The Scottish Forestry Trust

Trustees' Meeting, Thursday, 5 March 2026
Meeting was held by Zoom
9.30 am – 12.30 pm

Minutes

Present:	**Ralland Browne (Chair)** **Professor Ioly Kotta-Loizou** **Tim Liddon** **Dr Helen McKay** **Trefor Owen** **Professor James Pendlebury** **Professor David Burslem** **Dr Ian Willoughby** **Dr Stuart Glen (Executive Director)**
Apologies:	**Professor Adam Kleczkowski** **Eddie Balfour** **Paul Atkinson**
In attendance:	**Lynne Lamont – RBC Brewin Dolphin [Item 7 only]**

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and confirmed that apologies had been received in advance of the meeting, from PA, EB and AK.

2. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

HM declared that there was a conflict of interest in a number of the projects considered by the Projects and Research Committee and the Chair asked Trustees to declare a conflict of interest on individual items as the meeting progressed.

3. Minutes of Previous meeting

HM corrected the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2025, which named her as Chair. Otherwise, the minutes were approved as presented.

4. Actions and Matters Arising

The Chair noted that a number of action points from the last meeting had been discharged but invited SG to highlight any of the pertinent outstanding issues.

Action Point 23/6 (ongoing): SG to consider how information and dissemination of results managed within SFT contracts and own website. Incorporate feedback from Margaret Morton.

> Action ongoing. SG plans to renew and refresh the website, as well as requesting Plexus Media to move the site to an up to date, more supported platform, once new administration officer Kate Downes starts in March.

Action Point 24/4: New Executive Director to adjust application and concept forms with new question to identify how applicants heard about the Trust. Also to develop a proforma case study final report to be issued to all projects from now on.

> Ongoing. The development of a proforma case study final report has still to be discharged. This action will be undertaken at the same time as the website refresh.

Action 24/8: SG to ensure that the Trust's insurance policy is fit for purpose considering the hot-desk arrangements with Confor. The wording of the insurance policy needs to cover Trustees and other visitors to the office (22 Forth Street).

> Not actioned. SG plans to discuss the addition of a second member of staff with Confor. Following this, he will obtain a statement from Confor that he can use to obtain insurance. He noted that until insurance is obtained the Trust is unlikely to hold any meetings at the Forth Street offices.

Action 24/20: SG to amend funding application guidelines to reflect Trustees decision not to fund inflated international tuition fees.

> Actioned. The following statement has been inserted into the Bursary Application Guidance Note following an exchange with DB and AK,
"The fund will typically fund 30% of home-level tuition fees and associated stipend as set by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Council. As international postgraduate research fees can vary significantly based on the university and the specific research project, the Bursary Fund does not cover them, or the difference between home-level and international fees, or provide international students with a top-up of the stipend above the minimum level."

Action 24/25: SG to investigate with OSCR if there is any guidance on best practice on policies recommended for charities.

> Actioned. SG provided paper T26-03-08 in advance and will present later in the meeting.

Action 24/26: SG to update the Master Policy List to include the additional policies mentioned above.

> Actioned. SG provided paper T26-03-08 in advance and will present later in the meeting.

Action 25/16: Trustees recommend that the Trust increase the award of funding by 8% from 1 October 2025 for existing Trust-funded Bursary students.

> Not actioned.

Action 25/17: Trustees recommend that the Trust publicises the increase in funding from 1 October 2025 for existing Trust-funded Bursary students as a news story and/or blog post.

> Not actioned.

Action 25/18: SG to represent paper P25-06-06 at the Trustees meeting on 4 December 2025 taking on board the comments from members of the Projects and Research Committee.

> Actioned. SG provided paper T26-03-07 in advance and will present later in the meeting.

Action 25/19: SG to rework the funding eligibility examples. Once agreed, these examples will be published on the website.

> Actioned. SG provided paper T26-03-07 in advance and will present later in the meeting.

Action 25/24: SG to ensure Trustees are provided with a breakdown of the expenditure item 'Office costs' in the audited accounts 2024-2025.
> Actioned. SG emailed Trustees on 5 March 2026 with a breakdown of the office costs in the audited accounts 2024-2025.

Action 25/25: Each Trustee to suggest two or three new contacts (or organisations) that the Executive Director should look to engage with to raise profile and/or develop strategic partnerships.
> Ongoing. One Trustee has sent in contacts. This will be an agenda item for the in-person meetings planned for Summer 2026.

Action 25/26: SG to circulate the Project Administrator Job Description to all Trustees before the position is advertised.
> Actioned. SG reported on the applicants to the position and confirmed that Kate Downes had been appointed to the position and will start week commencing 9 March 2026. SG has floated the idea that the other applicant might apply for a Trustee position in the future.

Action 25/27: SG to co-ordinate a Corporate Strategy review session adjacent to the next Trustees meeting.
> Actioned. SG to provide an update later in the meeting.

Action 25/28: SG to investigate production of an Artificial Intelligence Policy.
> Ongoing. SG to provide an update later in the meeting.

