**SCOTTISH FORESTRY EXECUTIVE TEAM**

**Minutes (Draft)**

**Friday 25th Feb 2022**

**SET Attendees: In Attendance:**

Dave Signorini (DS) Marelle Dalziel (MD)

Zahid Deen (ZD) Helen Mackay (HM)

Jonathan Taylor (JT Marliese Richmond (MR)

Rosetta Forbes (RF)

Doug Howieson (DH)

**Apologies:**

Ross MacHardie (RMacH)

Alan Hampson (AH)

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

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

The following updates were received on action points.

* AP39/Nov 21: FLS progress towards planting target – DH confirmed that FLS has indicated that there have been between 500-600ha planted. Action closed.
* AP3/Jan 22: Contingency money projects – SET members had been asked for projects/pieces of work which could be completed using contingency monies by end of financial year. Some monies are being used to purchase office and IT equipment which will support hybrid work in the future. This led to a discussion on the need to take an agile ‘learn by doing’ approach, testing what will be required to ensure that any equipment purchased will be future proofed (eg movable desks and fish eye cameras for meeting rooms). Taking this approach will be fed back to Resilience Group by JT. Action closed.
* AP4/Jan 22: Vacancy prioritisation – This piece of work has nearly been completed, final details to be fed back to RF and MD. Action closed.
* AP7/Jan 22: Conservancy Operating Model consultation update – DH. DH updated the SET that this has progressed as planned, with positive feedback from Trade Unions. Action closed.

There was a brief discussion on reflections on recent All Staff Event which was held on 22.2.22. The following points were made:

* The progress SF has made in engaging with such large numbers of staff remotely was acknowledged, and the Communications Team were credited with producing such a professional session. The contribution of Rosie Ballantyne who managed the Q&A session was also recognised.
* Presentations were short and snappy with focus on key messages. Good balance of 50% time on presentations, 50% on staff questions, which was put in place following staff feedback on previous session.
* Polls, QR codes and visuals were felt to be useful. All staff got to see the questions, and many staff engaged/responded. It was felt that the remote, anonymous format may encourage a broader range of staff to come forward. There is power in these snap polls and are a quick way to get feedback on issues such as office/home working (although it was recognised they only represent a moment in time).
* The outward facing element of the second part of the session was something that some staff members did not seem to relate to (in contradiction to the results of the People Survey) and is concerning.
* Engagement was at 160 staff members at start, down to under 100 for the last 15 mins. This would indicate shorter sessions should be done more frequently on a rolling basis.
* Need to collate feedback from those who attended – Comms to undertake an evaluation of what staff get out of it and their suggestions for the future.

*Action: – MR to feedback these discussion points to Rachel Martin.*

**2. Business Plan 22/23 and Corporate Plan 23-26 & approach to Framework Review – Marliese Richmond and Jonathan Taylor**

This suite of corporate documents – the Framework Document, Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan - are all due for updates this year. This provides an opportunity to review them collectively and understand how they relate to one another.

JT and MR laid out the proposed high level approach and timelines.

The **Business Plan** is a one year plan which translates the high level priorities and actions into activities each year from the Corporate Plan. It is shaped by our Team Plans - but also directs some of the work undertaken by our Teams/Conservancies. It filters down to individual Forward Job Plans. It is proposed that the content and format is similar, but priorities are detailed elsewhere (Team/Conservancy Plans). Some revisions should be made, such as reflecting key issues such as Health, Safety and Wellbeing, incorporating Learning and Development a priority and addressing political risks around woodland creation. The current set of Key Performance Indicators should be maintained. The same Team/Conservancy Plan template would be used. The timetable would commence with the distribution of the template w/c May and publication 4th July.

