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| SF_col_landscape_logo | Strategic Advisory Group |

record of SCOTTISH FORESTRY STRATEGIC ADVISORY GROUP

1. 22 June 2021, Teams Meeting

**Present:**

Dave Signorini (Scottish Forestry Chief Executive)

James Stuart (Non-Executive Committee member)

Eleanor Ryan (Non-Executive Committee member)

Phil Taylor (Non-Executive Committee member)

Alan Hampson (Head of Standards Evidence & Expertise)

Jonathan Taylor (Head of Scottish Forestry Executive Office)

Ross MacHardie (Head of Finance and Business Support)

**Apologies:**

Helen McKay (Chief Forester for Scotland)

Doug Howieson (Head of Operational Delivery)

**In Attendance:**

Bob Frost (Head of People and Communities)

**1.** **Welcome** from Dave Signorini, Scottish Forestry CEO

DS updated on the changes to the executive team, with BC and JD leaving the organisation, and the plans to fill these posts.

The group had a discussion on the culture and benefit of interchange between SF and FLS, in both staff changes, and also informal information sharing.

DS also noted the changes that are shaping the relationship between the organisations, notably the SLA and how the new and future agreements would in all likelihood comprise quite different services and delivery models.

The SAG noted the risks and challenges with procuring new systems, and that default SG options are not necessarily right for our business.

Once the future 2022 -25 SLA processes is underway (after Head of Operational Services and Transformation is in post) the SAG would welcome a discussion on the planning, options, risks and structure of the services to be negotiated.

*Action: The SAG would welcome a discussion at the next on the organisation’s financial and budget position, and discussion around any scenario planning in light of the autumn budget revision. RMacH.*

**Minutes and actions from the last meeting:** Minutes to the last meeting were approved. All of the actions are completed.

**Declaration of interests:** none declared

**2.**  **SAG 4-21** **Issues and Risk Management – Ross MacHardie**

*RMacH* introduced the paper, jointly produced with MR, noting with thanks the help ER had provided in its preparation.

The paper built on previous discussions highlighting the interdependence of risk and issues, and the importance of mitigating risks and effective, rapid management of issues as they arise. It noted the gaps in our systems, and that our approach can be inconsistent.

This results in gaps in awareness at a senior and team leader level of our risks and issues, which can lead to both issues and risks being unaddressed. It proposed how to continuing the maturing in SF to managing issues and risks from a strategic level down to a team level, and strike the right balance between formal, documented processes, and a more flexible, informal approach.

The SAG welcomed the paper and supported the principles it set out. The group noted:

* Managing risks is as much about culture and there is an opportunity to link to our Values to re-enforce the need for staff to engage risk management and the benefits of raising issues.
* Communication of risks and issues is important – do not simply see it through the lens of the risk register, there a lots of opportunities to communicate (exec videos, leadership team, 1:1s).
* Setting out the processes in a clear and simple way for staff is vital, so they can see the formal and informal ways risks/issues are managed and importantly their role in managing them. It needs to be clear how to escalate issues and risks.
* Feedback on decisions taken needs to be provided – raising issues for them to disappear will have opposite effect on encouraging a culture change.
* Agreed to committing to embedding risk management and that for strategic risks named people need to be responsible and visible.
* Caution that any of the processes proposed in the paper should also be as light touch as possible – sense check these at regular intervals to ensure the

The group endorsed the paper’s recommendations and the proposals in Annex 2.

***Action:*** *MR/JT to discuss and implement taking the recommendations on risk forward.*

**3.**  **SAG 5-21** **Scotland’s Forestry Strategy (SFS) Implementation Plan – Progress Report and Lessons Learnt – Bob Frost**

BF presented the paper which informed of progress with the delivery of the SFS Implementation Plan (2020-22) and the plans for development of the next plan due to be published by 31 March 2022.

The group had a general discussion on the background and planning for its delivery and involvement with key stakeholders and delivery partners, towards the publication date of March 2022

* A key action will be to add evaluation to the monitoring of the plan, to assess the impact of our actions and design of indicators.
* The clarification and articulation of outcomes needs to continue to evolve and will help in the communication and presentation of the plan to Ministers, Parliament and stakeholders.
* Work still to be done on how to link stakeholders ‘ownership’ to the actions and ensure their buy in. Co-production can be seen as means to tie more strongly.

The group thanked BF for the significant work involved in getting the plan to this stage and would welcome another discussion before the plan is launched.

***Action:*** *BF to take into account the discussions of the SAG in shaping the next SFS Implementation Plan.*

**4.  SAG 6-21** **Improving Adaption and Resilience of Scotland’s Forests: developing a more proactive role for Scottish Forestry – Alan Hampson**

AH introduced the paper which set out the framework on developing Scottish Forestry’s role and priorities for improving the adaptation and resilience of Scotland forests and woodlands.

The group noted the risks and opportunities that resilience presents and the strategic drivers (climate change) which will impact both positively and negatively on Scotland’s forests and woodlands.

There was a shared concern that the sector has consistently not been proactive in this area. It looks to government for the answers, and lacks any real appetite for changing their business models. In addition Ministers have not yet fully engaged with this area as part of their forestry duties (as per legislation and generally).

Progress is required not only because of the threats to the sector but also to show progress against the priority in the Scottish Forestry Strategy of ‘increasing the adaptability and resilience of forests and woodlands’.

The SAG supported the proposals for the coming months to allow the organisation to take a more structured approach to developing its work on adaption and resilience. This includes appointing a new Adaption and Resilience Advisor, raising awareness and stimulating a national conversation on addressing climate risk, and developing policy and support mechanisms.

In addition the group noted:

* What lessons can we learn from other sectors, especially the land use/farming communities.
* Do we need to communicate in a different way with the sector about the risks and opportunities? Our traditional channels and content may need to change to articulate the issues and encourage the sector to own the actions.
* In stimulating a ‘national conversation’, encourage a diversity of voices as opposed to weighting it towards investors and large businesses.
* Develop a role for government (without overstepping into the regulatory space) to present information on climate related risk that can be part of forest investment appraisals.
* Need to understand that resilience touches the whole sector – from planting to processing. No one area can carry the burden or risk – it is too small and fragmented already.
* Work with the ICF and other bodies to ensure addressing adaption and resilience is integral to being a good forester, land manager etc. – but we need a better diversity of skills (finance, engineers etc.) within the sector if we hope to transition to net zero.

***Action:*** *AH to take into account the SAG feedback above when undertaking the next steps towards developing a more structured approach towards adaption and resilience.*

The meeting closed; no AOBs.