



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

13th January 2026

Attendees:

Kevin Quinlan, CEO (Chair)
Graeme Prest, Director of Land Management and Regions
Graeme Hutton, Director of Net Zero
David Leven, Director of Commercial Development
Nicola McBain, Interim Director of Corporate Services and Transformation
Shona Stewart, Portfolio Secretariat Assistant (Minutes)

Others:

Michael Hymers, Head of Corporate Office (item 3)
Julie Fitzpatrick, Head of People and Organisational Development (items, 3, 4, and 5)
Alison Forbes, EDI Advisor (item 4)

1. Review of Minutes

It was agreed that the minutes from the ELT meeting held on 9th December 2025 were a true and accurate reflection.

2. Summary of Action Points from Meeting

Ref.:	Action:	Owner:	Target Date:
01/01	To share Directorate Business Plans with paired non-executive advisors	Directors	14 January 2026
02/01	To conduct an FLS-wide Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) as part of each Directorate's Business Plan Workforce Planning exercise	Directors (with Julie Fitzpatrick to co-ordinate agency wide)	15 February 2026
03/01	To produce annual workforce movement reports for FY 2025/26 to 2028/29 inclusive, document the processes for managing workforce change, and develop three-year forecasts identifying areas likely to experience significant workforce shifts.	Julie Fitzpatrick	20 January 2026
04/01	To update the EDI action plan to reflect feedback from the women's report; work with internal comms to position this work as a) FLS wide work to improve inclusion for everyone and b) specific action for specific groups e.g. women	Alison Forbes	27 February 2026

05/01	To further analyse the free-text responses in the Staff Survey and produce heatmap reports by grade	Julie Fitzpatrick	29 January 2026
06/01	To work with the Senior Leadership Group on creating targeted Staff Survey Action Plans	Directors	31 March 2026

Action points (AP) 05/08, 01/09, 11/10 were closed.

Nicola McBain advised that Adam Dearnley, Head of Finance, will be providing revised target dates for AP 13/07 and AP 10/10.

David Leven and Graeme Prest will be meeting regarding AP 03/10.

Nicola McBain will review AP 14/10 with Adam Dearnley and Colin Buchanan.

For papers a new standard template is to be introduced, and it has been agreed that Directors must actively shape and sponsor papers before submission.

3. Business Plan Stocktake/Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) Meeting Preparation

Kevin Quinlan and Michael Hymers explained that the role of the FLS Non-Executive Advisors attending the SAB meeting on 22 January 2026 is to scrutinise and challenge the draft Three-Year Business Plan. It was noted that each Director has been paired with a Non-Executive Advisor and copy of their respective business planning template should be shared.

The Three-Year Business Plan Tracker was reviewed alongside timelines for both the Corporate and Business Plan.

Directors received an update from Julie Fitzpatrick on workforce planning activity. Julie will lead the development of a multi-year workforce profile covering 2025/26 to 2028/29. This will include a series of 'shape of movement' reports and document the organisational processes that support and govern workforce change. Finally, a forward-looking analysis will be produced to identify areas expected to see significant workforce changes over the next three years, enabling early planning and targeted support for the relevant teams.

AP 01/01: Directors to share Directorate Business Plans with paired non-executive advisors.

AP 02/01: Julie Fitzpatrick to conduct an FLS-wide Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) as part of each Directorate's Business Plan Workforce Planning exercise.

AP 03/01: Head of People and Organisational Development to produce annual workforce movement reports for FY 2025/26 to 2028/29 inclusive, document the processes for managing workforce change, and develop three-year forecasts identifying areas likely to experience significant workforce shift.

4. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Update

Nicola McBain acknowledged the significant work undertaken across the organisation on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, particularly in relation to women's experiences.

Alison Forbes reported that all six EDI Action Plan items agreed to in July 2025 are now either complete or in progress. She also highlighted that ELT members will be participating in two EDI development sessions with an external facilitator later this month.

The group discussed recruitment and retention. Women's career development emerged as a key area for focus. ELT members acknowledged the importance of providing structured opportunities for women to build confidence and understand progression pathways. It was noted that this also aligns with the wider organisational target to ensure development conversations take place consistently with all staff.

Further discussion followed about organisational performance, culture and staff experiences. There was agreement within the ELT that cultural change must be modelled from the top, with senior leaders setting the tone through how they run meetings, invite challenge and respond to feedback.

AP 04/01: EDI Advisor to update the EDI action plan to reflect feedback from the women's report; work with internal comms to position this work as a) FLS wide work to improve inclusion for everyone and b) specific action for specific groups e.g. women

5. FLS Staff Survey

Julie Fitzpatrick provided an overview of the results from the recent Staff Survey. Overall, the findings were positive, demonstrating meaningful progress over what has been a challenging year. In particular, Kevin Quinlan's Townhall sessions were highlighted as having had a strong impact in terms of staff engagement, perceptions of leadership, and improved satisfaction with change management.

Julie recommended that the ELT concentrate on a single strategic theme over the coming year to ensure clarity of focus and to maximise impact. The ELT agreed to prioritise inclusion, with a commitment to modelling inclusive behaviours at the senior level.

The Senior Leadership Group will be tasked with creating a targeted Staff Survey Action Plan for their specific area with a focus on improving organisational culture, psychological safety, and response to bullying/harassment. This approach is intended to ensure that leadership and management training is being translated into improved leadership behaviours across the organisation.

AP 05/01: Head of People and Organisational Development to further analyse the free-text responses in the Staff Survey and produce heatmap reports by grade.

AP 06/01: Directors to work with the Senior Leadership Group to advise on creating targeted Staff Survey Action Plans.

6. ELT Reflections

The ELT provided their reflections on the meeting.

7. AOB

There were no AOBs raised.

The next ELT meeting will be held on 20 January 2026.