1. Wednesday 11 September 2024
2. **Saughton House, E1 Scottish Forestry Large Meeting Room and Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

* Paul Lowe, Chief Executive (PL) – Chair
* Brendan Callaghan, Director of Operational Delivery (BC)
* Zahid Deen, Director of Transformation and Corporate Services (ZD)
* Alan Hampson, Director of Policy and Practice (AH)
* Helen McKay, Chief Forester (HM)
* Jonathan Taylor, Head of SF Executive Office (JT)
* Louise Maclean, Information Governance Manager (LM) – Minutes

**In Attendance:**

* Kyle Usher, Head of Innovation (KU) – Item 5
* Lynne Wilson, Digital Business Partner (LW) – Item 5
* Bastian Altrock, Future Working & Corporate Sustainability Manager (BA) – Item 6
* Rachel Martin, Head of Corporate Communications (RM) – Item 7
* Steve Williams, Senior Media Manager (SW) – Item 7

**Apologies:**

* Gary Henderson, Interim Head of Finance and Business Support (GH)

1. **Welcome and declarations of interest (as relevant)** 
   1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
   2. No new declarations of interest were made.
2. **Minutes and actions of previous meeting**
   1. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

* 1. Actions arising from previous meetings:
* 24/11 – Noted that this is ongoing, Digital Business Partner had scoped options including with Cyber & Fraud Centre Scotland. Subject to getting information on costs / content / potential dates a recommendation would be provided to PL by the end of October.
* 24/12 - Following on from the People Survey 2023 a ‘you said, we heard, we did’ communication was issued, based on the 2023 People Survey results.   
  Preparations were underway on the next iteration of the Agency’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, with the aim of submitting a paper to the November SET meeting. It was agreed this action could be closed.
* 24/14 – It was agreed to move the date to the end of September.
* 24/15 – Clarification on the definition of “a person” was received from Scottish Government Legal Department.
* **Action: BC to send PL details of the feedback from Deputy Directors/Bill Managers on possible vehicle for amendments in order to decide on next steps between officials.**
* 24/16 – Noted as complete and closed.
* 24/17 – Noted as complete and closed.
* 24/18 – The recommended edits had been incorporated into the plan. The additional documentation had been drafted. The Business Continuity Plan was presented to the Audit and Assurance Committee in August and was very well received. The revised plan and supporting documentation would be presented to SET in November.
* 24/19 – Consideration had been given on how best to address this. It was suggested that existing meetings be utilised to allow for these conversations to happen. Noted as complete and closed.
* 25/19 – Noted as complete and closed.

1. **Standing item: woodland creation update (PL, BC, AH)**

3.1 BC noted that approximately 8,400 hectares had been approved in 24/25 to date and that approximately a further 4000-5000 hectares were due to be considered, but noting that this would not all be planted in this season. PL thanked the teams for their continued efforts and asked that the Cabinet Sectary was provided an update submission.

* **Action point:** **BC to send update submission on woodland creation position to Cabinet Secretary Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands.**

**3.2** ZD noted the lessons learned exercise reflecting on the 2023/24 woodland creation out turn; BC gave his thanks again for what was a great piece of work. SET questioned how best to incorporate the lessons learned into practice. It was suggested that BC present them to the Strategic Operations Group to consider and update SET. JT noted it might also be a useful topic for the SAG/Non-execs given the woodland creation workshops in summer 2023.

* **Action Point: BC to present the WC Lessons Learned at the Strategic Operations Group and reflect back to SET.**

**3.3** SET discussed sector confidence in carbon funding and that the large schemes coming forward from investment companies were beginning to tail off. PL highlighted the ongoing importance of relaying this message to Ministers.

**3.4** SET discussed the position with the Stobo Judicial Review. There was also a discussion more broadly on regulation practice and challenges. SET acknowledged this required further analysis and assessment. BC to consider when further detail comes back to SET and to discuss with JT about how this is reflected on the Strategic Risk Register.

