



Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Meeting 12 May 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:

Michael Hymers, Head of Corporate Affairs, Performance & Engagement (item 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 & 11)
Jason Liggins, Head of Health, Safety & Wellbeing (item 5)
Julie Fitzpatrick, Head of People & Organisational Development (item 7)
Callum Macinnes, Head of Human Resources (item 7)
Fiona Dundas, Senior HR Manager (item 7)
Colin Buchanan, Senior Finance Manager (item 7)

Summary of Action Points (AP) from Meeting

Ref.:	Action:	Owner:	Target Date:
01/05	HR/Finance to update WFP spreadsheet including updating the trajectory over three years which should at minimum be the mandated 2%, 3%, 5% reduction by end March 27, March 28, and March 29, respectively.	Colin Buchanan & Callum Macinnes	12 June 2026
02/05	HR/Finance to reflect in future WFP reports, Paybill costs as part of reporting setting out how the baseline and the trajectory of reductions over the coming three years translate into total Paybill costs.	Colin Buchanan	12 June 2026
03/05	HR/Finance to reaffirm rules for allocation of time to at most two value streams.	Colin Buchanan	12 June 2026
04/05	HR to circulate draft to ELT for comment by 26 May for sign off by CEO by 28 May.	Julie Fitzpatrick	26 May 2026
05/05	Director of Land Management & Regions to consult with colleagues to ascertain the actual outcome for the outstanding KPI's, to allow the ELT to review the organisations performance.	Graeme Prest	20 May 2026



06/05	Directors are asked to review the 'draft' FLS Balanced Scorecard FY 26/27 and answer the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there any KPI's that require to be amended?• Are there any additional KPI's required?• Do any of the approved targets for FY 26/27 need to be amended? Either being increased (where we have exceeded them in FY 25/26) or reduced (where we have not met them in FY 25/26)?• Are there any KPI's where it would be helpful to introduce tolerances (e.g. 3,300 km³obs despatched +/- 10%)?	Directors	20 May 2026
07/05	Directors are asked to nominate a senior FLS lead (from the appropriate Directorate) for each Internal Audit scheduled for FY 26/27. The 'lead' responsible for engagement and ensuring that the front-end preparation occurs.	Directors	05 June 2026

1. Review of Minutes

It was agreed that the minutes from the ELT meeting held on 28 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.

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. The ELT agreed to retain the proposed meeting on the 07 July 2026.

4. Post Election Planning

The ELT had a brief discussion on the outcome of the Scottish Parliamentary Elections, noting that until a Government had been formed, no further preparatory work could be done.

5. Quarter Health & Safety & Wellbeing Update

The ELT noted the following improvements:

- Reduction in employee injury accidents (slight).



- Reduction in contractor accidents.
- Significant reduction in work-related ill health (particularly Lyme disease).
- Reduction in vehicle accidents (~25%).

Those Improvements are linked to:

- Training and awareness.
- Preventative measures (e.g. tick protection).
- Behavioral changes and monitoring (e.g. vehicle telematics).

The ELT noted the following ongoing concerns:

- Accident rates still reflect a high-risk operational environment.
- Continuous focus needed on:
 - Behavior.
 - Risk awareness.
 - Near-miss reporting.
 - Evidence-based management.

Performance is improving, but safety remains a core organisational risk requiring sustained attention.

The ELT discussed FLS's internal governance and associated processes / procedures for Health, Safety & welfare, noting the introduction of a new approach:

- Learning and assurance visits instead of traditional audits.
- Focus on support and improvement, not just compliance.
- Risk-based targeting of high-impact areas.

The ELT endorsed the approach to ensure processes are practical, proportionate, and improvement focused.

6. Workforce Management Update

The ELT had a full discussion on Workforce Management. The outcomes are summarized in Annex I, attached to these minutes. (The Annex has been designed to be shared as appropriate with colleagues).

AP 01/05: HR/Finance to update WFP spreadsheet including updating the trajectory over three years which should at minimum be the mandated 2%, 3%, 5% reduction by end March 27, March 28, and March 29, respectively.

AP 02/05: HR/Finance to reflect in future WFP reports, Paybill costs as part of reporting setting out how the baseline and the trajectory of reductions over the coming three years translate into total Paybill costs.

AP 03/05: HR/Finance to reaffirm rules for allocation of time to at most two value streams.



AP 04/05: HR to circulate draft to ELT for comment by 26 May for sign off by CEO by 28 May.

7. Performance Monitoring / FLS Balanced Scorecard

The ELT briefly discussed the performance of those Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) where the P12 actual was known.

AP 05/05: Director of Land Management & Regions to consult with colleagues to ascertain the actual outcome for the outstanding KPI's, to allow the ELT to review the organisations performance.

Directors asked for additional guidance as to what to consider, prior to the 'draft' FLS Balanced Scorecard being reviewed at the subsequent meeting.

AP 06/05: Directors are asked to review the 'draft' FLS Balanced Scorecard FY 26/27 and answer the following:

- Are there any KPI's that require to be amended?
- Are there any additional KPI's required?
- Do any of the approved targets for FY 26/27 need to be amended? Either being increased (where we have exceeded them in FY 25/26) or reduced (where we have not met them in FY 25/26)?
- Are there any KPI's where it would be helpful to introduce tolerances (e.g. 3,300 km³obs despatched +/- 10%)?

