



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

28 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
Nicola McBain, Director of Corporate Services and Transformation

Others:

James Kyle, Head of Harvesting Support (item 4)
Rhondda Salmond, Change Manager (item 7, 8)
Adam Dearnley, Head of Finance (item 9)

Summary of Action Points (AP) from Meeting

Ref.:	Action:	Owner:	Target Date:
01/04	Circulate six-month comparative Direct Production Review data	James Kyle	15 May 2026
02/04	Return Direct Production Review to ELT 21 July with 12 months data for decision	Graeme Prest / James Kyle	23 July 2026
03/04	Arrange for the outsourced Service, Maintenance and Repair contract to be terminated ensuring warranty arrangements are protected and for staff to be advised on the outcome as soon as possible.	James Kyle	15 May 2026
04/04	Refresh financial sustainability and workforce corporate risks. Directors to ensure quarterly review of Risks in their Directorates and regular discussion of issues.	Nicola McBain / Michael Hymers	21 May 2026
05/04	Integrate protected species compliance into appropriate corporate risk with action plan	Michael Hymers	21 May 2026
06/04	Schedule fuller ELT stocktake of overall risk register and scoring	Rhondda Salmond	5 May 2026
07/04	Arrange Aspen user workshops and review reporting capability options	Adam Dearnley	?

1. Review of Minutes

It was agreed that the minutes from the ELT meeting held on 15 April 2026 were a true and accurate reflection.

2. Review of Action Points

The ELT reviewed the status of the Action Tracker, noting that most outstanding actions are in progress. It was recognised that a number of actions had proliferated and were creating unnecessary complexity. ELT agreed that clearer consolidation would improve oversight and accountability.

3. ELT Forward Look

Kevin Quinlan (KQ) emphasised the importance of maintaining strategic focus and operating at the appropriate level of altitude, given the scale of change and governance activity underway. The ELT noted the need to balance substantive strategic discussion with necessary assurance items. No amendments were proposed at this stage.

4. Direct Production Review Update

ELT were reminded of their commitment to allow evidence to inform future options and to avoid premature conclusions, and that this is the beginning of an evidence-based review, rather than a decision point. The review relates to Direct Production Unit arrangements and was established to move beyond anecdotal perspectives and create a credible evidence base.

James Kyle (JK) outlined how the data has been gathered and governed, emphasising that the data informs but does not determine future decisions and must be considered alongside wider operational context. JK will circulate further data covering the most recent six-month period to provide clearer insight into current trends. Early indications suggest improved performance in more recent months.

ELT discussed the importance of first understanding what the data is showing before moving to interpretation, and the need to balance quantitative evidence with professional judgement. It was agreed that no decisions would be taken at this stage and that the item would return to the ELT on 21 July 2026 for decision based on data for 12 months up to that point.

The ELT also reviewed the 12-month trial of outsourcing service, maintenance and repair for two DP machines (a harvester and a forwarder), launched in April 2025. The results show that in-house MES provision delivered lower costs and higher machine availability.

Members recognised this strong performance by MES and asked for the outsourcing trial to conclude as soon as possible, while ensuring appropriate warranty arrangements remain in place and to advise staff on the outcome

AP 01/04: Circulate six-month comparative Direct Production Review data

AP 02/04: Return Direct Production Review to ELT 21 July with 12 months data for decision

AP 03/04: Arrange for the outsourced Service, Maintenance and Repair contract to be terminated ensuring warranty arrangements are protected and for staff to be advised on the outcome as soon as possible

5. Monitoring Business Plan Delivery

Nicola Mc Bain (NMcb) outlined the emerging approach to monitoring and reporting delivery of the Business Plan. Emphasis was placed on achieving a single, consistent narrative across business plan reporting, workforce planning, risk and audit, and avoiding duplication or conflicting messages. ELT noted that fragmented reporting increases burden and reduces clarity. ELT agreed the direction of travel and asked that the approach be further refined.

6. Lunch

7. Quarterly Risk Review

The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed in advance of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). ELT expressed concern that the register had become overly static despite changes in the operating environment. Agreement was reached that risks relating to compliance, financial sustainability and workforce should be refreshed.

Extended discussion took place on protected species compliance, including recent incidents, FOI disclosures and potential legal and reputational implications. ELT emphasised that risk management must be proportionate, integrated with strategy and focused on real risks rather than compliance alone.

AP 04/04: Refresh financial sustainability and workforce corporate risks. Directors to ensure quarterly review of Risks in their Directorates and regular discussion of issues.

8. Quarterly Audit Review

The Audit Tracker was reviewed and noted to be in a stronger position than the risk register, with progress evident on many actions. Delays were often attributed to timelines of updates rather than lack of delivery. The Audit Tracker was approved for progression to ARC.

AP 05/04: Integrate protected species compliance into appropriate corporate risk with action plan

AP 06/04: Schedule fuller ELT stocktake of overall risk register and scoring

9. Finance Update (Draft FY 25/26)

Adam Dearnley (AD) provided an update on year-end progress, balance sheet reconciliations, and the draft Annual Report and Accounts timetable. The Budget Monitoring Report outlook was discussed, with emerging upside in timber income noted.

An update on the Aspen system was provided. Core functionality is operating as expected, however access to management information and reporting remains the principal challenge. Short-term pressure within the Aspen support team was noted but nonetheless regional workshops will be held to reinforce staff continued learning on how to use the new system.

AP 07/04: Arrange Aspen user workshops and review reporting capability options

10. Meeting Preparation: Audit and Risk Committee (21 May 2026)

Preparations for the forthcoming ARC were discussed. It was agreed that relevant papers, including risk and audit updates, would be finalised in line with ARC deadlines.

11. ELT Reflections

The ELT gave their reflections on the meeting.

12. AOB

There were no items raised under AOB.

The next ELT meeting will be held on 12 May 2026.