approval. The Project Leader submitted a list of items for discussion and approval of the Planning Committee.

4.1 Forest valuation study. The Committee was informed of RSPB's intention to carry out a separately funded study of forest valuation, with some cooperation from the project team. This was approved.

4.2 Interim agreement with communities. A proposed interim agreement with the communities, outlining the benefits provided in return for forest protection, was presented. A question was asked, is it realistic to ban mining in the forest? Answer, yes, it is not really a major activity in the forest. Chief Kanneh added that mining has been stopped around Tiwai Island. An amendment was agreed to Paragraph 4 of the agreement, to say that communities must at least report and collaborate in controlling illegal activities, in cases where they cannot control them alone. It was agreed that the proposed agreement is for the development phase only; it will later be replaced by a more detailed agreement. The Director CSSL asked who is aware of the proposed agreement. It was agreed that the proposal should be taken to a large meeting in each chiefdom before signing.

4.3 Demonstration farm workers. It was earlier agreed in principle that these people may be engaged, provided the budget will allow it.

4.4 Small grants to councils. It was agreed that this is something better to put off to the next phase, by which time we should have a closer relationship with the councils, and roles may have been clarified.

4.5 Salary increases for inflation, and some merit increases. This was agreed in principle. The Project Leader is to work out what can be done within the budget.

4.6 Roll leave allowances into salaries. Agreed.

4.7 Proposal for timber plantations. It was agreed this should also be put off to the next phase, but discussion can begin now.

5. Action plan. The proposed action plan for January to June 2006 was presented and briefly discussed.

Forestry quarters. The Chief said it would be unfortunate for any chiefdom to be left out of the construction of forestry quarters. It was explained that the intention is still to build in all the chiefdoms as soon as funds are available.

Budget situation. The Project Leader apologized that he is not in a position to say exactly how much has been spent in each budget line and what is remaining. By the next meeting, he should determine whether there are any amounts unspent that could be reallocated to other budget lines.

Livelihoods study. The Director CSSL mentioned that a proposal has been made for a livelihood study.

Mineral prospection in forest. Concerning the company doing mineral exploration in Malema, the project team will find out more and report to the Director, who will in turn write to the Director of Mines. The Director stated that nobody had sought his approval to do mineral exploration in the reserve.

6. Review of the week's planning discussions. The Chairman introduced the final two agenda items. Since most of the members had been present for the other meetings, not much discussion was needed. The Project Leader was asked to brief Chief Kanneh, and to print out copies of the documents resulting from the other meetings.

7. Next meeting. It was agreed that the next meeting should be in April or May.