The **Corporate Plan** sets out Scottish Forestry’s purpose and strategic objectives alongside high level priorities and actions which will shape our activities over the next 3 years. It is proposed that the approach for the next Corporate Plan 2023-2026 will be built around comprehensive staff engagement, with involvement in activities such as the evaluation of the first corporate plan, the refresh of the strategic objectives, securing Subject Matter Expertise. There will be an assessment of the progress made between 2020-23. The strategic objectives will be revised – for example, to cover wellbeing. The narrative will reflect SG’s changing priorities and the views of the new set of Ministers (such as forestry’s role in climate emergency, community benefits/consultation, NetZero). Our approach towards our future working will be laid out, and how this links to the Target Operating Model. Our Key Performance Indicators will be reviewed – to include data on emissions, for example. The draft timetable was laid out, with a review of our current Corporate Plan starting Sept 2022, leading to publication in June 2023.

Our **Framework Document** follows the model framework document but is tailored to SF. It forms a key part of accountability and governance framework and defines key roles and responsibilities which underpin our relationship with SG. Much of the review will be an update on our purpose, values, and Strategic Objectives and our Corporate/Business Planning approach; our agency functions and statutory duties; and referencing our TOM and future working. More detailed information on our decision making processes and information governance will be included. Our approach to Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion approach needs to be updated, as well as our community/stakeholder engagement. Additional information will also be included: reference to the FLS SLA; our corporate responsibilities and statutory duties; and a section Learning and Development, as well as Health Safety and Wellbeing. Central to the process will be Non Execs engagement on their views as to how SF is operating, and including the recommendations from Auditors.

The following points were discussed and feedback provided:

* **Staff engagement:** It was agreed that engagement with staff is critical. It should start off by enabling staff to understand the resources we have available, what we need to do, and how they can contribute. This should start with a presentation to the Leadership Meeting, with an integrated timetable for all 3 documents, and a visual diagram showing how they all link. This diagram should also show the links with other strategies and plans. There are many documents being referred to regularly - Scotland’s Forestry Strategy, Target Operating Model, the SG Performance Framework, the Workforce Plan, and the People Survey – and this may be leading to confusion amongst staff.
* **Guidance for Conservancy/Team Plans:** It was agreed that while the Conservancy/Team Plan template does not need to change, the guidance will be essential for managing expectations. The messaging must convey that while some of last year was around a bidding process, 22-23 will be a period of stability and will focus on delivery. We need to hear from conservancies/teams what they plan to do with their current resources and staff to make progress towards our strategic objectives.
* **Progress of Business Plan 21-22:** The progress made on the last year will be captured for the Annual Report and Accounts, with narrative inputs sought from staff members on the priorities laid out.
* **Content of Framework Document:** The Framework Document should include information on Risk and Business Continuity.
* **Ministerial Approval:** For each document, time for Ministerial approval will need to be incorporated.
* **Development of Corporate Plan:** It was suggested that external consultant input could be sought to provide an objective evaluation of progress made 2020-2023. They could also assist in refreshing the strategic objectives. There would be the opportunity to align engagement activities on the new Target Operating Model and the development of the next Corporate Plan.

*Action: The SET agreed with the overall approach and timetable proposed for the review of the Framework Document, pulling together the Business Plan 22-23 and the Corporate Plan 23-26. MR to present the an integrated timetable for the plans for these 3 documents at the next Leadership Meeting, alongside visuals, explaining the relationship between these 3 documents, and other plans/strategies.*

**3. People Survey Action Plan update – Marelle Dalziel/Zahid Deen**

(Item 3 was switched with item 4 on agenda).

MD presented a paper on the development of a People Response Action Plan. This would tackle the 4 following key areas:

* Learning and Development
* Leadership and Managing Change
* Workload and Wellbeing
* Discrimination, bullying and harassment.

The paper proposed the creation of agree to create short life working groups, sitting alongside existing activity undertaken by the Improvement Programme; and a SET Lead on this area of activity. They were asked to agree the approach; additional resourcing; updates to SET and key messages for staff.

The SET agreed that the 4 areas of action highlighted are the right ones. -The discussion centred around whether there should be additional working groups, and a dedicated Plan.

* It was felt that there were many pieces of work and plans already underway (Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan, Target Operating Model, and Business Plan) and a specific People Survey Plan may not be necessary. Actions being taken should be fed back via Improvement Plan, Target Operating Model, Business Plan and Corporate Plan processes, and Team/Leadership meetings.
* The other point of view presented was that a dedicated plan with working groups made up of representatives from across the organisation would provide some leverage and provide support to managers to make the changes required.

