



# Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) Strategic Advisory Board

**Date of Meeting: 16 October 2025**

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

**Present:**

Jo O'Hara (JO'H), Chair, Non-Exec

Lyndon Jones (LJ), Non-Exec

Clea Warner (CW), Non-Exec

Therese O'Donnell (TO'D), Non-Exec

Gio D'Alessio (GD'A), Non-Exec

Maf Smith (MS), Non-Exec

Nicola Gordon (NG), Non-Exec

Kevin Quinlan (KQ) Chief Executive FLS

Tom Greenan (TG), Director of Corporate Services & Transformation FLS

Graeme Prest (GP), Director of Land Management & Regions FLS

David Leven (DL), Director of Commercial Development FLS

Graeme Hutton (GH), Director of Net Zero FLS

Matthew Henderson, Secretariat Assistant, Minute Taker

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

Jo O'Hara thanked attendees, welcoming the new non-exec members to their first Strategic Advisory Board meeting. It was agreed that the minutes of the SAB meeting on 24 May 2025 were a true and accurate reflection.

J'OH advised that for future action point tracking, they should always have a named action owner and specific due date, rather than a team or 'ongoing'.

In light of this, **AP 13/24 due date revised** such that it can be closed following the Coillte visit.

## 2. CEO update

Kevin Quinlan provided an update on external challenges including timber income which makes up a majority of Forestry and Land Scotland's income, facing sluggish prices and high stock levels, while renewable income hasn't been as fast a revenue stream as hoped. Noted that action to improve internal processes to drive faster throughput of volumes were underway. The expectation though is that renewables capacity and income will double in the medium term to

allow the powering of 2 million homes by 2030, and the need to prepare internally for the ‘bow-wave’ impact of this on the business.

Cabinet Secretary approval was received this week, which allows FLS to proceed with consultation on their Corporate Plan, which will be finalised by the end of the calendar year. Themes already emerging include, concerns about community ownership in energy projects and scope for provisions for new agricultural entrants.

Scottish Government is requiring 20% back office cost reductions over the next couple of years, while simultaneously requesting additional services, creating challenges in reconciling priorities, finances and staffing through the business planning process concluding by end of December 2025.

### **3. Insights / Reflections**

It was agreed that articulating existing offer needs to be better than previous years, and ensuring FLS doesn't over commit to activities beyond that without the appropriate resources in place.

GD'A acknowledged that finding the financial sustainability balance is a challenge, and there is a need to continue to focus on the big picture, particularly with increased pressure from Scottish Government to make short-term reductions. Part of that challenge involves making investments in digital transformation that can be costly in the short term both in productivity and financially, but mid to long term make a big difference in efficiency.

Corporate Plan consultation feedback highlighted the need for language consistency, accuracy of details and better articulation of renewable energy's strategic importance given income doubling projections. Renewable energy infrastructure was identified as potentially more permanent than cyclical forestry assets, requiring proactive engagement with energy companies and government on community benefit expectations and cost pressures.

### **4. SAB Re-Set / Forward Look**

JO'H provided the SAB with a proposal for the new SAB framework and opened up discussion around the revised SAB remit. Strategic Advisory Board Terms of Reference were approved with a new structure focusing on four rotating themes: external operating environment, strategy and planning, organisational change and improvement, and operations, delivery and stewardship.

Non-Exec members will work both collectively in SAB meetings and bilaterally supporting individual directors, with annual review processes included.

The theme for the next SAB is organisational change and improvement. Innovation capacity needs strengthening beyond the current single-person team to capture grassroots ideas from

~1200 staff members, with suggestions made for internal entrepreneurship ('intrapreneurship') programmes and better utilisation of Scotland's innovation ecosystem.

**AP 01/25: GP to liaise with ELT and Innovation Manager, and present opportunities for innovation growth at next SAB (16/12/25).**

## **5. FLS Corporate Strategic Plan update**

KQ presented an update on the development of the new five-year FLS Corporate Strategic Plan (2026-2030). The revised draft introduces four strategic outcomes: People, Nature, Climate and Economy.

