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| SF_col_landscape_logo | Senior Executive Team Minutes |

**9 April 2024**

**Saughton House, E1 Meeting Room and Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

Paul Lowe, Chief Executive (PL) – Chair

Brendan Callaghan, Director of Operational Delivery (BC) – for item 4 onward

Zahid Deen, Director of Transformation and Corporate Services (ZD)

Alan Hampson, Director of Policy and Practice (AH)

James Aldred, Corporate Support Manager (JA) – minutes

**In Attendance:**

Helen McKay, Chief Forester (HM)

Gary Henderson, Senior Finance Manager (GH)

James Nott, Head of Tree Health (JN), for item 5

Steve Williams (SW) and Jax Eden-James (JEJ), for item 6

**Apologies:**

Ross Machardie, Head of Finance & Business Support (RM)

Jonathan Taylor, Head of SF Executive Office (JT)

1. **Welcome and declarations of interest**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. No new declarations of interest were made.

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

AH noted an amendment to item 4 to read:

On costs, SET noted the potential release of £200,000 from the UK Forestry Strategy Implementation Fund, which could balance additional pressures in the tree health budget, and the potential [etc.]

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as amended.

On actions arising from previous meetings:

* Career Progression for Woodland Officers: noted as closed
* Timber production forecast: noted that this was dependent on pending recruitment and priorities within the relevant Policy team. Noted that this would be discussed at a future Resourcing Committee meeting.
* Ministerial note advising of the creation of the WCC Senior Managers’ Board: noted as still outstanding.
* Audit and Assurance Committee notification of revised approaches to woodland creation: Complete and closed.
* Women in Leadership: assurance from SF People team around guidance and training to recruitment managers regarding discrimination and gender equality – noted as open.
* Women in Leadership: input from People team around awareness raising and culture change – noted as closed.
* CivTech funding: to be covered via a future demonstration meeting.
* People Survey action plan: noted that this was on the agenda for the next SET meeting.

1. **Standing item: woodland creation update**

PL reported approvals of over 8,700 hectares of woodland creation in 2024/25, of which 50% was native woodland. As allocated, the woodland creation budget was sufficient to fund an additional 1,000 – 2,000 hectares, with outstanding applications for 5,000 hectares.

1. **Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan: progress report (AH)**

AH introduced the report, which presented the third progress report on delivering Scotland’s Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan 2022-25. The Plan contained key actions to support the delivery of the Forestry Strategy’s six priorities, and a set of high-level indicators to track progress against the Strategy’s 10-year objectives

AH noted that the next official report to the Scottish Parliament on progress against the Strategy was due by the end of 2025. The current Implementation Plan was due to expire in mid-2025, and a paper would be brought to a future meeting on options given the expected next Scottish Parliament election was due in 2026.

SET received and noted the report, subject to the inclusion of sources for the quoted figures and statistics.

1. **Tree Health Update (SET sponsor: AH, presenter: JN)**

JN presented the report, which noted last autumn’s interception of Ips typographus and a resulting heightened risk of a population becoming established in Scotland. The report proposed the extension of the existing survey programme to ensure early detection and rapid response to further incursions; action to ensure any over-wintering beetles from last year’s interception did not create a breeding population; and recognition of the potential costs and increased workload that would result should a breeding population become established.

Increased survey costs were estimated at £200,000 per year going forward, and should a breeding population become established, the estimated cost of managing an outbreak was in the order of £500,000 in the first year. Outbreak preparation was likely to involve support from the Business Support team, and proposed actions would be taken to the Senior Operations Group for review.

If an outbreak were to occur, the aim would be to ensure any actions to be taken on the demarcated area would minimise timber transport implications, for example by allowing timber to be moved through an outbreak area as long as it were taken to a suitably licensed plant and processed within sufficient time to prevent any breeding. Forest Research’s input was being sought on this proposal.

GH noted the correction to the minutes and undertook to review whether the £200k released from Forestry Strategy implementation budgets could be used to support the recommended actions.

In response to queries as to whether the forestry industry should be invited to contribute to the protection of a key crop, JN noted that previous attempts to encourage industry contributions to tree health efforts had been largely unsuccessful due to the ‘free rider’ problem, with contributors feeling they were subsidising non-contributing competitors.

SET discussed the proposed approach to stakeholder engagement and the possibility of a standardised approach to high-risk events such as pest outbreaks, major fire, catastrophic windthrow, etc.

**SET approved** the actions laid out in the report.

**Actions:**

* **JN to produce update for Ministers, including risk of outbreak, potential costs of management and inability of SF to meet within existing budgets.**
* **JN to liaise with Corporate Governance and Planning Manager to ensure inclusion of the noted risks in SF’s corporate risk register and escalation to the Directorate**
* **GH to capture risk around budget pressures from potential outbreak**

1. **Proposal for event venue and accommodation for all-staff event (SET sponsor: JT, presenters: SW, JEJ)**

SW and JEJ presented the report, which noted SET’s previous approval of proposals for an all-staff event to be held in Autumn 2024, and sought approval from SET to book the proposed venue of The John McIntyre Conference Centre, Pollock Estate, Edinburgh, and to hold accommodation for approx. 80 staff at the Pollock Estate.

**SET approved the proposals laid out in the report**, noting that the proposed venue presented a low-cost option and that staff views were being sought on possible speakers and industry involvement. SET requested that the organising committee consider whether the opportunity could be taken to provide engagement opportunities for the wider forestry sector.

* **Action: JT and team to prepare contingency communication lines to defend against possible charges of wastefulness, etc.**

1. **AOB**

SET forward planning for 2024/25

Possible future agenda items were noted as:

* Regulatory stocktake (BC, July)
* Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan options (AH, July)
* Budget monitoring (GH, from August onward)
* Priorities for the Chief Forester (HM, September)
* Performance information, communications and project updates (various, as appropriate)
* Corporate Plan and Strategy (JT, as appropriate)

Papers previously circulated by correspondence: Key Performance Indicator Strategy and Policy

* **Action: GH/JA to explore integration of KPI reporting into Annual Report and Accounts**

1. **Date of Next Meeting**

Friday 7th June 2024, 10am, Saughton House E1 Spur Large meeting room & Microsoft Teams.

**Meeting Action List**

| **Ref** | **Meeting** | **Action** | **Lead / Staff Member** | **Target Date** | **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 24/1 | Jan 24 | CivTech funding:   * KU to clarify VAT position with regard to costs. * KU to bring back proposals to SET as appropriate. * GH/BC to follow up regarding ongoing funding to the Forest Research project | * ZD/KU * ZD/KU * GH/BC | April meeting | Closed |
| 24/2 | Jan 24 | People Survey: MD to pick up proposed action plan with PL on his return | ZD/MD | Next SET meeting | Open - |
| 24/3 | Apr 24 | Tree health:   * JN to produce tree health update for Ministers, including risk of outbreak, potential costs of management and inability of SF to meet within existing budgets. * JN to liaise with Corporate Governance and Planning Manager to ensure inclusion of the noted risks in SF’s corporate risk register and escalation to the Directorate * GH to capture risk around budget pressures from potential outbreak | * AH/JN * AH/JN * GH | Next SET meeting | Open |
| 24/4 | Apr 24 | All-staff event: JT and team to prepare contingency communication lines to defend against possible charges of wastefulness, etc. | JT | ASAP | Open |
| 24/5 | Apr 24 | Key Performance Indicators: GH/JA to explore integration of KPI reporting into Annual Report and Accounts | GH/JA | ASAP | Open |