*Action: The SET agreed that the paper should be revised, and an approach developed which engages and collaborates with staff through light touch working groups and through existing processes. The key players on the specific topics need to be identified. MD to present this to SET in April 2022.*

**4. Update on Future Working Arrangements – Jonathan Taylor and Zahid Deen**

JT introduced a paper on the next steps for taking forward future working arrangements. The paper detailed previous SET discussions on 9.2.22 on future working, where it was agreed that:

* Not only is this about how people are located in work spaces, but this is about a change in leadership and culture and how our services are offered
* Fairness and consistency is vital. There are trade-offs between very detailed guidance versus a framework and managers discretion.
* Business needs are important, alongside the well-being of staff.
* The themes of well-being, cohesion, teamwork and development are central to developing what we want our work spaces to be for; how we balance leadership, culture, brand; and individuals connection to the organisation.
* We need to recognise our needs as an organisation, and that we relatively small, with regional teams and operational working.

It is recognised that people will have adjusted their routines after several years of alternative working – e.g. childcare, ability to travel. In line with SG, and in terms of practicalities, it is proposed to plan for phased approach whilst also considering longer term strategic decisions on more flexible forms of working.

**Agile approach:** The paper pointed to the fact that initial or early versions of hybrid working may be different in the longer-term. Discussions by SET agreed that we should put a ‘test and iterate’, agile approach in place. This area of work will move ahead, but will be reviewed in light of responses to staff engagement activities on this topic.

**Principles:** Although the expectation is thatoffices will be fully open as soon this is permissible under SG rules, hybrid working will continue to be an option for staff. It was agreed that by the summer, SF will set out a clear position on what SFs hybrid working will look like – for example, the type of activities we would expect to be undertaken collaboratively and face to face. It was highlighted that staff/managers need to have a framework of what is acceptable. Not only will this bring clarity, it will help prevent a mismatch between the expectations of managers and staff on office working. It was agreed that the offer of hyrbid working will be essential in attracting new recruits to SF.

**Office furniture and equipment:** The purchase of digital equipment and office furniture will be central in supporting improved working arrangements (funded through contingency budget). It was agreed that a project management, agile approach should be taken so that kit is tested, and meets requirements.

**Communications:** It was agreed that we need to issue communications as soon as possible. It was noted that staff like certainty, and will wish to see a plan and timetable (i.e. a routemap) for the development the arrangements. Guidance for managers will also be essential to avoid any mismatch of expectations and the potential for staff to feel pressured or bullied into a position they are uncomfortable or unhappy with.

*Action: The SET agreed with what was proposed as part of the paper, and that the following points will be taken forward in the immediate term:*

* *The Head of Corporate Communications will have part of her time dedicated to project managing Future Working (in the mid term, recruitment is underway to recruit a Future Working and Corporate Sustainability Manager).*
* *The Resilience Group will be reformed to have a specific focus on future working arrangements and to have a greater degree of decision making.*

**Standing Items**

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

**Budget paper:** DS highlighted the key points of the budget paper in RMacH’s absence.

* Although new planting within this financial year will fall below the 13k ha target and is likely to be closer to 12k ha. This could equate to an underspend of around £7M. This was recently flagged in discussions with the Minister, but the fact that this is the highest level of woodland creation which has ever been achieved was emphasised. SET agreed that the longer term position for SF would be to be able to choose from applications submitted, but significantly more applications would need to be presented.
* Expenditure is currently 28% of forecast budget, mainly due to an underspend associated with planting levels. Delays in recruitment, emerging vacancies and continued impacts of the pandemic has led to a substantial increase in the Contingency Budget from just under £200k reported in the third quarter to nearly £700k.

It was noted that the Resource Spending Review is still taking place.

SET acknowledged the Budget Update, and no specific issues were raised.

**Staffing update**: MD

The following points were discussed.

