**SCOTTISH FORESTRY EXECUTIVE TEAM**

**Minutes (Draft)**

**Tuesday 13th April 2021**

**SET Attendees: In Attendance:**

Dave Signorini (Chair) Rosetta Forbes (RF)

Brendan Callaghan (BC)Marliese Richmond (Minutes)

Alan Hampson (JH) Helen Mackay

John Dougan (JD) Amy Noble

Ross MacHardie (RM) Bob Frost

**Apologies:**

Jonathan Taylor (JT)

Marelle Dalziel (MD)

**Summary of action points**:

| **Ref:** | **Action** | **SET Lead/Staff Member** | **Target Date** | **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| AP 65/August | MD will bring mentoring proposal to SET once this has been consulted on with key contacts and developed further. | MD | Aug 2021 | Ongoing |
| AP2/Jan | MR to continue exploring outsourcing data collection work for sustainability reporting | MR | May 2021 | Ongoing |
| AP4/Jan | MR and Rob Langton to continue working with relevant staff members on publication of Corporate KPIs | MR/Rob Langton | Aug 2021 | Ongoing |
| AP12/April | DS and MD to update and circulate the EDI Plan. | DS/MD | May 2021 | Ongoing |
| AP13/April | JD to work with MD/RF to map out decision tree/flow chart on recruitment procedures. Present options in relation to TRAs. | JD/MD/RF | May 2021 | Ongoing |
| AP14/April | DS to find out how FLS/SF can be represented on or tap into the SG Diversity Networks. | DS | May 2021 | Ongoing |
| AP15/April | AH/Bob Frost to draft submission on National Stakeholder Group for the Cab Sec shortly after election. | AH/Bob Frost | June 2021 | Ongoing |

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

DS welcomed everyone to the meeting. The February minutes were agreed.

The matters arising not on the agenda were discussed.

* AP65/August – Development of mentoring proposal is continuing.
* AP1/January - BC/RM have discussed monitoring and controls for grants and regulatory activities. Action completed and to be taken off.
* AP2/January – MR discussed possibility of outsourcing data collection work for sustainability reporting with contact at Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. They recommended a consultancy but stated that it is a time consuming process. MR to look at options further.
* AP4/January - MR and Rob Langton have been working with relevant staff members to gather the data and information for the Corporate KPIs available for 20/21, and are currently on course to meet publication date of August 21.
* AP5/January and AP6/Feb – There has been good attendance at Engaging the Bystander training, with sessions extended to accommodate all staff members. JD/Amy Noble to confirm final attendance. Actions completed and to be taken off.
* AP8/Feb – BC/RM has provided update to finance business partner on potential grant claims underspend, and has plans to update Cab Sec following election. Discussions to continue offline. Action completed and to be taken off.
* AP9/Feb – Demonstration of iTrent organised for 19th April with Alison Wilson and Mairiertta Walker by FLS staff. Action completed and to be taken off.

**2. Standing Item – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Amy Noble (AN) and Helen McKay (HMcK) attended this part of the meeting.

**2.1 EDI Action Plan Review.** The EDI Action Plan was reviewed. It was suggested that the EDI Action Plan be numbered.

* The first 4 actions are covered by the Equalities and Diversity Mainstreaming Report.
* The review of the recruitment process to ensure it supports Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is outstanding and will be part of the launch of the new recruitment platform in June/July. As part of this, all documentation, guidance and procedures will be reviewed.
* It was felt that the action ‘review employment practice to ensure policies and procedures attract and retain a diverse workforce’ is to open ended. This should be made more specific and more time bound. Progress is being made in this area through the People Policy Groups.
* The Engaging the Bystanders sessions have highlighted to managers that there are a lot of issues to ensure that staff feel enabled to raise concerns and address concerns regarding inappropriate behaviours. It has also flagged the need to address unconscious bias (in addition to the current Civil Service Learning module). At the next meeting, the SET will consider what the next steps should be, and linking this to work on values/behaviours.
* The Comms Team have yet to work on diversity days.
* HMcK informed the group that SF/FLS should consider working with the Industries Leadership Group to explore options to establish a process to encourage young people into the Forestry Sector, as they are undertaking marketing and promotion activities for the sector.
* The mentoring scheme for women is still to be progressed.

**2.2 Scottish Forestry Equality Mainstreaming Report.** AN talked through the draft Scottish Forestry Equality Mainstreaming Report – 2019-2021, which is due to be published externally by 30th April. Some organisations, such as Visit Scotland and Cairngorms National Park, have chosen not to publish due to the impact of covid and lockdown. SEPA is not publishing their report because of a cyber attack on their organisation

The following points were clarified by AN.

* Infographics are being commissioned to encourage more people to read and digest data.
* Data is required on all 9 protected characteristics. Where this is less than 5 people, this is redacted. As SF is a small organisation and there are low members of staff which this covers, there is a lot of redaction. AN has actual numbers and trends which will be useful internally.
* It is proposed that as consultation activities cannot be undertaken fully at present, that SF adopt the SG ones which have already been consulted on.

