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| SF_col_landscape_logo | Senior Operations Group Minutes |

**24th April 2024,**

**Birnam Arts Centre and Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

Brendan Callaghan, Head of Operational Delivery (BC)

Alan Hampson, Head of Policy and Practice (AH)

Doug Howieson, Conservator, South Scotland (DH)

Steven Hutcheon, Conservator, Grampian (SH)

Cameron Maxwell Conservator Perth and Argyll (CM)

Neil Murray, Conservator, Highland (NM)

Jonathon Taylor, Head of Scottish Forestry Executive Office (JT)

Keith Wishart, Conservator, Central Scotland (KW)

Matt Young, Conservator (MY)

**In Attendance:**

Jenny Greaves (taking minutes)

**Apologies:**

Zahid Deen, Head of Operational Services and Transformation (ZD)

Helen McKay, Chief Forester (HM)

Helen Sellars, Head of Sustainable Forest Management (HS)

1. **Welcome and declarations of interest**

BC welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Previous minutes were agreed, and the following actions can be closed:

| **Ref** | **Action** | **Lead / Staff Member** | **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.1 | JG to invite Pat and / or Andy (WCC) to next SOG to give update. | JG | Closed |
| 1.7 | AH to arrange for Helen Sellers to bring paper to the next SOG meeting. | AH | Closed, to come to next meeting.  |
| 2.1 | JM to send around document to be read and signed off. | JM | Closed |
| 2.2 | SOG to look at SOP and get back to NM with any comments.  | All / NM | Closed |

1. **Natural capital discussion**
* Discussion on Natural Capital and how this can benefit communities.
* CM asked for this to be a more substantial agenda item for another meeting later in the year.
* Pat to update at next meeting but only on Carbon Codec
* SH said it would be useful to see things from a conservancy point of view.
* JT said that there is a proposed carbon tax in the land reform bill.
* BC highlighted that investors funding woodland creation is the same as natural capital funding.

**Action: BC to add agenda item to another meeting for fuller discussion.**

1. **Drones**
* KW asked about the next steps for conservancies now we have a drones policy.
* CM said it would be good for staff morale to get drones into the conservancies.
* All agreed that there are staff who are keen and interested.
* SH pointed out that SF are asking agents to provide drone images so we need to know how to use them. DH agreed that the use of drones is now embedded in the sector.
* BC agreed a plan was required. ‘

**Action: BC to contact Kyle and ask his team (Gareth’s team?) to lead on project looking at use of drones in conservancies.**

1. **Woodland Creation progress update**
* Claims trickling in. Expect a rush in next couple of weeks.
* Just over 5,000ha submitted.
* Variations will be looked at in June when we know what claims are in.
* Busy clearing round for March.
* 8,700ha approved for 24-25.
* All still dynamic at the moment.
* Just over 2,000ha committed for 25/26
* General feeling of increasing local opposition to schemes. General prejudice against commercial forestry, usually led by one or two individuals.
* There was general discussion on community involvement in woodland creation schemes.
1. **Media – JT**
* JT explained that there has been a shift in the past nine months from generally positive stories about forestry in the media to generally negative ones.
* JT gave a brief summary of forestry in the media over the past year.
* The economic report will be launched in early May.
* SH – need to highlight the benefits commercial forestry brings to communities.
1. **Ips typographus**
* AH – paper has gone out to SET.
* Pheromone traps being used and extending the Forest Trapping Network area and survey regime.
* Paul Lowe wants quarterly updates.
* Need a key contact in each conservancy to feed into quarterly meetings.
* BC – if this escalates then need more resources and extra funding.

1. **Matt Young – Projects**
* Had useful feedback on the WO/TO promotion board.
* Nicola has had feedback on the competency framework, especially on the soft skills (management, relationship skills)
* MY asked when adverts should be put out.
* All agreed best to go now rather than wait until the summer. The comms can go out next week. MY can attend teams meetings if needed.
* CM – it would be useful to put out that this will be an annual event.

1. **Date of Next Meeting**

23rd May 2024.

**SOG Action List**

| **Ref** | **Meeting** | **Action** | **Lead / Staff Member** | **Target Date** | **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.1 | Feb and March 24 | JG to invite Pat and / or Andy (WCC) to next SOG to give update. | JG | 23/04/24 | Coming to next meeting |
| 1.7 | Feb 24 | AH to arrange for Helen Sellers to bring paper to the next SOG meeting. | AH | 21/03/24 | Coming to next meeting |
| 3.1 | April 24 | Add an agenda item discuss media and woodland creation and working with communities.  | BC | 22/08/24 | Open  |
| 3.2 | April  | Contact Kyle and ask that his team leads on implementing drone policy and using it in conservancies.  | BC | 23/05/2024 | Open |