



Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Meeting

28th October 2025

Attendees:

Kevin Quinlan, CEO (Chair)
Graeme Prest, Director of Land Management and Regions
Graeme Hutton, Director of Net Zero
Tom Greenan, Director of Corporate Services and Transformation
David Leven, Director of Commercial Development
Sophia Christopoulos, Portfolio Secretariat Assistant (Minutes)

Others:

Rhondda Salmond, Change Manager (items 4, 5 and 8)
Colin Buchanan, Interim Head of Finance (item 6)

1. Review of Minutes

It was agreed that the minutes from the ELT meeting held on 14th October 2025 were a true and accurate reflection.

2. Summary of Action Points from Meeting

Ref.:	Action:	Owner:	Target Date:
03/10	To develop a proposal for the asset management of bare land, incorporating restocking, woodland creation and compensatory planting regulations.	David Leven / Graeme Prest	20 January 2026
04/10	To circulate revised Business Plan timetable.	Tom Greenan	18 November 2025
05/10	To review and update the Corporate Risk Register, ensuring that actions are prioritised in order of their impact on risk mitigation.	Directors	7 November 2025
06/10	To review and update the Audit Action Tracker.	Directors	7 November 2025
07/10	To develop options for improving how progress against audit actions is presented to the Audit and Risk Committee, including visual reporting.	Rhondda Salmond	26 November 2025
08/10	To liaise with Head of People and Organisational Development on the workforce implications of SG-funded programmes and a revised approach to redeployment.	Graeme Prest	18 November 2025
09/10	To liaise with the Head of Harvesting Support to clarify VME purchase requirements during the Direct Production trial, with the Director of Net	Graeme Prest / Graeme Hutton	25 November 2025

	Zero to pause any new purchases until clarity is obtained.		
10/10	To review accounting treatment of biological assets and PSS stock between years.	Tom Greenan / Colin Buchanan	9 December 2025
11/10	To prepare benefits statement for the Newton Nursery Project, as part of the Business Planning work.	Graeme Prest	25 November 2025
12/10	To liaise with Senior Internal Communications Manager on consolidation of all Balanced Scorecards for publication on Saltire.	Tom Greenan	11 November 2025
13/10	To review accident investigation levels and ensure actions are in place to improve performance. Health and Safety Manager to issue summary explaining the measure and calculation to support consistent understanding across directorates.	Directors	9 December 2025
14/10	To review and confirm process for approving investment proposals.	Tom Greenan	25 November 2025
15/10	To confirm business case sign off for the relocation of the Operational Shed and Deer Larder from West Calder (Five Sisters) to Dunsynton	All	18 November 2025

Actions 21/07, 3/09, 11/09, 15/09, 17/09, and 1/10 were confirmed as closed.

Revised target dates were agreed for AP 03/07 (to 25 November 2025) and AP 05/08 (to December 2025). Tom Greenan sought clarity on AP 08/09, and the due date was updated to 11 November 2025.

Discussion on AP 11/09 led to agreement on next steps and a further action. David Leven and Graeme Prest will develop a strategy for the asset management of bare and unplanted land. An outline of the approach will be brought to the ELT in January 2026 and the full strategy due for completion by June 2026.

While AP 15/09 was closed, the ELT agreed that this area of work should be monitored on an ongoing basis. Graeme Prest confirmed that responsibility will be delegated to the Head of Planning and Environment and the Head of Harvesting, Marketing and Sales, who will ensure alignment with the Finance team and consistency across the business.

AP 03/10: Director of Land Management and Regions and Director of Commercial Development to develop a proposal for the asset management of bare land, incorporating restocking, woodland creation and compensatory planting regulations.

3. Three-Year Business Plan Timetable Revision

Tom Greenan outlined the draft Business Plan timetable (as circulated in papers), noting capacity pressures within Corporate Services and the need to adjust key planning sessions currently scheduled for early November.

Graeme Prest highlighted that gaps in data identified through Land Management Leadership Team (LMLT) discussions should be used as the focus for one of the sessions, with regional and national leads working together on 5 November 2025 to review financial and operational assumptions.

The ELT agreed that the Business Plan timetable will be delayed by approximately two weeks to allow sufficient preparation time and more meaningful challenge sessions. The sessions on 5 and 6 November 2025 will now be used by directorates to progress their own business planning, followed by a short ELT stocktake. The ELT will then meet on 18 November 2025 for an in-depth discussion, replacing the scheduled Senior Leadership Group (SLG) meeting.

The ELT also discussed future coordination of business planning, including potential leads to take forward this work following Tom's planned departure in early December 2025.

AP 04/10: Director of Corporate Services to circulate revised Business Plan timetable.

4. Quarterly Risk Review

Rhondda Salmond presented the quarterly review of the Corporate Risk Register, requesting support from directors to ensure that entries are up to date ahead of submission to the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting on 27 November 2025. She noted that the Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) risk entry and associated actions will be updated by the Head of HSW later in November.