* The final version of the prioritisation for the current lists of vacancies needs to be clarified by SE members and passed to MD/RF.
* A Recruitment Master List needs to be developed and held. SET would review the order of that list on a monthly basis and manage pipeline. This would help manage expectations (for SF) and workflow (for HR).
* SET would prefer fortnightly staff numbers. An HR dashboard is provided by FLS each month but DS flagged that this can be out of date.
* A process diagram for recruitment has been pulled together. The scale of recruitment is such that needs to be a centrally managed process.

*Actions agreed: SET members to finalise prioritisation for current vacancies – pass to MD/RF.*

**6. Standing Item - Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion**

A new temporary EDI manager has just been appointed. This item will be discussed at SET in April.

**7. Standing Item – Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

DH provided an updated. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy Statement is being developed by the well-attended group, and should be available for discussion at SET in April.

**8. Strategic Risk Register – Marliese Richmond and Alasdair Duncan**

MR and AD provided an update on the [Strategic Risk Register](https://scotsconnect.sharepoint.com/sites/BusinessExcellence-ORG-SF/Lists/SF%20Strategic%20Risk%20Register/AllItems.aspx?env=WebViewList).

**Alignment with SG risk management programme**: The SF Risk Management approach is being aligned with that of SG. MR has been nominated as Risk Champion, with ZD as a SET support. Although MR had only just completed the SG Risk Management training course, at that point, the key points for SET to note on this were:

* Our risk register should align with the SG format (which will require changing the current format slightly).
* It is suggested that a Risk Moderation Forum be set up to oversee and support improvement of risk management and help ensure risks have been calibrated/moderated.
* The SF Risk Appetite will need to be revisited in order to establish the criteria for escalation to the Strategic Risk Register; to prioritise risk mitigation actions and delivery choices.
* There is an SG programme of online risk management training which can be rolled out to all staff.

DS clarified that the risks which should be escalated to the Director General Net Zero will be risks related to the delivery of the Woodland Creation Target and/or delivery of achieving net zero by 2045.

It was also agreed that rather than setting up a Risk Moderation Forum, risks will be managed/escalated at a project level. Instead, clear guidance will be issued on how to score risks (based on our risk appetite).

**Update on format**: AD provided SET members with a demonstration of Strategic Risk Register which is now hosted on MS Lists and highlighted the benefits. This includes:

* Each risk owner can go in and update a risk. This can be done concurrently, which encourages collaboration. The document is a ‘live’ version of the current strategic risks.
* This provides a single source of truth, and clear audit trail behind each risk. An email alert can be set to be sent to each risk owner when any updates are made.
* Each field has a clear description as to which information should be entered. Some fields are automatically completed (eg risk id, the scoring). It can contain more detail than an excel spreadsheet.
* We can share the link for this register with different audiences, with ‘view only’ or ‘edit’ permission levels
* It can be viewed in different ways, and can be filtered to present different information to different audiences (eg risks over a certain level are presented to SET).
* The intention is to link the column ‘Controls/Actions Planned’ projects/programmes taking place where that risk is being managed and mitigated. Other developments will include setting timescales for each risk, and a calendar view to enable tracking progress of that area of action.

**Changes to risks/new risks**: There was some discussion on the highest risks, with a particular focus on the risk related to a cyber-security incident.

**Continue embedding risk management**: There was discussion on the steps required to continue to embed the SF risk management approach.

* Develop clear guidance will be issued on how to score risks on Strategic Risk Register (based on our risk appetite). Consider options for recording issues vs risks.
* Set out our relationship with SG risk management channels.
* Work with RMacH to set up slot on risk management at Audit and Assurance Committee. Discussions to clarify role of AAC, and their views on the process for escalation/decisions/resources and funding/communications re risk management. ZD, JT and MR to attend.
* Ensure information for staff members is available (for example, risk management documents on Saltire are FLS, but there is an SF Risk Management Policy and Procedures). Set corporate value for these documents.
* Update Framework Document on our processes for Risk Management.

*Action: It was agreed that MR/AD would continue to work on improving the format for the Strategic Risk Register format. The next step will be to clarify the role of the AAC in risk management, and establish clear risk register procedures.*

**9. Closed session for SET Members only**