



Forestry and Land Scotland Strategic Board Meeting

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 22nd September 2020

Location: Skype Videoconference (Due to COVID-19 restrictions)

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
- Lisa Tennant, Non-Executive Advisor
- Pamela Zielinski, Non-Executive Advisor
- Linda McKenna, Corporate Development Officer (Secretariat)

In Attendance:

- Charlie Taylor, Strategic Planning Manager (Item 4)
- Gordon Donaldson, Business Services Consultant (Item 5)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Simon Hodgson welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that the meeting was being held by video conference due to the continued COVID-19 restrictions.

Following a brief discussion, minutes of the previous meeting (19th June 2020) were agreed by Board members and approved for publication.

2. FLS/Scottish Government Update

Simon Hodgson referred to the document previously circulated which provided an update on some of the main issues for FLS over the recent period. This covered implementation of Scotland's COVID-19 Route Map and an update on the COVID-19 Restart and Recovery; Programme for Government commitments relevant to FLS; an update on the Financial Outcome for period four, and; organisational opportunities and Risks.

Following discussion and queries around the financial position and the issues arising referred to in the paper, non-executive advisors requested additional written information on them.

AP 1/09/20: Director of Corporate Services to arrange for further information to be provided to Strategic Board members on the issues arising.

3. Carbon Management

Trefor Owen introduced and referred to the paper previously circulated to Board members on Carbon Management. The paper set out the current actions being taken around carbon management and to help meet Scottish Government commitments in relation to reducing carbon emissions. Trefor stressed that the Scottish Government has been very proactive on this issue, setting ambitious targets and that it was now time to decide the FLS approach to Carbon Management. The paper summarised the FLS activities associated with carbon management: Woodland Creation, Peatland Restoration, Other Land Management, Renewable Energy Generation and Minimising Business Emissions. It also posed questions for the Strategic Board to consider, which could be summarised as 'how proactive should FLS be with carbon management?'.

There followed discussion on the issues and questions posed by the paper. Points raised by the non-executive advisors were around ensuring that the organisation and public would be satisfied that FLS had done everything possible to meet carbon targets in order to mitigate climate change; the need to be clear about what FLS wants to achieve in this area; the role for FLS to encourage others (public, contractors etc) in relation to carbon emissions, and; consideration of commercial opportunities by working with the private sector on this issue.

It was agreed that FLS should take a proactive approach on the issue of Carbon Management. Non-executive advisors requested that further work take place to develop and refine the options and for clear recommendations to be brought to a future meeting of the Strategic Board for discussion.

AP 2/09/20: Director of Land Management to arrange for options on Carbon Management to be further developed and brought back to a future meeting of the Strategic Board with clear recommendations for discussion.

4. Project Next 100

Charlie Taylor, Strategic Planning Manager, joined the meeting at this point to present information on the progress of 'Project Next 100'. Since last discussed at the Strategic Board in May 2019, the project to examine the capabilities of the national forests and land and plan for a sustainable future over the next 100 years had been called 'Project Next 100'. Charlie advised that by reviewing all of the current Land Management Plans, examining data on biodiversity, recreation, timber resource, carbon sequestration, diversity of forest resource and net cost/revenue of land management activity, then assumptions and forecasts could be made to make better use of the national forests and land. Charlie advised that Forest Research was commissioned in April 2020 to create an ecosystem services model for the national forests and land, and this would be available in December 2020. This would in turn help with the development of a forecasting model for the national forests and land, which would help predict outcomes/trajectories depending on decisions taken on key areas such as biodiversity.

Strategic Board members welcomed the presentation and sought clarity on issues raised in the presentation, including baselines, timescales and authority for the climate data to be used in the project. Charlie agreed to provide further information on the timescales to Strategic Board members.

AP 3/09/20: Strategic Planning Manager to provide details of timescales for the project, including Gantt charts to Strategic Board members.

Non-executive advisors also queried how the project was being linked with other pieces of work going on across the organisation. Charlie explained that linkages had been made to the work on Financial Sustainability (John Mair leading), and has been working with Scottish Government and NatureScot (formally known as Scottish Natural Heritage). Charlie also advised that a reference group is being set up to provide advice on the project and better understand the data/constraints etc, and welcomed Board members' input. Pamela Zielinski suggested that Professor George Burt of Stirling University may be a good addition to the reference group with his expertise on scenario planning.

The Strategic Board thanked Charlie for the update and welcomed the progress made on the project. *(Charlie left the meeting at this point).*

5. Slavery and Human Trafficking

Gordon Donaldson, Business Services Consultant, joined the meeting to provide information on the proposed FLS Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement, which had been previously circulated. Gordon also provided information on the proposed steps that the organisation would take to better understand and address potential Slavery and Human Trafficking risks relating to the FLS business and supply chain.

Strategic Board members welcomed the Statement and proposed actions, and noted the work and effort that had been made by all involved. Some comments were provided to Gordon in terms of adding in more detail on the prevalence of the issue across the UK, and information on suppliers outside of Scotland to strengthen the document.

Strategic Board members thanked Gordon for the report and looked forward to seeing the final published statement. *(Gordon left the meeting at this point).*

5. Moving to Financial Sustainability – Action Planning and Progress Update

Simon Hodgson introduced the paper which had been previously circulated. Simon advised Board members that now that the financial sustainability objective had been articulated more clearly, this had made it easier to translate to actions for cost centres in respect of financial planning. Simon advised that he is also considering whether or not we have the right distribution of functions and business processes across the organisation and will be starting this process later in the week with a mapping exercise. Through the PfG exercise we had shown that where we could provide more effort, research etc and demonstrate the benefits of our work, this could result in being awarded finances for projects (eg. investment in Newton Nursery).

John Mair then presented an overview of the work that had been undertaken in the development of the action plan to ensure financial sustainability since the last Strategic Board meeting.

Following the presentation and discussion of the issues raised, Board members agreed that good progress had been made in this area and in the development of the plan to become more financially sustainable, but this was a first step in a longer journey required to achieve the outcomes.

Non-executive members welcomed the actions taken so far, thanked all staff involved and looked forward to seeing the plan move forward to implementation.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 21st January 2021.