Action 25/29: SG to send out CT: Audit's Audit Summary Report for The Scottish Forestry Trust for the year ended 31 March 2025 to all Trustees.
> Actioned. An email was sent to all Trustees on 4 December 2025.

Action 25/30: SG to ensure all Trustees complete a Trustees Declaration Form on an annual basis. > Actioned. An email was sent to all Trustees on 7 January 2026. All Register of Interests forms have now been returned and will be uploaded to the Trust's website in the coming weeks.

Action 25/31: SG to implement (detailed) bank reconciliations as a matter of course and implement a new monthly sign off process from 1 April 2026, when hopefully the Project Administrator will be in post.
> Not actioned. This process will be implemented once the Administrative Officer is in post.

Action 25/32: SG to send Steven Smilie (Chloe Herd) the draft Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024-2025 with amendments from the Trustees.
> Actioned. An email was sent to Chloe Herd (and Steven Smilie) on 10 December 2025.

Action 25/33: SG to inform the grant applicant that the Trust has committed an additional four months of funding (£3,463.32) in support of the project.
> Actioned. An email was sent to the grant applicant (and PhD supervisor) on 4 December 2025.

Action 25/34: SG to ensure Trustees are informed of events that the Trust is sponsoring in case Trustees wish to attend the event.
> Ongoing.

Action 25/35: SG to liaise with the Chair to plan a corporate strategy review. This will likely involve the presentation of a paper at the (online) Trustees meeting planned for Thursday, 5 March 2026, and the (in-person) Trustees meeting planned for Thursday, 2 July 2026.

> Actioned. SG provided update on plan for in person Trustee meeting in Edinburgh on Thursday 2 July, with an afternoon session the day before on 1 July, with a strategic review facilitated by consultant Victoria Russell. VR may send out a survey to Trustees in advance of the session.

5. Investment Manager's Report

The Chair welcomed LL of RBC Brewin Dolphin to the meeting. She presented details of the report that was shared with Trustees ahead of the meeting.

The Executive Director commented on current cash flow requirements in relation to the investment outlook and confirmed that he has a paper on this subject coming later in his Director's Report.

Action 26/01: SG to contact LL about a room for one of the in-person meetings in July

The Chair thanked LL for her presentation.

6. Strategic Review with Trustees [Item 13, but brought forward in the agenda]

SG spoke to the proposal for in-person meetings in July 2026 for a discussion with PA. SG proposed two meetings, one afternoon strategy session on Wednesday 1 July (1.00-5.00pm) followed by a morning Trustee meeting on Thursday 2 July (9.30am – 12 noon). One meeting will take place at the Forth Street offices, the other at the BD offices, details to be confirmed. SG proposed a Trustees Dinner on the evening of 1 July, possibly at the New Town Cookery School.

Action 26/02: SG to share quote for dinner with trustees and confirm timings as soon as possible

Victoria Russell will facilitate the strategic meeting on 1 July 2026. She will share a survey with the Trustees ahead of time. The meeting will focus on the Trust's 10-year **Development Strategy: Futureproofing Forestry: Priorities for 2022-2031**, risk appetites of Trustees, and desires for the next 5 years.

Trustees discussed the importance of reviewing the existing 10-year plan and incorporating, adapting, or revising goals as needed.

Action 26/03: All Trustees to put dates (1 and 2 July) in diaries as a placeholder for in person meetings

7. Director's Report

SG introduced the Director's Report and indicated he would not be speaking to each element but would be happy to take questions. He spoke to the following points:

The Trust's Annual Report and Financial Statement 2024-2025 were submitted to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) on 22 December 2025, ahead of OSCR's deadline (31 December 2025).

The application to wind-up The Scottish Forestry Trust was submitted to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) in January, and OSCR officially confirmed all was in order on 29 January 2026.

The Trust's Current Account has a balance of £113,083.72 and the 95-Day Notice Account has a balance of £90,442.80 [figures correct as of 17 February 2026].

The balance includes a contribution of £20,000 from Scottish Forestry in support of the Trust's Bursary Fund.

Kate Downes will take up the position of Administrative Officer on Monday, 2 March 2026. Kate will work two days a week until Easter, before starting her normal working patten of three days a week.

As of 17 February 2026, the Trust's BlueSky account has 37 followers (up from 29 followers in November 2025). The LinkedIn account is continuing to gain followers (602 followers – up from 581 followers in November 2025 (3.6%).

SG has represented the Trust at a number of events since his last report, and attended several meetings, detailed in the Director's Report. The enquiries tracker is up to date for February.

8. Financial Report, including Risk Register

SG presented the five-year cash flow sheet, highlighting the 2025/6 and 2026/7 years. He has worked on projects for the 2026/2027 year but needs to include the new administration officer salary, and a potential increase in office costs. He highlighted the projection for December 2026, at which point the current account appears overdrawn, but this will be offset by the £80,000 deposit maturing in November 2026. SG noted that income has remained static over several years, but that the new administrator role will free him up to work more on fundraising and income generation. This will impact the projections for 2026/2027.