* **Action Point: JT to speak with BC about adding  enforcement action contingency planning to the strategic risk register.**

1. **Future Grant Support for Forestry – Sponsor BC, Presenter BC**

**4.1** BC introduced a paper that updated SET on the potential Future Grant Support for Forestry (FGSF) project. Feedback was sought on some key areas that would impact the scope and the approach to be taken. SET discussed the need to ensure that appropriate support, resourcing and overarching governance to be in place.

**4.2** ZD highlighted the need to ensure that SET were happy with the scope should this project proceed. The approach taken would also be considered in light of the resources available.

**4.3** BC informed SET that the future Agriculture and Rural Economy (ARE) project was well underway in some of the workstreams. There was a need to consider the policy aspect in respect of the desired outcomes. It was agreed that further discussion was required and that SET should meet to consider and assess the range of options and discuss the questions raised in the paper. HM requested to attend the session.

* **Action point: Executive Office Team to schedule a half day workshop to consider proposals in the paper presented before end of the year and ensure that HM is invited.**

1. **Scottish Forestry Draft Digital and Data strategy – Sponsor ZD, Presenter KU / LW**

**5.1** KU introduced the paper. He informed SET that they had engaged with staff across the agency in order to inform the action plan for the next 3 years. In total 7 actions were identified. LW noted that an agile approach was taken and that some actions were already underway, such as the use of drones and scoping for the automated redactions project.

**5.2** PL noted that gathering the list of changes was extremely helpful but he noted that there was at this stage no prioritisation of these asks. He highlighted that another key priority for change activities were those initiatives that would deliver quantifiable savings benefits to better assess how technology and innovation can save Scottish Forestry. KU noted that the objective of the strategy was to manage and safeguard Scottish Forestry’s digital estate in a strategic way, while giving consideration to resources available and that some actions were already underway.

**5.3** There was some discussion around aligning the timescales within the strategy with the Corporate Plan, that will run for 5 years with supporting detail provided through the supporting annual Business Plans. ZD noted that the pace of change in technology was significant and that aligning the strategy with annual business plans may be the best approach.

* **Action point: KU and team to develop a prioritised list of activities**
* **Action point: KU and team to consider change priorities against a 5 year change horizon, aligned to the corporate strategy and plan duration**
* **Action point: SET to consider if there are any additional actions that should be included in the action plan and feedback to KU/LW; and a revised version would be presented back to SET later in 2024**

1. **Hybrid working model: implementation update – Sponsor ZD, Presenter BA**

**6.1** BA introduced the paper that provided an update on progress following the roll out of hybrid working in Scottish Forestry. Based on a recent survey, he noted that most teams had participated in producing a hybrid working scenario for their team. 100% of those asked had said that hybrid working works for them. Implementation to date had been successful with almost all teams holding meetings to agree work patterns between 2 days per month to 2 days per week.

**6.2** BA noted the FLS agreed that it was pragmatic to incorporate hybrid working into the wellbeing policy. BA noted that a post occupancy survey for Saughton House would be issued soon.

**6.3** PL noted that the implementation of the hybrid working model had been handled thoughtfully. He thanked all those involved and highlighted the importance of considering estate changes and our impact on the environment.

1. **Communications Update – Sponsor JT, Presenter RM / SW**
   1. RM introduced the presentation and talked to the reflections on the year so far, the work plan for the year and challenges of meeting changing issues/priorities. She noted a number of important comms moments in the year, and how they have been handled professionally. SET recognised and congratulated the team for the really high level of staff engagement (score 75%) against the industry standard of 50%.
   2. PL thanked Rachel and the team for consistently high quality communications support and navigating some very challenging moments over the past few months. He noted the value of these periodic updates to SET to help manage priorities and maintain visibility of work and issues.

