



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

17 March 2026

### Attendees:

Kevin Quinlan, CEO (Chair)  
Graeme Prest, Director of Land Management and Regions  
Graeme Hutton, Director of Net Zero  
Nicola McBain, Director of Corporate Services and Transformation  
David Leven, Director of Commercial Development

### Others:

Michael Hymers, Head of Corporate Office (items 2, 6, and 7)  
Chris Murray, Cloud & Systems Integration Manager (item 5)  
Avanade representatives (item 5)  
Adam Dearnley, Head of Finance (item 6)  
Jason Liggins, Head of Health, Safety & Wellbeing (item 7)

### Summary of Action Points (AP) from Meeting

Ref.:	Action:	Owner:	Target Date:
6/03	Coordinate with Head of Finance and Change Manager to align Business Plan milestones and Monthly Balance Scorecard, and schedule preparatory meeting for Financial Sustainability deep dive.	Nicola McBain	15 April 2026
7/03	Bring Stakeholder Management/Community Engagement scoping paper to support the ELT's upcoming deep dive.	Michael Hymers	28 April 2026
8/03	Prepare business cases for three prototype use cases, confirming whether land management use case is region-specific or applicable across all regions, and assess the resourcing requirements for implementing the proposed co-build model.	Chris Murray	12 May 2026
9/03	Provide detailed explanation for the cost variance in North Region deer larder project tender, including assessment of specification and market factors prior to approval.	Adam Dearnley, Graeme Hutton & Alex MacLeod	15 April 2026

10/03	Update and consolidate business case pipeline, ensuring all relevant building and operational projects are included in preparation for ELT review.	Adam Dearnley	23 June 2026
11/03	Expand the Health & Safety Leadership Training to include the Senior Leadership Group and ensure forestry-specific content is incorporated.	Jason Liggins & Rhondda Salmond	?

**1. Review of Minutes**

It was agreed that the minutes from the ELT meeting held on 10 February 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. ELT Forward Look**

The ELT reviewed the Forward Look for upcoming meetings, confirming future agenda items, scheduling of key reports, and identified the need for further updates on several topics including Health & Safety, Workforce Management, and other strategic options. The team were updated on the status of discussions regarding workforce reporting, and the progress made on tracking headcounts changes, contract types and funding sources was highlighted.

**4. “Deep Dive” on theme for Audit and Risk Committee**

Kevin Quinlan led a discussion on which topics should be selected for upcoming ELT ‘deep dives’ based on a review of the Corporate Risk Register. The consensus was to prioritise financial sustainability pipelines, stakeholder management, and supply chains as future focus areas.

Rhondda Salmond was asked to commission pre-meetings and preparatory work for the financial sustainability deep dive, with Michael task to present a scoping paper on stakeholder management to the ELT. The group also discussed the frequency and scheduling of deep dives, aiming for quarterly cadence.

**AP 6/03: Director of Corporate Services & Transformation to coordinate with Head of Finance and Change Manager to align Business Plan milestones and Monthly Balance Scorecard, and schedule preparatory meeting for a Financial Sustainability deep dive.**

**AP 7/03: Head of Corporate Office to bring Stakeholder Management/Community Engagement scoping paper to support the ELT’s upcoming deep dive.**

**5. Artificial Intelligence & Automation Follow-Up**

Representatives of Avanade presented findings from their discovery work on FLS’ AI and automation readiness, recommending a hybrid approach to build foundational capability and deliver three pilot use cases. These include automating reporting & data collation for programme planning; developing a low-code application to streamline visitor services requests; and using an agentic AI meeting assistant to support procurement and contract management meetings. Each use case was discussed in terms of business value, technical approach, and reusability.

The recommendation was for a hybrid approach; developing a co-build model where Avanade would assist in establishing AI governance and foundational capability while jointly delivering these three proofs of concept, aiming to build internal skills and reduce long-term supplier dependency.

The team emphasised that the approach should be designed to build FLS' internal capabilities through workshops and hands-on involvement to ensure that staff are able to continue developing and scaling AI solutions independently after the initial pilots.

The ELT agreed to proceed with the business case development alongside the ELT providing feedback on the findings and next steps. Chris Murray and the wider AI & Automation Project team was asked to work with relevant departments on commitments, timelines and resource requirements. The importance of ensuring cross-regional applicability and communicating with relevant stakeholders was noted.

**AP 8/03: Cloud Systems & Integration Manager to prepare business cases for three prototype use cases, confirming whether land management use case is region-specific or applicable across all regions, and assess the resourcing requirements for implementing the proposed co-build model.**

## **6. Reserves, Disposals & Investment Update**

Adam Dearnley presented an update on the status of business cases, reserves, and the investment pipeline. The ELT discussed project slippage and cost overruns whilst also observing the need for clearer processes and timelines for approval and capital planning.

The team considered the complexity of the investment approval process – with multiple channels required for approval to take place – and the need for a consolidated pipeline. It was agreed to move to a quarterly review cycle, with the next major update scheduled for the end of June.

The importance of aligning disposals and investment plans to ensure affordability was highlighted, and there was focus on providing clear targets for disposals, bearing in mind the impact of planned investments on reserves.

**AP 9/03: Head of Finance, Regional Manager and Director of Net Zero to provide detailed explanation for the cost variance in North Region deer larder project tender, including assessment of specification and market factors prior to approval.**

**AP 10/03: Head of Finance to update and consolidate business case pipeline, ensuring all relevant building and operational projects are included in preparation for ELT review.**

## **7. Quarterly Health, Safety & Wellbeing Update**

Jason Liggins provided an interim update on Health & Safety performance, highlighting reductions in employee injuries (12%), vehicle accidents (29%), and occupational health reports (87%), while also addressing ongoing actions and challenges related to incident reporting and assurance systems. Improvements were in part attributed to targeted interventions such as telematics and awareness campaigns.

The update also covered trends in incident types, with slips, trips, and manual handling incidents remaining prevalent. The ELT discussed the importance of near-miss and hazard reporting, efforts to raise awareness, and improve data quality.

Progress was reported on implementing a new Health & Safety management system, with ongoing market surveillance and focus group feedback included. The need for AI-enabled features and modular implementation was discussed, with an aim for a September rollout established.

Concerns were raised about the impact of headcount reductions on Health & Safety assurance, with Jason noting the importance of maintaining face-to-face support alongside the challenges of managing welfare facilities and compliance with limited resources.

**AP 11/03: Head of Health, Safety & Wellbeing and Change Manager to expand the Health & Safety Leadership Training to include the Senior Leadership Group and ensure forestry-specific content is incorporated.**

**8. ELT Reflections**

The ELT gave their reflections on the meeting.

**9. AOB**

The ELT discussed areas of outstanding business outwith of the meeting.

The next ELT meeting will be held on 31 March 2026.