



**Thursday, 13 February 2025**  
**Saughton House and Microsoft Teams**

## **Draft for approval**

### **Present:**

Paul Lowe (PL), Chief Executive (Chair)  
Brendan Callaghan (BC), Director of Operational Delivery  
Adam Dearnley (AD), Director of Finance  
Eleanor Ryan (ER), Non Executive Advisor  
Richard Morris (RM), Non Executive Advisor  
Helen McKay (HM), Chief Forester for Scotland

### **In Attendance:**

Jason Hubert (JH), Head of Forest Sector Development  
Julia Garritt (JG), Policy and Practice Co-Ordinator  
Marelle Dalziel (MD), Senior HR Business Partner  
Kevin MacMillan (KM), Head of Programme Management Office  
Órla O'Sullivan (OOS), Corporate Support Manager (minutes)

### **Apologies:**

Phil Taylor (PT), Non Executive Advisor  
Alan Hampson (AH), Director of Policy and Practice  
Jonathan Taylor (JT), Head of Corporate Affairs and Communications

## **1. Welcome and declarations of interest**

**1.1** PL welcomed Órla O'Sullivan, new Corporate Support Manager, to the meeting and introductions were made.

**1.2** There were no declarations of interest.

**1.3** Minutes and actions of previous meeting: The draft minutes to 5.11.2024 were accepted.



## 1.4 Updates on existing Action Points were noted by the group:

Ref	Meeting	Action	Lead / Staff Member	Target Date	Status Update
AP6/24	November 2024	Action: Seek to reflect Public Sector Reform and Place Based Approaches where appropriate in the SF Corporate and Annual Business Plans.	JT	Early 2025	Completed
AP7/24	November 2024	Action: AN/BF to take these areas of feedback and pull these points out as part of the conversations at National Stakeholder Meeting.	AN/BF	November 2024	Completed

## 1.5 CEO Update

- **All Staff event:** The All Staff event is being scheduled for June 2025 in Edinburgh.
- **Woodland Creation:** A large impact from the budget reduction is being reflected by the sector in schemes coming forward for approval and being planted. Expected final out turn will be known in June and is likely to be between 8-9K hectares.

## 2. Reflection post Storm Eowyn and the management of windblow

JH provided a presentation on the reflections post storm Eowyn and the Scottish Wind Blow Contingency Plan.

There was an initial discussion on the definition of a major windblow exceeding speeds of 90 mph that causes damage to trees. Reflections on the aftermath of storm Arwen (2021) and lessons learnt from this event were Scottish Forestry (SF), Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), and the Confederation of Forest Industries (Confor) collaborated to assess the damage and coordinate recovery efforts, including timber salvage and replanting. Storm Arwen was a more severe storm than storm Eowyn and caused more damage. A felling permission is needed for clearing windthrown trees, unless the situation meets exemption criteria. SF don't intervene directly in the marketing of windblown timber.

The Scottish Windblow Contingency Plan details the strategy for dealing with major windblow events in Scottish forests. SF does not deal with garden, roads and individual trees.

### The plan covers:

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- Information about the forest planning measures that can increase the resilience of forests to storm events
- steps that should be taken to prepare for all windblow events
- processes that are triggered when winds  $\geq 90$  mph are forecast, responses that will occur after a potentially major windblow event – data collection, support to sector and communications.

Steps of dealing with a storm, before and after it occurs were presented from the initial Red warning alert of notification to the conservancies continuity team to the comms alert to the sector through to Day 1, the information gathering phase and initial assessment to Day 5, meeting with Senior Executive Team (SET), FLS and Confor to collate and review evidence, and assess position re thresholds and through to Day 30, if evidence still confirms a major or sub major result and actions taken accordingly.

Yearly statistics show that Red storms have decreased in year 2023/2024 compared to previous years beginning in year 2015/2016 but named storms have increased in the past 5 years.

### **3. Future of Scotland's Forestry Strategy and Implementation Plan, and forestry summit.**

JG and JH presented paper 01/25 on Scotland's Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan 2022-2025: update and Forestry Strategy Summit.

In October 2024, Cabinet Secretary Ms Gougeon approved the Executive Board recommendation to extend the period of the current Implementation Plan (IP) by one year, to 31 March 2026. This is to allow resources to stay focused on delivering more impactful actions rather than be diverted to the process of developing a new IP.

Of the 18 SF significant actions in the plan, nine have been delivered and the remaining nine are on track for delivery by 31 March 2026.

JG will look at any financial restrictions as brought to the group's attention by HM.

Under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018, Scottish Ministers are required to publish a Strategy progress report every three years, and to lay a copy of this report before the Scottish Parliament. The next report is due by December 2025.

ER asked that clarity be provided for ministers on what has been delivered regarding actions.

Ms Gougeon has also approved the recommendation to host a Forestry Strategy Summit in Spring 2025 to present progress and discuss future priority issues that SG and partners should consider for the final phase of the Strategy, which must be

reviewed in 2028. The event also provides an opportunity to articulate the multi-purpose nature of forestry in Scotland.

*Action: To update the SAG on the event post the Forestry Strategy Summit.*

## 4. Results of the 2024 People Survey and next steps

MD presented paper 02/25 on the results of the People Survey that were collected from 10 September 2024 to 08 October 2024 with 81% staff participation (197 respondents).

The responses have remained fairly consistent with notable improvements in Learning and Development and Pay and Reward although further development and engagement with cost centres and managers will occur to increase engagement with the performance and development process. Pay and Reward is more difficult due to the pay negotiation process and constraints in relation to the benefits the Agency can offer.

Positive results were noted in SF being a great place to work, with staff showing interest in their work and on staff choice on how they do their work. Positive results were also noted regarding colleagues and managers.

Marliese Richmond, Corporate Planning and Governance Manager is assessing if the Bullying and Harassment results are internal or external.

RM raised the potential issue of silo working and support for conservancies that may be impacted by this.

## 5. Supporting Women into Leadership

MD presented paper 03/25 on Women into Leadership.

In November 2023, PL and ER hosted a Women in Leadership event and a paper was presented to the Executive Board providing feedback from the event.

Scottish Government have a Women's Development Network but SF want to develop their own inhouse network. Volunteers came together to discuss next steps to establish a Terms of Reference. The newly appointed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Manager Alison Forbes has met to discuss a framework and possible collaboration with FLS.

In order to be effective, it is proposed that the Network be led by a Chair and Committee, elected by women across the agency or agencies.

Gender Decoder is being used to produce job details that are gender neutral. The Agency continues to encourage women to apply for senior positions, for example, via the new Woodland Officer to Technical Officer promotion boards

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Engagement by HR has occurred with the charity dedicated to increasing diversity of thought on boards, Changing the Chemistry and engagement with Equate Scotland which promotes gender equality throughout the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) sectors.

## 6. AOCB and Close

There was no AOCB. Date of next meeting is 22.07.25.



## Summary of Actions from the meeting

*Actions points run sequentially from the start of the Calander year for example the first action point for a meeting taking place in January 2024 would read AP1/Jan24. Subsequent action points will run sequentially from that point and then the month of the meeting should always be referenced.*

Ref	Meeting	Action	Lead / Staff Member	Target Date	Status
AP1/25	February 2025	Action: Update on the Corporate Plan and Strategy.	JT	March/April	Complete
AP2/25	February 2025	Action: Update on the Staff Event	Rachel Martin	April/May	Complete
AP3/25	February 2025	Action: Provide a summary and actions post the Forestry Strategy Summit.	JG	June/July 2025	In hand
AP4/25	February 2025	Action: Update on SLA	MD/AD	July 2025	In hand, Adam to provide an update.