



## Forestry and Land Scotland Strategic Board Meeting

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>11.30 am</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Teleconference</b> (Due to COVID-19 restrictions)
<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Present:</b> Simon Hodgson, Chief Executive (Chair) Graeme Hutton, Director of Business Services Michael Hymers, Director of Corporate Services John Mair, Director of Estate Development Trefor Owen, Director of Land Management Mark Pountain, Non-Executive Advisor Lisa Tennant, Non-Executive Advisor Pamela Zielinski, Non-Executive Advisor Linda McKenna, Corporate Development Officer (Secretariat)  <b>In Attendance:</b> Rosetta Forbes, Head of People and Organisational Development Nicky Whitaker, Head of Visitor Services and Communities (Item 4) Mick Bottomley, Head of Marketing and Sales (Item 6)

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Simon Hodgson welcomed everyone to the meeting. He noted that no one could have foreseen the significant change in circumstances since the Board last met in January due to the COVID -19 situation and restrictions. The shocking and concerning circumstances have had a significant impact on the work of FLS.

Simon advised that FLS was not 'locked-down' entirely and a significant number of staff were able to work from home. There is also some work ongoing in order to supply businesses who are critical to the COVID-19 response.

### 2. SG COVID-19 Business Impacts

Simon invited the Directors to provide an overview of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the work of their respective functions.

**Land Management:** Trefor Owen provided an overview of the impact on the work of the Land Management function. He advised that all forest management activity was suspended including planting, fencing, and deer management. All recreational facilities were closed, including car parks, with only local people are permitted to exercise on the national forests and land. One exception to the suspension of activity was in relation to civil engineering activity currently taking place on the A83 trunk road. This work is continuing, whilst observing official guidance, in order to decrease the risk of landslides as this is a main access route to hospitals in the Argyll region.

Trefor advised work was also ongoing to assist FLS customers who are manufacturing products that are in short supply. Products include wooden pallets to transport food and pharmaceutical products, which are in short supply due to the abrupt stop in supply of imported pallets; paper for items such as pharmaceutical packaging and toilet roll; and wood fuel for energy production, supplying power stations and key buildings including care homes.

Trefor advised that protocols have been put in place to keep staff safe. All staff who are being asked to work in these areas have been provided with letters of authority from the Chief Executive to share with police should they be questioned. Work is also going on within the Land Management function to model what will happen over the rest of the year as well as considering protocols for restarting operations when the COVID-19 restrictions begin to lift.

**Estate Development:** John Mair advised that a lot of the work of the Estate Development function can be done from home and so it is somewhat business as usual compared with other areas of the business. The team have been shortlisting sites for renewables, but need to be realistic about timescales given the impact of any ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. Likewise there may be a slower pace in coming months in relation to acquisitions and disposals due to restrictions.

John advised that some of the FLS tenants and partners will face particular challenges due to COVID-19 and the length of restrictions. As such the Estate Development team will be helping them wherever possible.

**Business Services:** Graeme Hutton informed the Board that he had been organising the FLS COVID-19 response. Planning had been underway for such an event prior to the restrictions and so they were quick to move to crisis mode. Graeme advised that everyone in FLS who could work from home was doing so and arrangements had been made to support maintenance working wherever possible. The Procurement Team have been writing to suppliers in relation to force majeure of contracts. The function is now considering how best to restart once restrictions begin to be lifted.

Rosetta Forbes provided details of the impact on the HR response. The team has been working between all parts of the organisation and with Scottish Government and Scottish Forestry to ensure consistency. A wellbeing survey was issued to staff by way of a 'temperature check' and the results have informed the development of guidance for staff. A decision was also taken to implement the SG pay policy from April. Bereavement guidance was also being updated in recognition of the COVID-19 situation and potential impact on staff.

In response to a question raised by Mark Pountain, Rosetta advised that FLS would not be furloughing any staff or making any redundancies. Simon added that a recovery plan for FLS was being developed and would consider a number of issues.

**Corporate Services:** Michael Hymers advised that the main impact on Corporate Services had been felt by the Communications Team which has seen an exponential shift in relation to providing communications to staff and visitors/customers. There have also been huge changes in expectations in relation to providing information to Scottish Government (SG), with normal chains of communication changing. This has meant the Corporate Services team have had to change and adapt ways of working in order to respond to queries from ministers/SG much quicker than usual.

