**Forestry and Land Scotland Strategic Board Meeting**

| **Date of Meeting**  | Wednesday 22nd January 2020  |
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| **Time**  | 11.00 am  |
| **Location**  | Central Boardroom, 4th Floor, Silvan House  |
| **Attendees**  | **Present:** * 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
* Pamela Zielinski, Non-Executive Advisor
* Linda McKenna, Secretariat

**In Attendance:** * Sallie Bailey, Regional Manager (South)
* Dave Exeter, Business Services (Item 5)
* Gwen Hamilton, Corporate Services (Item 6)
* Carol Houston, Business Services (Item 5)
* Carol McGinnes, Regional Manager (Central)  Agata McWhirter, Business Services (Item 3)

 **Apologies:** * Lisa Tennant, Non-Executive Advisor
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 **1. Non – Executive Session – Introduction to the FLS Trade Unions**

This session was held in private.

# Welcome and Introductions

Simon Hodgson welcomed everyone to the meeting and initiated roundtable introductions. Apologies were noted as outlined above.

Simon provided an overview of issues being discussed by Scottish Government colleagues that could have an influence on FLS. These included the delay to the Budget following the General Election and uncertainty as to what the settlement for Scotland is likely to be. Agriculture and Land Use following Brexit and in relation to Climate Change was also an issue raised.

Simon advised that discussions on how FLS can help organisations with Carbon Offsetting were continuing and a proposal had been submitted to Edinburgh University. It was suggested that the opportunities could be shared with the Institute of Directors. Michael Hymers advised that following Mr. Ewing’s conversations with the Oil and Gas industry on carbon offsetting opportunities, Michael was due to meet with the Head of Strategy from Oil and Gas UK.

Discussion also took place around the forthcoming the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) due to be held in Glasgow, and the opportunities for Scottish Government, including FLS to promote its work in relation to addressing the Climate Emergency. More information is expected from Scottish Government in the lead up to the event.

# FLS Assurance Framework

Agata McWhirter delivered a presentation highlighting the work taking place on developing the revised Assurance Framework. This included proposed goals for the assurance framework, proposed actions to align the framework to the SG Internal Control Checklists, and assurance mapping.

Following the presentation, discussion took place around aligning the Assurance Framework to job descriptions, aligning the process/timelines to the Audit and Risk Committee meetings (i.e. 3 per year rather than 4); ensuring that the right questions are being asked within the process with the right people; ensuring that it doesn’t become a ‘tick box exercise’ and that it helps with culture change; and ensuring that the timescales set out for implementation of the Assurance Framework were realistic. Graeme Hutton answered questions posed by the non-exec advisers and confirmed that the Business Services function was leading on the process, which would be developed further and integrated to the Business Plans next year (21/22).

Board members thanked Agata for her presentation and work taken place to date.

# New Woodland Investment Programme

John Mair presented information on the New Woodland Investment Programme (NWIP). John advised that the programme involves selling woodlands contributing least to the delivery of public benefits and using the proceeds to invest in woodland creation, on the existing landbank and on newly acquired land. It was agreed with the Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Ewing, last year that a review of NWIP was due.

Conclusions from the review suggested that NWIP had achieved its primary purposes by successfully delivering a repositioning of the portfolio and contributing to new woodland planting targets. A new approach is now needed in order to help FLS respond to the Climate Emergency and so the NWIP should conclude at the end of its current five year term in May 2021. John advised that the recommendation was to develop five new work streams rather than continue with NWIP.

Board members discussed the issues raised in the presentation and in responding to questions, John advised that although woodlands were being sold as part of NWIP, they were required to remain as woodlands, and so did not reflect a net loss to Scottish woodlands.

There also followed a discussion around the role of carbon offsetting in the new workstreams. It was agreed that this had the potential to be an increasingly significant income stream for FLS and could also benefit other organisations via receipt of carbon credits and other ‘green’ incentives currently being considered by Scottish Government colleagues. In response to a question on seed and sapling supply in order to meet carbon offsetting requests, Simon confirmed that FLS was in the process of negotiating an extension to Newton Nursery.

Board members thanked John for the overview of the work to date.

# FLS Digital Strategy

Dave Exeter and Carol Houston presented an outline of the plans for a new Digital Strategy. It was proposed that the strategy be based around four Pillars: People, Data, Technology and Services. A set of principles would also guide the development of the strategy, which included ‘data-driven decision making’ and ‘Innovative, proactive and responsive services’. Dave advised that the scope of the strategy would have to factor in the need to operate within Scottish Government parameters and available funding. Dave invited comments on the structure and plans to further develop the strategy.

During the following discussion a number of issues were raised including the need to consider where FLS is in terms of organisational transition, applications required and the use of data.

It was also recommended that further information should be provided on the purpose and context of the strategy, and that the list of principles should be simplified. Board members advised that the strategy should link with the organisational vision, mission and outcomes. The outcomes set out within the strategy required further consideration to ensure that they were outcomes.

Carol Houston advised that consideration would also be given to recognition of the different needs of the workforce, those who are centrally located in offices and those who are rural and out of the office most days.

Board members thanked Dave and Carol for the opportunity to comment on the strategy at this early stage of development.

# FLS Communications and Marketing Strategy Action Plan

Gwen Hamilton provided an overview of the action plan currently being developed to support the implementation of the Communications and Marketing Strategy. This identified channels, resources, evaluation methods and timing as to how FLS would communicate messages over the next three years.

Gwen advised that the organisation needed to be clear and careful about messaging to ensure consistency. There also needs to be consideration about where the investment in communications is made and to be able to see what channels are working. The most popular media story last year was about an archaeological site on the national forests and land which may have been used as a distillery.

Board members discussed the content of the paper. Suggestions included consideration of an annual plan rather than 3 year plan, and the opportunity to set out aspirations and cost, eg if spend £XX on social media, how many people would this reach and what are the benefits of reaching a wider audience? Michael Hymers advised that because this was relatively new to FLS, we still had to really consider what we want in terms of reach and marketing. Gwen advised that the three year plan was the starting point and it would be developed into annual plans which reflected the journey people were on in their understanding of the work of the organisation.

Further feedback provided on the plan included the need to link to the Corporate Plan, eg to articulate messages around the corporate outcomes such as promoting diversity. Simon advised that there was a need to focus and target visitors to the national forests and land, but also our customers such as timber customers and those interested in carbon offsetting opportunities. There would need to be two strands of promotion: to government and industry, and business/corporate arena. More work was required in relation to marketing carbon offsetting and this would be developed over the next year.

Board members thanked Gwen for her overview and for the opportunity to comment on the plan.

# Non-Executive Session – FLS People Strategy

This session was held in private.

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 16th April 2020.

Heading 1 bold

The Lampstand fights two trailers. One subway grew up, then Minnesota auctioned off five trailers. One Chrysanthemum towed two cats. Umpteen irascible orifices perused one mat, because the fountain towed two purple Jabberwockies.

Heading 1

The Lampstand fights two trailers. One subway grew up, then Minnesota auctioned off five trailers. One Chrysanthemum towed two cats. Umpteen irascible orifices perused one mat, because the fountain towed two purple Jabberwockies.

Heading 2 bold

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Heading 4

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Bullets

* One chrysanthemum towed two cats
* Five very progressive bureaux bought purple trailers
* One subway grew up, then Minnesota auctioned off five trailers

Numbers

1. One chrysanthemum towed two cats
2. Five very progressive bureaux bought purple trailers
3. One subway grew up, then Minnesota auctioned off five trailers