8. AOB

Permanent Secretary / DG Net Zero visit to Glentress

The ELT were given a brief overview of the proposed visit, intended to showcase Scotland's national forests and land and the work of Forestry and Land Scotland. Providing an insight into Operational forestry activity and the End-to-end value chain (from planting to timber products). Whilst also demonstrating the wider public benefits.

The visit programme includes an executive overview and safety briefing, and operational site visits including Windymains Timber.

Internal audit and assurance

The ELT discussed internal audit outcomes, noting that a "reasonable assurance" rating is expected, which is seen as a positive step.

Some caveats remain, including outstanding audit work and/or a need for additional financial information. There is a recognition that FLS is in a better position than previous years. Stronger engagement with internal audit is improving outcomes.



ELT agreed that the organization needs to use audit as a “critical friend”, not just a compliance exercise. Directors need to ensure that there is stronger front-end preparation for audits and/or that teams provide clear evidence and documentation.

AP 07/05: Directors are asked to nominate a senior FLS lead (from the appropriate Directorate) for each Internal Audit scheduled for FY 26/27. The ‘lead’ responsible for engagement and ensuring that the front-end preparation occurs.



Workforce Management Decisions – Executive Leadership Team Meeting (12 May 2026)

1 Determining the baseline for WFP

After some deliberation, a baseline of 1084 for 13/03/26 was agreed based on the original end March 2026 target of 1069 plus the fifteen posts which are funded by the private sector (currently all FLOs). This figure of 1084 enables resourcing of the 1053 actual FTE at 31/3/26 (the FTE on the payroll) plus thirty-one of the total vacancies at 31/3/26. The thirty-one allowance was pro-rated across Directorates by workforce size as below. Thus, posts that are externally private funded (e.g. FLOs) will be part of Directors baseline though funding source for posts will be separately reported.

Table of 31 March 2026 baseline agreed at ELT -

FTEs	31/03 actual FTEs	Pro Rate vacancies Target to Actuals	Target	Adjusted vacancies agreed at ELT	Total NEW Baseline
Corp	125.0	3.7	128.7	2.0	127.0
Commercial	51.0	1.5	52.5	3.0	54.0
Land Mgt	786.0	23.1	809.1	24.0	810.0
NZ	91.0	2.7	93.7	2.0	93.0
Total	1,053.0	31.0	1,084.0	31.0	1,084.0

Key columns 31/03 actual and Adjusted vacancies and Total NEW Baseline. 2nd column was simple pro rata of 31 vacancies based on actual FTEs. ELT agreed the adjusted vacancy split at 12/05 ELT

Target = 1069 previously shared with SG + 15 FLO roles externally funded = 1,084. Vacancies of 31 being 1,084 less 1,053

Action - Colin and Callum to update WFP spreadsheet including updating the trajectory over 3 years which should at minimum be the mandated 2%, 3%, 5% reduction by end March 27, March 28, and March 29, respectively.

2 Reporting of Funding Sources for Posts

Funding source of all posts (FLS main, SG project funded or private-sector externally funded) to be included in a separate section of the workforce planning report. Furthermore, all future external funded posts should be Fixed term Contracts and external funding should cover the full cost of the post, including on costs.

Action – HR/Finance to reflect in future WFP reports. Colin to provide Paybill costs as part of reporting setting out how the baseline and the trajectory of reductions over the coming 3 years translates into total Paybill costs.



3 Allocation of staff time to Value Streams

In general, in practise staff will work to deliver for one value stream or at most two. Whilst there may be rare exceptions where staff work for more than two value streams the administrative burden of dividing time across more than two value streams was not judged worthwhile.

Action – HR/ Finance to reaffirm rules for allocation of time to at most two value streams.

4 Pay Band 6B Posts

Whilst in principle FLS wants to advertise all posts internally first, it was recognised that there is limited internal interest in 6B posts which are entry level posts. Agreed we allow advertising of 6B post to go straight to external, with internal advertising running concurrently.

5 FLS Wide Advertising of posts

Agreed all vacancies must be advertised FLS wide to preserve equality of opportunity. (Please note that those on STTA's are not considered to be "internal" as they are not considered to be civil servants therefore cannot apply for internal vacancies).

6 External Advertising

Authorisation to advertise externally can be permitted at start of recruitment process, and paperwork will be updated accordingly IF approved by the relevant Director AND provided they demonstrate to HR that they have headroom within their overall WFP control total delegated by the CEO.

7 Management Positing

Agreed that:

- Standard practice would be for Management Postings to be Agency wide, however, allow for Management Posting to be advertised within a restricted pool with authorisation from Head of People/Director.
- Relevant Director and Head of People should sign off all Permanent Appointments
- Move final bullet point of Appendix 5 to top. Simone to update policy.

8. Communications/Next Actions

Suite of communications proposed was agreed in principle.



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba

Action – HR to circulate draft to ELT for comment by 26 May for sign off by CEO by 28 May.