The following points were discussed.

* AN needs volunteers to sense check the covid section.
* Our employment of under 25s are under 1% and less than 7% 25-29. It was felt that this may be because the nature of the roles available do no lend themselves to younger people as they tend to be graduate roles. Are we able to attract younger people in the first place – or is there a ‘leaky pipeline’?
* Gender Pay Gap - on average a woman is being paid 23% less than a woman per hour. Only 10 out of 48 posts of PB3 and above in senior grades are women. It was noted that SF is at a good starting point with 50-50 gender split across the organisation.Men sitting at the top of the payband is part of the issue, but the central reason is that women are doing lower paid roles (primarily admin roles). Not only is this this pay gap a risk to SF’s reputation, it means there is a lack of diversity of thought at a decision making level. There needs to be clear actions on our gender pay gap to which SF is held to account.
* There needs to be work undertaken in relation to workforce planning. SF has a huge pool of talent in organisation and need to develop that. There needs to be an effective strategy for developing people at middle level and bringing them forward. SF needs to retain people and develop their own talent. We need to identify where false ceilings/glass walls sit and diversify the types of roles for individuals to progress into. We need to consider what we request in relation to qualifications in our essential criteria – many staff members have no chance to progress due to the narrowness of the criteria and demand for specific qualitifications.
* SF needs to plan ahead to take into account the current age structure for the organisation. Many people are going to be retiring in the next few years, many of whom are experts in their particular area.
* The recruitment data available to SF needs to be scrutinised, in particular, looking at people coming through to interview. Is there some bias in our recruitment process, and the design of these roles?
* Our organisation needs to look at our approach to flexible working, especially now that the lockdown has proven that we can work anywhere nationally, and at different hours. It was noted that working patterns tend to be full time and permanent at senior level. There need to be role models at this level.

*It was agreed thatDS/MD will update and revise the EDI Plan following the outcome of these discussions and the issues raised by the Equality Mainstreaming Report.*

**2.3 EDI Issues raised through Staff Feedback.** DS presented a paper to prompt discussion on potential actions we could take to improve awareness, training and practice around recruitment, promotion, supporting disabled staff and strengthening how we live up to our Values.

The first part of the discussion focused on whether we are clear and consistent about the requirements for fair and open competition, for all posts within Scottish Forestry.

* It was a clarified that a Temporary Responsibility Allowance can be put into place to enable an individual to cover a vacant post at a more senior level for up to 3 months. These can be signed off at a Cost Centre Manager level. If it is set to be any longer than this, it should be advertised as competitive fixed term post. However, the reality is that parameters can shift over time, and the staff member covering the vacancy can be in post for a considerable period of time. This leads to a ‘back door’ perception of (un)fairness. The person covering the post has the advantage of getting the experience of being in post. It can be seen as a ‘fait accompli’ where this kind of practice is allowed. The advantage of TRAs is that it allows flexibility, and enables a Line Manager to plug a short term gap.
* It was felt that as staff members very seldom need to recruit, they need to be supported through the process. As they are not clear on the process, there is a risk that the system lead to failing the individuals involved. Staff members need the right knowledge and capacity to undertake recruitment correctly and fairly.

*It was agreed that the SET needs to consider whether to continue with or abolish TRAs. It was agreed that JD to work with MD/RF to map out decision tree/flow chart and the procedures to be undertaken when recruiting, and how to engage with our HR Business Partners.*

The second part of the discussion focused on whether we are providing sufficient support not just to disabled staff, but to their teams and line managers. 7% of staff have disclosed they have a disability, which is higher than across the public sector – but the expectation would be that it should be closer to 1 in 5. It is thought that people may not consider themselves disabled or that staff do not disclose health/disability issues as they do not know how it will ‘land’ and are fearful of what the response would be to the adjustments they may require. AN highlighted that SF could do more to put someone forward as a preferred candidate if they have a disability. There are SG Diversity Networks in place, but because of FLS/SF’s T&Cs, AN cannot join these.

*DS to follow up and find out how FLS/SF can be represented on or tap into the SG Diversity Networks.*

**3. Standing Item – Budget and Staffing Information**

RM provided a verbal update on the budget.

* Grants budget – underspend of £9.4M based on current figures from casebook (pending clarification with BC’s team). Could be as high as £20M.
* Salaries coming in on budget at £8.4M.
* Admin budget – agency staff is over budget as staff kept on longer than anticipated at £100K, but overall budget is underspent by £600K.
* The non-grants underspend overall is forecast to be £750-800K.

A summary of the comments on staffing submitted by the SET by email on the vacancy list was circulated (SF14-21).

**4. Revised Business/Team Planning Process**

The new format of the National Team/Conservancy Team Plan templates was presented and agreed. It was agreed that these would be presented at the Management Team Meeting on 20.4.21.