Discussion covered purpose (whether this is a compliance or a communication / promotional document), style and language, and the need for greater consistency (especially with figures). It was noted that community and people aspects were better articulated than previously. MS commented that the ambition around renewables currently sits in economy and not in climate and questioned whether this was appropriate. Overall on renewables it was agreed that there needed to be greater consideration of the strategic role of FLS within the renewables space. There will be a major shift in the income generation this brings in over the next 10 years but it's not clear from the plan that this is the case or what the organisation is doing to prepare.

In conclusion, there were 5 key points of feedback from the SAB:

- 1) Thorough checking of language, editing, internal consistency and all figures before publication
- 2) Clarification of purpose and primary and secondary audiences (nb. Significance of internal communications and promotion)
- 3) Greater clarity around underlying strategy on renewables 'bow-wave'
- 4) Need for improved stakeholder analysis following consultation
- 5) The need to include an explanation of 'how we got here' in the final document to demonstrate the extent of external scrutiny

Given the breadth and detail of the comments provided by the SAB, JO'H requested that the secretariat team provide a shared live document version of the plan which everyone can feed into with a view to discuss feedback and draft plan at next SAB before it's finalised.

**AP 02/25: Matthew Henderson to set up a shared document for the draft Corporate Plan that enables all participants to provide feedback collaboratively by 20/10/25.**

**AP 03/25: Jo O'Hara to ensure Non-Exec SAB members provide feedback to shared draft Corporate Plan by 03/11/25 at the latest.**

## **6. Break**

## **7. FLS Three-Year Business Plan Update**

Tom Greenan provided an update on the three-year business plan with a look at the emerging themes. The business plan represents a significant shift for FLS from financial planning on an annual basis to genuine operational business planning through a three-year, rolling plan, which aims to build collaboratively by business streams with value stream analysis and rolling annual updates.

This plan is primarily inward looking, with targets by value stream. TG explained that the process of producing the Business Plan is split into several iterations, and while currently the specifics of reductions are clear, how they will be achieved is being worked on. This includes having challenge sessions where several options will be reviewed for how to reduce and by how much. It is important this is a collaborative piece rather than each directorate working in isolation.

The business planning process aims to reconcile headcount reductions with production volume increases and digital transformation investments, requiring sharp focus on initiatives that materially shift performance, rather than provide incremental improvements.

The SAB welcomed the move to a three-year business plan, and the importance of this in building the 'one FLS narrative' and the golden thread running from corporate objectives through to individual teams and roles.

## **8. FLS Corporate Balanced Scorecard FY 25/26**

JO'H explained to the newer members of the SAB that this will be a standing item on the agenda for SAB meetings moving forward. TG presented two papers, one on how the Scorecard was formulated, and the other is the P5 update of the Balanced Scorecard. Balanced Scorecard implementation provides a performance framework across four pillars with directorate-level scorecards. While it required refinement of metrics and variance analysis, there was previously very little information to guide non-exec's so this will allow informed questions to be asked and will only improve with the implementation of ASPEN.

In order to maintain timekeeping, JO'H advised she would like to have a little extra time for discussion of the Balanced Scorecard at the next SAB meeting. TG commented that if there are any questions members have prior to then, they are welcome to contact him directly.

**AP 04/25: Secretariat to ensure sufficient time included in future agendas for consideration of Balanced Scorecard.**

## **9. AOB**

Forward Look:

The next SAB meeting will focus on organisational change and improvement, including culture, communication, and managing creative tension during transformation. The theme of change will be discussed at ELT level prior to this, looking at various approaches to change.

There was a discussion relating to the date of the next meeting given the annual schedule and interactions with the ARC.

**AP 05/25: Kevin Quinlan to confirm if next SAB meeting will remain on 16/12/25 or be rescheduled to January 2026 by 27/10/25.**

**Potential date of Next Meeting: 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025**