



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

15 April 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

Apologies:

Nicola McBain, Director of Corporate Services and Transformation

Others:

Jim Higgins, Land Agency Programme Manager (item 3)
Julie Fitzpatrick, Head of People and OD (item 4)
Callum Macinnes, Head of HR (item 4)
David Craig, Transformation Programme and Planning Manager (item 5)

Summary of Action Points (AP) from Meeting

Ref.:	Action:	Owner:	Target Date:
18/03	Revise agriculture action plan to focus on outcomes, targets, and clearer narrative; strengthen FLS's narrative; establish Agricultural Programme Reserve (incl. staff costs) with Finance	Jim Higgins	30 June 2026
19/03	Develop workforce narrative showing direction of travel by value stream, detailed internal workforce baseline and 3 year trajectory.	Julie Fitzpatrick	30 April 2026
20/03	Present updated proposal for Change Management Framework	David Craig	26 May 2026

1. Review of Minutes

It was agreed that the minutes from the ELT meeting held on 31 March 2026 were a true and accurate reflection.

2. Stocktake on Action Tracker

The ELT reviewed the status of the Action Tracker, noting that most outstanding actions are in progress, with a small number which require an update from their respective owners.

3. FLS Approach to Agriculture

ELT considered FLS's role in agriculture in the context of ministerial expectations, statutory obligations, and organisational priorities. Agriculture was reaffirmed as fitting into the "more" rather than "core" category of priorities for FLS (unless otherwise directed by ministers) albeit as part of an established part of balanced land management.

The political context was acknowledged, particularly sensitivity around starter farms and tenant security. With regard to Starter Farms, ELT noted the current position was original portfolio of nine starter farms; two disposed of; three in negotiation; and four remaining where tenants wish to stay but cannot purchase. ELT accepted that FLS is politically unfeasible to exit the remaining four farms at this time.

It was agreed that FLS will not acquire additional agricultural land unless funded by SG. The remaining four starter farms will move to long-term tenancies (circa 15–20 years).

Future agricultural lettings should prioritise longer-term, largely bare lets; minimise landlord liability wherever possible; and any expansion beyond current activity must be Minister-led, explicitly funded and clear on cost and capacity implications.

ELT supported the direction of travel of the draft agriculture action plan but required clear articulation of outcomes, not just activities; outcome measures or targets over time; and improved narrative on what FLS already delivers (e.g. annual lettings).

It was confirmed there would be continuation of the nationally coordinated / regionally delivered model. National coordination seen as essential to manage consistency and political sensitivity.

In relation to funding, agriculture recognised as largely a public / social good, not a revenue-generating activity. Therefore ELT agreed that agriculture costs should not sit with regional budgets. Instead an Agricultural Programme Reserve will be used to meet costs, including Starter farm liabilities; Landlord obligations; Consultancy; and Potentially staff costs (subject to finance advice).

AP 18/03: Land Agency Programme Manager to revise agriculture action plan to focus on outcomes, targets, and clearer narrative; strengthen FLS's narrative; establish Agricultural Programme Reserve (incl. staff costs) with Finance.

4. Workforce Planning

ELT reviewed the workforce narrative and emerging data, agreeing that a clear narrative is required for managers and staff, including careful consideration on the communication of headcount figures at this time.

ELT endorsed a value-stream-based view of the workforce as most meaningful for management. They also recognised that consideration must be given to fairness of baselines due to vacancies and externally funded posts.

It was agreed that audience specific narratives would be developed to support trajectory of travel. Further work was required to confirm baseline position (including treatment of

vacancies); distinguish externally funded posts; and develop a credible three year workforce trajectory.

AP19/03: Head of People and OD to develop workforce narrative showing direction of travel by value stream, detailed internal workforce baseline and 3 year trajectory.

5. Change Management Framework

ELT reviewed the proposed direction for a unified change management framework. The intent to replace fragmented guidance with a single, organisation wide framework was supported in principle.

They agreed that greater clarity on the practical shape of the framework was required, alongside assurance it will be proportionate, not overly bureaucratic with clear linkage to existing agreements with trade unions.

ELT requested that a revised framework was brought back at a future date, that included details of how the framework will be used in practice; how it will be tested and embedded; and expected benefits and return on investment.

AP20/03: Transformation Programme and Planning Manager to present updated proposal for Change Management Framework,

6. ELT Reflections

The ELT gave their reflections on the meeting.

7. AOB

There were no items raised under AOB.

The next ELT meeting will be held on 28 April 2026.