



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

18th November 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:

Gwen Hamilton, Head of Communications (item 6)
Michael Hymers, Head of Corporate Office (item 6)
Amy Balloch, Digital Manager (item 6)
Nicola McCully, Bright Signals (item 6)
Lesley McCall, Bright Signals (item 6)
Julie Fitzpatrick, Head of People & Organisational Development (item 7)
Pamela Beattie, Senior HR Manager (item 7)
David Craig, Programme Manager (item 8)

1. Review of Minutes

It was agreed that the minutes from the ELT meeting held on 11th November 2025 were a true and accurate reflection.

2. Summary of Action Points from Meeting

Ref.:	Action:	Owner:	Target Date:
3/11	To review the Audit Tracker to ensure Directorate oversight/ownership of both compliance and advisory actions.	Rhondda Salmond	February 2026
4/11	To agree the number of VME units to replace as part of the Direct Production Review.	Graeme Prest / Graeme Hutton / Kevin Quinlan	20 November 2025
5/11	To confirm sign off of deer larder in Central Region.	Kevin Quinlan	24 November 2025
6/11	To review and standardise depreciation approach for operational vehicles.	Graeme Hutton / Adam Dearnley	February 2026
7/11	To review monitoring arrangements for business-only use of vehicles, ensuring VAT and tax compliance.	Graeme Hutton / Adam Dearnley	February 2026

8/11	To circulate the Website Re-platform Project financial summary.	Gwen Hamilton	9 December 2025
9/11	To update on launch timing options for the Website Re-platform Project.	Gwen Hamilton	9 December 2025
10/11	To draft wording for Directors to cascade to teams on the need for timely notification of payroll-related changes by managers	Pamela Beattie	9 December 2025

Action points (AP) 3/07, 14/09, 15/09, 4/10, 5/10, 6/10, 8/10, 15/10, 1/11, 2/11 were closed.

The following APs had their deadlines extended; 6/09 to 9 December 2025, 13/09 to 5 December 2025, 7/10 to March 2026 and 12/10 to 20 January 2026.

Graeme Hutton and Kevin Quinlan provided an update on AP 18/07, following their discussion with the Chief Surveyor regarding the Edinburgh office plans.

On AP 1/09, Rhondda Salmond noted that several gaps remain in the Risk Register. The version issued to the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) for the November meeting includes those gaps, alongside assurance that the register will be fully updated ahead of the next ARC in March 2026.

David Leven provided a brief update on the Renewables advisory audit, which is still in progress; this will be brought to an ELT meeting when complete. The ELT agreed that advisory audits action should be recorded and tracked.

Graeme Prest provided context to AP 9/10 relating to Vehicle, Machinery and Equipment (VME) purchases. The discussion linked closely with AP 14/10, highlighting the need for clearer processes and criteria around major capital expenditure and approvals.

AP 03/11: Change Manager to review the Audit Tracker to ensure Directorate oversight/ownership of both compliance and advisory actions.

AP 04/11: Director of Land Management and Region, Director of Net Zero and CEO to agree the number of VME units to replace as part of the Direct Production Review.

3. ELT Forward Look

The ELT reviewed and discussed the agenda for their upcoming meetings. David Leven requested that a reflection on their visit to Coillte be included at the ELT in December to allow further strategic discussion.

4. Business Case – Operational Shed & Deer Larder Central Region

Graeme Prest presented the business case, highlighting the condition of the current larder and the need for a long-term solution. The ELT were supportive of the preferred option in principle, subject to circulation of the full business case for final sign-off.

Kevin requested a clarification on some financial assumptions, specifically rent savings, which Graeme Hutton agreed to provide via correspondence.

AP 05/11: CEO to confirm sign off of deer larder in Central Region.

5. Draft Annual Report and Accounts FY 24-25

Tom Greenan provided an overview of the draft Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) for FY 24-25. The audit is substantially complete with no qualification of the accounts and audit ratings have improved following effective engagement with external auditors.

The ELT discussed the importance of timely responses to audit queries and improved information flows across the organisation. Tom emphasised the need to standardise depreciation treatment of operational vehicles to ensure consistency, as well as improving oversight of business-only vehicle use to ensure VAT and tax compliance.

AP 06/11: Director of Net Zero and Head of Finance to review and standardise depreciation approach for operational vehicles.

AP 07/11: Director of Net Zero and Head of Finance to review monitoring arrangements for business-only use of vehicles, ensuring VAT and tax compliance.

6. Website Re-platform Project Update

Amy Balloch gave a presentation on the project, outlining the progress, scope and user-centred improvements. While visual changes are minimal, the new platform significantly improves accessibility, security, compliance and back-end functionality. User groups have informed navigation and pathway design, and the project remains on budget and on track for completion in March 2026. However, Gwen Hamilton noted that the proximity to the pre-election period means the launch date will need to be brought forward or delayed. The ELT requested that this be launched before the pre-election period.

The ELT reviewed early elements of the Beta phase. They emphasised the importance of helping users understand FLS's wider role beyond visitor services, including providing clearer access to organisational information and job opportunities.

AP 08/11: Head of Communications to circulate the Website Re-platform Project financial summary.

AP 09/11: Head of Communications to update on launch timing options for the Website Re-platform Project.

7. Payroll Audit – Draft Management Response

Pamela Beattie outlined the audit advisory report, acknowledging the significant improvements in team capacity and resilience since the audit period. She explained that since the resourcing issues have been resolved, the highest priority issue now relates to timely notification of payroll changes by managers, to prevent avoidable over and under payments.

AP 10/11: Senior HR Manager to draft wording for Directors to cascade to teams on the need for timely notification of payroll-related changes by managers.

8. Change Management – Draft Management Response

David Craig provided an overview of the advisory audit report and highlighted key recommendations. This included the need for an organisation-wide Change Management Framework, which is contingent on the recruitment of a Head of Change Management. Recruitment is underway with appointment expected by end of February.

9. Business Planning

The ELT discussed the upcoming Business Planning milestones and the need for an additional session to consider directorate-level plans. Handover arrangements for business planning leadership to Adam

Dearnley, the new Head of Finance, and to Nicola McBain, the interim Director of Corporate Services and Transformation, were noted ahead of Tom's departure on 5 December 2025.

10. ELT Reflections

The ELT provided their reflections on the meeting.

11. AOB

ASPEN Check-In

Tom confirmed that ASPEN continues to operate well post go-live. Additional resource has been allocated to support invoice processing. The upcoming month-end will be an important checkpoint for assessing system performance and workflow stability.

The next ELT meeting will be held on 9 December 2025.