*The SET supported the new format of the National Team/Conservancy Team Plan templates.*

**5. Update on Information Governance and Records Management**

Due to time constraints, DS will issue the paper providing an update on Information Governance and Records Management by correspondence.

**6. National Stakeholder Group**

Bob Frost (BF) attend this part of the meeting. AH and BF presented the paper on establishing a national stakeholder group to advise Scottish Forestry (SF) on strategic policy issues influencing the implementation of the forestry strategy objectives and delivery of SG outcomes. It would provide a:

* Forum for regular and structured stakeholder engagement on strategic policy issues.
* Balanced group with representatives from a range of interests (complementing our existing topic groups); to enable broader discussions on delivering sustainable forest management and its social, economic and environmental aspects.
* Grouping to advise on the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the forestry strategy and broaden support for its delivery.
* Umbrella group for the existing SF groups enabling strategic cross-cutting issues to be escalated and considered.

There is political commitment to this type of group.

The following points were discussed.

* Membership should be flexible and adapted as necessary. It was suggested that rather than members representing particular stakeholders, it should be organised by thematic areas (based on Scotland’s Forestry Strategy). This will allow strategic discussion on different issues. Members will be expected to contributed their knowledge and expertise, rather than representing their organisation. It was acknowledged that this will be more difficult to organise, time consuming and risks missing people.
* There will be questions from Conservators on the future of regional stakeholder groups, and their relationship with any national group. It was agreed that regional forums will need to be reviewed and modernised, particularly taking a wider view, and looking at cross cutting land use issues. Regional Land Use Partnerships should be explicitly referenced in the paper. Regional stakeholder engagement will be incorporated into Team Plans.
* The chairing was discussed. If it is an advisory group for SF, this should be chaired by DS. If it is advising Scottish Ministers, it should be chaired by the Directorate.
* The term ‘office holder’ should not be used as it is not a paid post. Look at SG examples regarding expenses.

*The SET agreed to support the paper. A draft submission taking into account the feedback provided will be prepared for the Cab Sec shortly after the election by AH/BF.*

**7. Resourcing People and Communities Options Paper 2**

AH presented 3 options in terms of resourcing people and communities.

* Option 1 - Increase resource to grow influence, broaden expertise, reset priorities, and manage change.
* Option 2 - Increase resource to reset priorities and manage change.
* Option 3 - Increase resource to broaden expertise.

These options were discussed by the SET in detail.

*The SET agreed Option 3 was the best approach. They requested AH to review his Team structure, in particular, potential PB2 capacity to manage the People and Communities Team. The proposed PB3 post should be added to the vacancy list, and form part of the overall business planning process.*

**8. Statutory Plant Health Notices - Options in considering capacity of Conservancies and the sector to respond.**

Jim Dewar (JD) joined the meeting for this agenda item. The paper on Statutory Plant Health Notices - Options in considering capacity of Conservancies and the sector to respond was considered. The key issue is how we can reduce the number of SPHNs the Conservancies have to issue each year and manage the rate of spread at a landscape scale. 4 options were presented:

1. The use of individual SPHN’s for each individual occurrence of infection as each is identified, issued by WO’s
2. Part 4 of the Felling (Scotland) Regulations 2019 permits Scottish Ministers to instruct tree felling under certain conditions outlined in section 34(2) of The Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 (1), issued by WO’s
3. The use of an individual SPHN to cover more than one occurrence of infection served on a single landscape scale woodland (or woodlands) issued by WO’s
4. The use of an individual SPHN to cover more than one occurrence of infection where these are in reasonable close proximity and with similar characteristics, issued by WO’s.

# Option 4 was presented as the preferred option for different reasons, as it:

* provides the most flexibility,
* gives Conservancies and land owners and agents certainty as when they can expect to receive notifications of SPHNs hence aiding work planning,
* provides the processing sector with more certainty on timing for large volumes of redwood reaching the market,
* gives Conservancies more opportunity and time to negotiate with landowners on scale and timing and importantly,
* does not require any legislative change and keeps us ‘in line’ with the regulatory approach in England and Wales.
* maintains the overarching aim of reducing risk and legal requirement of controlling the spread.

The following points were discussed.

* It was agreed that issuing fewer SPHNs is the best option.
* Option 4 makes it a more shared problem.
* Matters are urgent, so a limited number of options were considered and presented – however, other options will be investigated over a longer timescale. It was flagged up that, realistically, the risk reduction zone will spread across Scotland. The voluntary removal of trees will be required, and this should feed into Long Term Forest Plans.
* Communications on this issue will need to be considered.

*The SET agreed to support option 4.*

**9. AOB**

* The SET gave formal approval to recruit on a temporary basis to the Head of Operational Delivery post.
* AH will circulate a paper by Sally York regarding schools and volunteering by correspondence.