**SCOTTISH FORESTRY EXECUTIVE TEAM**

**Minutes (Draft)**

**22 November 2022, Board Room, Bothwell House, Central Conservancy Office, Hamilton and Teams Meeting**

**SET Attendees:**

Dave Signorini (DS)

Zahid Deen (ZD)

Jonathan Taylor (JT)

Brendan Callaghan (BC)

Ross MacHardie (RM)

Alan Hampson (AH)

James Aldred (JA) – minutes

**In Attendance:**

Helen McKay (HM)

Nicola Steven (NS) – for item 5

Marliese Richmond (MR) and Lynne Wilson (LW) – for item 6

**Apologies:**

None

1. **Minutes and actions of previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

On actions arising and outstanding:

* AP6/May 22, Health and Safety Policy Statement: DS noted that it was to be confirmed whether this should be considered by SOG prior to SET consideration.
* AP2/Sep 22, Policy creation and development paper: AH undertook to bring this to the January meeting.
* AP4/Sep 22, Woodland creation on agricultural land: AH reported that this was being taken forward with RPID and ARE colleagues, and that any resulting revised guidance would be taken to SOG in the first instance.
* AP5/Sep 22, Forestry Strategy Progress Report: AH reported that this would be sent up to the Minister by the end of the week.
* AP3/Oct 22, Outstanding audit recommendations: noted that an action plan was under development and that this would be taken to the next Audit Committee meeting on 13th December.
* AP4/Oct22, External meeting room bookings: RM reported that the Finance team had streamlined the process and provided additional guidance. SET members noted various Scottish Forestry and Scottish Government buildings with meeting rooms available for internal use for larger-scale meetings, including the Northern Research Station meeting room in Silvan House and options in Victoria Quay.

1. **SF Target Operating Model**

ZD introduced the paper, noting that an initial version of the Target Operating Model (TOM) had previously been taken to the Strategic Advisory Group and the direction of travel agreed. Key questions included the prioritisation of resources and key ambitions for the proposed 2-3 year lifetime of the model.

In discussion, SET noted:

* The collective responsibility required to champion and co-ordinate delivery of the TOM.
* The tension between completeness and prioritisation, given the limited time and resources available for delivery of the identified projects, and the current challenges in delivering the ‘business as usual’ elements of the organisation.
* The visual presentation of TOM could be changed to help staff with understanding priorities
* The potential for flexibility across team boundaries and a more centralised model of administration across the organisation.
* That, as per the key assumptions noted in the report, there will not be radical change to the service delivery or architecture of FGS in the next few years, and Casebook will still be our case management system for FGS case types and regulatory activity.
* DS suggested extending the timeframe a way to realistically deliver the TOM. It was discussed setting this as the end of 2025.
* It was noted that many aspects of the TOM were already in motion because projects had started or there were things in it we needed to do.

To help address some of the issues raised, ZD agreed to follow up with SET members to get final feedback on ranking/prioritisation of TOM elements/related projects. The ranking will help identify which elements, for example, may be mandatory with fixed timescales, or would be more flexible.

**There was agreement on the architecture/casebook assumptions and it was agreed** to extend the timeframe for the TOM through to the end of 2025, to align with the end of the current Parliamentary term and the new agriculture support system.

* **Action:** ZD to present prioritisation of the identified projects with SET, review with internal and external stakeholders, and begin the preparation of internal communications.

1. **Progress on capacity building across the wider forestry sector**

HM spoke to the report, noting shortfalls in both 'forest floor' and management and policy roles across the private forestry sector, and an ongoing misunderstanding that 'agriculture' (including forestry) was in decline, when in reality forestry as a sector was growing faster than qualified candidates could be found. Aquaculture was noted as a similar sector, expanding rapidly but with little traditional training available.

Suggestions to encourage improved capacity in the sector included exploring the possibility of funding forestry skills through the Forestry Grant Scheme. Unfortunately funding for graduate apprenticeships was not available as this had been funded from EU funds.

**SET agreed** the recommendations, and noted that an update paper would be taken to the December Strategic Advisory Group.

1. **Standing item: Budget Update**

RM presented the current financial position, noting that SG Finance had queried the currently projected underspend. SET noted the projected slight overspend in salary budgets in line with the unfunded pay mandate, but that there was likely to be sufficient underspend in operational budgets to cover.

BC reported that given the current position expenditure on the Forestry Grant Scheme was not expected to increase beyond current projections.

* **Action:** RM/BC to liaise and agree position to be communicated

1. **Learning and Skills Development Strategy**

NS joined the meeting and presented the draft Strategy, noting the aim to set out Scottish Forestry’s ambition to become a learning organisation, and to put processes and systems in place to ensure that staff can perform as best they can and that the organisation has the skills and knowledge it needs for the future.

Regarding identifying learning and development needs, NS noted that the Corporate Plan and team plans should help to identify corporate needs, and that iTrent and managerial conversations should identify individual development needs. Learning and Development were working with FLS on sourcing reports from iTrent to collate and identify any disconnects between individual and team plan needs, and prioritise delivery accordingly.

On resourcing, NS noted that requirements would depend on the ask from Corporate and team plans, and undertook to come back once requirements were clearer. The SLA transition was a likely temporary pinch point and might require the redeployment or reprioritisation of resources.

**SET endorsed the Strategy and agreed** the approach of centralising a proportion of the Learning & Development budget to support its delivery, with the final proportion to be confirmed as part of standard budget setting.

1. **Business Continuity Plan**

MR and LW joined the meeting and presented the draft Plan, noting that its development had been informed by learning from the implementation of the previous Plan during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as by input from subject matter experts and the previous Digital Business Partner.

The draft Plan had been presented to the Audit Committee and been well received. Further development was planned to expand the scenarios covered to include cost of living impacts on staff, and potential blackouts or brownouts affecting offices and home working. On cyber-resilience, LW noted the proposal to undertake an SG-led workshop and subsequent internal scenario work.

On the sharing of personal contact details, options discussed included the use of a Hunt group system for personal mobile numbers, or the private sharing of personal numbers between SET members so that the on-call SET member could alert others.

HM noted the plan’s focus on fire risks to buildings and queried whether the potential for extensive forest fires should also be covered.

**SET agreed** the proposed testing approach and requested that paper copies of the final Plan be printed and circulated to relevant staff prior to the Christmas break.

* **Action:** MR/LW to review and confirm the primary and secondary priority lists with SET by correspondence; to review the position on the sharing of personal numbers; and to circulate the final Plan in hard copy prior to the Christmas break.
* **Action:** JT/ZD to ensure clarity of responsibilities between Scottish Forestry and Forestry & Land Scotland under the new Service Level Agreement.

1. **AOB**

* **Action:** DS/RM/ZD to discuss roles and responsibilities for estates planning offline.