**7.2** SW spoke to the media work overview reflecting on the challenges within the sector, especially around woodland creation, but also that there is very positive work going on such as the Integrating Trees Network and the work on the Riparian Rainforest had provided a different and helpful narrative. SET recognised that it was useful to explore how to do more of this type of work, and AH invited SW and RM to the next meeting of the Policy and Practice Team to plan for future news releases and communications.

* **Action point: RM to add HM to communications distribution list.**
* **Action Point: RM + SW to attend next Policy and Practice Team meeting.**
* **Action point: SET would like an update on the website project at the November meeting.**
* **Action point: Communications updated to be add to SET agenda twice each year.**

1. **AOB**

**Staff resourcing:** ZD proposed that SET arrange a meeting with a focus on discussing the future of the Staff Resourcing Committee in the light of the current and possible future budgetary restrictions.

* **Action: JT to speak with GH/AD to arrange a meeting of SET members that would discuss resourcing, budget position and forward look.**

1. **Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 20 November 2024, 10:00, Saughton House E1 Spur Large meeting room & Microsoft Teams.

**Meeting Action List**

| **Ref** | **Meeting** | **Action** | **Lead / Staff Member** | **Target Date** | **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 24/11 | Jun 24 | Cybersecurity: LW to scope potential offer for Executive-focused cybersecurity training (previously delivered via Scottish Business Resilience Centre). | ZD / LW | End October | Open |
| 24/14 | Jul 24 | Woodland creation: BC to produce short update to Ministers incorporating:   * Current position on woodland creation approvals and medium term outlook * Relationship between WC targets and available budget, and upcoming advice on future targets * Proposal for possible annual report on woodland creation | BC | End September | Open |
| 24/15 | Jul 24 | Amendment to the Forestry and Land Management Act 2018:   * NM/BC to seek clarification from SGLD as to definition of 'a person' in legislation * BC/NM to produce submission to Cabinet Secretary raising issues with current legislation as laid out in report and setting out options, for PL approval * BC to send PL details of the feedback from Deputy Directors/Bill Managers on possible vehicle for amendments in order to decide on next steps between officials | NM / BC | End September | Open |
| 24/18 | Jul 24 | Business continuity plan: LM/JT to revise plan to:   * Incorporate role in advising Ministers beyond formal MiCase correspondence * Clarify whether catastrophic events (e.g. Storm Arwen, Ips outbreaks, etc.) are in scope * Incorporate staggered approach to incidents (e.g. gold / silver / bronze approach) with appropriate reporting and escalation / de-escalation arrangements * Produce incident management guide, including draft agenda for an incident meeting, attendees with contact information, initial set of questions | JT / LM | November | Open |
| 25/20 | Sep 24 | Woodland Creation:   * BC to present lessons learned compiled by ZD at Strategic Operations Group * BC to send update submission on woodland creation position to Cabinet Secretary Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands. * JT to discuss with BC about adding  enforcement action contingency planning to strategic risk register | BC / JT | October  November | New |
| 26/20 | Sep 24 | Future Grant Support for Forestry:   * Executive Office Team to schedule a half day workshop to consider proposals in the paper presented before end of the year * Invite Helen Mackay | JT / BC / AH | By end of December | New |
| 27/20 | Sep 24 | Digital and Data Strategy:   * KU and team to develop a prioritised list of activities * KU and team to consider change priorities against a 5 year change horizon, aligned to the corporate strategy and plan duration * SET to consider if there are any additional actions that should be included in the action plan and feedback to KU/LW; and a revised version would be presented back to SET later in 2024 | All | End September | New |
| 28/20 | Sep 24 | Communications update:   * RM to include HM in communications distribution list * RM + SW to attend next Policy and Practice team meeting to plan future communications releases * Update on the website project to be presented at the November meeting * Communications update to be added to SET work planner twice a year | RM / SW / LM | ASAP  October  November  ASAP | New |
| 29/20 | Sep 24 | AOB: JT to speak with GH/AD to arrange a meeting of SET members that would discuss resourcing, budget position and forward look. | JT | October | New |