In response to questions in relation to recovery, Simon advised that the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Tourism is working hand in hand with FLS, Scottish Forestry, Confor and the wider forestry sector so that the recovery plan is well thought out.

**Presentations:** Simon provided an overview of slides previously circulated to Board members. These included information on the impact on Business, information on how Scottish government will work in relation to governance around a recovery programme and macro impacts analysis and recovery.

There followed discussion on a number of issues raised by Board members including the inability to recruit staff which may impact on ability to deliver the Annual Report and Accounts, the need to revisit the Financial Plan and the need for ongoing modelling and scenario planning based on the length of time that COVID-19 restrictions are in place.

### 3. FLS Priorities

John Mair provided a summary of the paper and the work that had been undertaken on the strategic priorities and proposals for the FLS Business Model to date. John advised Board Members that the majority of the work had been undertaken prior to the COVID-19 situation.

Discussion took place on issues surrounding the development of the paper and its positioning, including lack of links to the Corporate Plan and organisational vision and mission. John advised that the purpose of the paper was to begin to set out new priorities with the intended audience being the Executive Team, with more details to be fleshed out in due course.

Trefor Owen suggested that work should be taken to develop a roadmap towards the outputs of this work, with the main output being the next FLS Corporate Plan.

Following discussion it was agreed that more information was required by non-executive advisors to understand the background and process to the work, including ongoing work in relation to the Corporate Planning Framework. It was also agreed that further discussion on the Strategic Priorities would be discussed at the next meeting of the Strategic Board to allow for input from the non-executive advisors.

Board Members thanked John for the work to date on this issue.

**AP 1/04/20:** More information to be provided to non-executive advisors on the background to the work and links to the Corporate Planning Framework.

**AP 2/04/20:** Non-executive advisors to be invited to attend future meetings of the Executive Team Sub Group on FLS Priorities.

## 5. FLS Visitor Services Strategy

Nicky Whitaker provided a brief summary and outline of the paper which had been previously circulated, the purpose of which was to provide the Strategic Board with an early opportunity to inform the development of the Visitor Strategy. Nicky advised that this was very much an early discussion paper and was looking for input from the Strategic Board.

Board Members welcomed the paper and the opportunity to comment. It was felt that the draft could benefit from further financial information in relation to visitor services and detail around the context of what FLS are required to provide.

Discussion took place around considerations to be included in the development of the Visitor Strategy. Main points included the need to ensure financial sustainability of visitor operations, whilst considering duties as a public body; ensuring that the strategy fits with the strategic direction of the organisation, linking to the Corporate Plan and Communication and Marketing Strategy; and ensuring that the outcomes contained in the strategy are true outcomes rather than outputs. Comments also included the need to ensure that the strategy support the recovery from COVID-19, whilst acknowledging that work had taken place on the development of the strategy prior to the current situation.

Board members thanked Nicky for the paper and welcomed the opportunity to comment further at a later stage in the development of the strategy.

## 6. FLS Timber Marketing Plan

Trefor Owen introduced the paper and advised Board Members that this was the first Timber Marketing Plan for the organisation. The purpose of sharing the paper and draft plan with the Strategic Board was to set out information on FLS approach to the marketing of timber.

Mick Bottomley provided an overview of the approach to timber marketing and how this has operated over the years. He advised the purpose of the plan was to bring together all of the information on the

various contracts (eg long-term contracts) so that traders and others can understand the operations and in some way hold the organisation to account.

Board members welcomed the opportunity to provide comment on the draft plan and noted the huge amount of information and effort that had gone into its development to date. Comments on the plan included consideration of whether or not this should be described as a 'policy' rather than 'marketing plan'; suggestions of including graphics/images to summarise some of the information and; ensuring links to strategic priorities, outcomes and timescales.

Discussion continued around consideration of what the organisation was trying to achieve around profitability, the role of supporting the wider industry vs profits and likely timber demand over the next 10 years.

Simon Hodgson advised that the final published document would convey that although the plan covers a 10 year period, things may change as FLS develops as an organisation and recovers from COVID-19. This would give customers a degree of confidence in our approach without compromising the organisation.

Trefor and Mick thanked Board members for their insight and contributions.

## 6. Minutes of Previous Meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 were approved. It was agreed that minutes would be circulated as soon as possible in future.

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020.

