



# Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) Strategic Advisory Board

**Date of Meeting: 27 May 2025**

**Location: Apex House, Edinburgh and MS Teams**

## **Present:**

- Kevin Quinlan, Chief Executive (Chair)
- Jo O'Hara, Non-Executive Advisor
- Clea Warner, Non-Executive Advisor
- Therese O'Donnell, Non-Executive Advisor
- Lyndon Jones, Non-Executive Advisor
- Tom Greenan, Director of Corporate Services & Transformation
- David Leven, Director of Commercial Development
- Graeme Hutton, Director of Net Zero
- Graeme Prest, Director of Land Management & Regions
- Michael Hymers, Head of Corporate Office
- Jo Ellis, Head of Planning & Environment
- Ian Considine, Head of Procurement
- David Exeter, Head of Digital
- Colin Buchanan, Head of Finance
- John Dougan, Regional Manager (South)
- Andy Hunt, Regional Manager (West)

## **1. Welcome, Introductions, Minutes & Action Points**

Kevin Quinlan thanked attendees and outlined the focus of the meeting which was on the Balanced Scorecard and development of the Corporate Plan.

It was noted that Jo O'Hara is to chair future Strategic Advisory Board meetings.

With minor revision to phrasing, it was agreed that the minutes of the Strategic Advisory Board meeting on 27 November 2024 were a true and accurate reflection.

## **2. Financial Performance (FY 24/25)**

Tom Greenan and Colin Buchanan submitted a presentation on FLS' provisional financial outturn for financial year 2024/25, which detailed income and reserves as being largely positive. Successes in optimising timber income, cost controls, progression within renewables, and

enhancing the organisation through the Fit for the Future programme were noted, and attention was brought to labour costs, restocking and organisational agility through the renewal or upgrade of assets.

Further cost control and a clear financial blueprint would be beneficial; FLS differs from other public bodies in that it is mostly self-sustaining – raising over 80% of its own income – however should work towards being fully self-sustaining.

Kevin updated the SAB on activities within Visitor Services – work has commenced on the update of car parking infrastructure and the renegotiation of contracts across the national estate which will increase income, ensure better value for the public purse, and allow FLS to place more care into managed land.

Tom stated that results from this financial year have been ‘very encouraging’ and suggested that the most suitable way to achieving this aim would be to continue gradually increasing revenue and managing costs, with further insights to be gleaned once Aspen, FLS’ new finance system, has been delivered.

Therese O’Donnell sought a deeper understanding of the report, querying differentials in costs and incomes between regions. Kevin explained that regional business foci vary, leading to differing challenges. It was also noted that accuracy in forecasting could be improved, though year-end timber income is traditionally difficult to predict as the operational year does not align with the financial year.

It was concluded that FLS will continue to refine its financial forecasting accuracy both during and after the implementation of Aspen. Aspen will equip business leaders across the organisation and enable them to make more informed decisions, in addition to showing the quantum and scales of FLS-wide incomes and expenditures.

### **3. Corporate Balanced Scorecard**

Tom introduced the Corporate Balanced Scorecard and presented its current draft to the board. He highlighted its main themes, and that it should provide direction in addition to establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which will inform colleagues as to how their work has agency-wide impact across FLS.

The SAB discussed the implementation of the Corporate Balanced Scorecard, its strengths and weaknesses.

Jo Ellis observed that the scorecard aims to be more of a cultural development tool; the scorecard should prompt discussion on finding and solving issues rather than exist as a pass-fail document with its sole focus on KPIs. David Leven added that the scorecard has allowed many items to be escalated to form corporate objectives.

#### **4. Corporate Plan Workshop**

Michael Hymers and Jo Ellis shared details of the Corporate Plan draft, outlining the background on elements of thinking so far, and asked that the board take time to discuss the plan's frameworks, timelines, and next steps with a view to completion of the plan this calendar year. Kevin elaborated on the plan's raison d'être – the Corporate Plan is not only a legal requirement, but should reaffirm the combined vision, mission and purpose of FLS colleagues, whilst also being a framework for strategic choices.

The data which constitutes Corporate Plan should be high level, however with sufficient detail to inform stakeholders by 'telling the FLS story' and communicating the agency's objectives, with commercially sustainable messaging throughout.

The Non-Executive Advisors provided their thoughts and guidance, and the SAB considered the Corporate Plan in the context of other aspects of FLS such as external communications, stakeholder engagement, and how the statements within the Corporate Plan could be seen to frame the organisation.

It was agreed that long term, high impact risk mitigation and future-proofing actions should be considered to have more of a place in the Corporate Plan.

The SAB endorsed both the proposed purpose of the Corporate Plan, and the document as a framework for making choices.

#### **6. AOB**

The board was notified that FLS will seek to advertise for additional Non-Executive Advisors with specialisations and areas of interest in Renewables, Visitor Services, and Digital Services.

**Date of Next Meeting: 16<sup>th</sup> October 202**