Rhondda outlined the development of an approach to compliance and assurance mapping, involving the creation of a single list of all relevant legislation with which FLS must maintain compliance, and the allocation of clear ownership across the organisation. It was agreed that this work should be achievable by March 2026, though Rhondda noted that this work will be resource intensive.

AP 05/10: Directors to review and update the Corporate Risk Register, ensuring that actions are prioritised in order of their impact on risk mitigation.

5. Quarterly Audit Review

Rhondda reported on the latest audit outcomes, including new reports on Building Compliance, Harvesting and Marketing, and a Special Investigation. The team discussed the need to improve the presentation of audit data to demonstrate progress more clearly to the ARC.

The ELT agreed that future reporting should include visual summaries of completed and outstanding actions. Directors were reminded to ensure all audit actions are closed or updated in time for the next ARC meeting.

AP 06/10: Directors to review and update the Audit Action Tracker.

AP 07/10: Change Manager to develop options for improving how progress against audit actions is presented to the Audit and Risk Committee, including visual reporting.

6. Finance Update

Colin Buchanan provided an overview of the financial position at Period 6, noting an operating surplus of £3.2m to date and a forecast year-end deficit of £19.1m, a slight increase on the previous forecast. The ELT discussed the funding position and noted that the overall cash deficit will be largely offset by Scottish Government (SG) subsidy supporting non-commercial public value activities. This results in a £0.9m reduction in reserves. It was agreed that accruals should be managed more regularly, ideally monthly, to improve forecasting accuracy.

The ELT discussed workforce implications of SG programme funding (Atlantic Rainforest, Peatland Restoration, and Woodland Creation), recognising the need for a more structured and transparent approach to staff redeployment, including consideration of alternative terminology to better reflect the purpose of the process.

It was noted that Vehicle, Machinery and Equipment (VME) spend for 2025-26 includes replacement of Direct Production (DP) machinery. Graeme Prest agreed to review with the Head of Marketing Support whether there are compelling reasons why DP purchases should proceed during the trial. Discussion also covered biological assets and Plant and Seed Supply (PSS) clarity, with Tom and Colin to review inter-year stock treatment and develop a clearer reporting approach.

Kevin Quinlan requested a benefits statement for the Newton Nursery project (covering financial performance and outputs) be developed as part of the Business Plan process. The ELT agreed to do a deep dive into this topic in January or February 2026.

AP 08/10: Director of Land Management and Regions to liaise with Head of People and Organisational Development on the workforce implications of SG-funded programmes and a revised approach to redeployment.

AP 09/10: Director of Land Management and Regions to liaise with the Head of Harvesting Support to clarify VME purchase requirements during the Direct Production trial, with the Director of Net Zero to pause any new purchases until clarity is obtained.

AP 10/10: Director of Corporate Services and Head of Finance to review accounting treatment of biological assets and PSS stock between years.

AP 11/10: Director of Land Management and Regions to prepare benefits statement for the Newton Nursery Project, as part of the Business Planning work.

7. Monthly Balanced Scorecard, including agreement to amend targets

Tom presented updates to the corporate and directorate Balanced Scorecards, explaining that several targets required recalibration based on improved understanding of baselines. The ELT discussed the importance of setting realistic targets and maintaining meaningful performance indicators.

AP 12/10: Director of Corporate Services to liaise with Senior Internal Communications Manager on consolidation of all Balanced Scorecards for publication on Saltire.

AP 13/10: Directors to review accident investigation levels and ensure actions are in place to improve performance. Health and Safety Manager to issue summary explaining the measure and calculation to support consistent understanding across directorates.

8. Meeting Preparation

Audit and Risk Committee (26 Nov)

Rhondda provided an overview of the draft ARC meeting agenda. The ELT discussed different options for the ARC Deep Dive in March 2026.

Senior Leadership Group (18 Nov)

As discussed earlier, the ELT agreed to cancel the upcoming meeting and the January 2026 SLG meeting, and to postpone the Strategic Advisory Board to January 2026. These changes will accommodate business planning activity and ensure alignment with wider organisational timelines and priorities.

9. ELT Forward Look

The ELT reviewed and discussed the agenda for their upcoming meetings.

David Leven confirmed that the quarterly renewables update had been circulated by email and that the final accrual will be completed in collaboration with Grant Thornton, the external auditors.

AP 14/10: Director of Corporate Services to review and confirm process for approving investment proposals.

AP 15/10: ELT to confirm business case sign off for the relocation of the Operational Shed and Deer Larder from West Calder (Five Sisters) to Dunsyston.

10. ELT Reflections

The ELT provided their reflections on the meeting.

11. AOB

ASPEN Check-In

Tom Greenan confirmed that ASPEN is on track for go-live on 5 November 2025, with no major issues arising. Catch up meetings are scheduled over the next week.

The next ELT meeting will be held on 11 November 2025.