SG proposes to reinstate the monthly draw down from the investments to coincide with the final payment from the Enforcement Undertaking in April 2026, going up to £7,250 from £7,150. This was approved.

Action 26/04: SG to produce up-to date financials in advance of the July strategy meeting. A Fundraising Plan will be produced following the Strategic Review meeting.

SG highlighted the payment schedule, noting that the Trust has committed funds into 2028-2029. In 2025-2026, the Trust is close to £138,000 in grants, and the following year £150,000 is already committed, highlighting the importance of increasing income.

SG presented the Risk Register. The following risks were discussed:

Risk 5 (loss of data from computer). SG has had an initial meeting with Craig Torley of Diagknows to discuss ongoing IT support and security.

Risk 4 (burglary) should be updated to reflect a second staff member in the office and no insurance as yet.

Action 26/05: SG to review risk 4 on the Risk Register

Parts of risk 7 (Landlord terminates lease) and risk 13 (Applications stop or slow significantly) have been removed due to changed circumstances.

Risk 8 (Poor investment performance). The register states that the SIP will be reviewed every three years, which is now out of date, and that the investment management company will be reviewed periodically. SG and RB will work on a comparison, which will be presented at the July in person meeting.

Action 26/06: SG and RB to discuss and present on a comparison for the July meeting. [Subsequent to the Trustees meeting, TO has also offered to help with the review of the Investment Performance.]

9. Projects and Research Committee Minutes and Recommendations

To begin, HM spoke on The Dr Cyril Hart Memorial Award. She stated that the quality of the submissions was exceptionally high but there was a clear winner: Sarah Watts, a PhD student at the University of Stirling, for the paper ‘Improving Outcomes in Montane Woodland Restoration: Thinking Outside the Bog’ published in the journal, Restoration Ecology. HM thanked SG for the admin and the other members of the committee for reviewing all the nominated papers. The presentation of the award will be made at the Confor dinner on 11 March 2026.

The Projects and Research Committee Minutes and Recommendations were discussed as Item 9. HM did not intend to speak at length about individual projects as there is a comprehensive note in the Trustees papers (Draft minutes of the Projects and Research Committee), although she did comment that this was the first time the committee had only full applications and no concept notes, and that the committee would make a note if it happened again.

HM summarised the Projects and Research Committee’s recommendations and on that basis the Trustees agreed the following actions.

> **General Fund: Assessing the application of Tree-Related Microhabitats (TreMs). The Trustees agree with the members of the Projects and Research Committee’s recommendation to reject the funding**
> **application at this time, however the grant applicant is encouraged to further engage with the Trust.** The study will evaluate whether TreMs can complement existing tree valuation and ecological assessment methods. While members of the Projects and Research Committee were interested in this worthwhile project, there were concerns surrounding the risk mitigation, the dissemination plan and the exact total of the secured match funding.

Action 26/07: SG to communicate with applicant and encourage a resubmission of an amended application.

> **General Fund: Wildfire directional vulnerability risk assessment. The Trustees approve up to £660 in the next financial year** This project will adapt and apply a directional vulnerability assessment of wildfire risk to Scottish forests and communities. Building on an established protocol (in operation in Canada) and a validated study in England (part of the applicant’s master’s research), the research will test and implement the method in Scotland’s distinct ecosystem.

> **General Fund: A data standard for UK forestry. The Trustees have already approved £9,800 by email correspondence.** This project will assess the need for a UK Forestry Data Standard by reviewing standards used in other countries and sectors, analysing the current challenges of data sharing in UK forestry, and consulting with stakeholders across policy, practice and research. The Projects and Research Committee was initially hesitant as the project costs were unclear, but the applicant provided further details to Allay members of the committee’s concerns.

> **General Fund: Validation of the commercial viability and operational feasibility of bark-derived compounds parasite control. The Trustees agree with the members of the Projects and Research Committee’s recommendation reject the funding application at this time; however, the grant applicant is encouraged to further engage with the Trust.** The project’s main objective is to validate the commercial viability and operational feasibility of bark-derived compounds as a sustainable parasite control solution. Members of the committee had concerns regarding value for money, particularly the excessive charge-out rates for staff and consultant costs, and the implication that the Trust is essentially being asked to fully fund the publication costs.

General Fund: Clyde Climate Forest Community Tree Warden Programme. The Trustees wish to obtain more information on the long-term prospects of the project before making a decision. The Clyde Climate Forest would like to expand the training offering to support an ambitious expansion in the Tree Warden programme. The funding would be for the appointment of a project officer. There was a discussion about whether the project would be able to attain financial independence and therefore sustainability by the end of the funding period, and whether prospective longevity should be considered when assessing project applications.

Action 26/08: SG to speak with Scottish Forestry or Future Woodlands Scotland to get a sense of the Clyde Climate Forest Community Tree Warden Programme's sustainability. Trustees to make final decision by email.

Action 26/09: HM to table an item to a future the Projects and Research Committee to discuss whether longevity and sustainability should be considered as part of projects going forward

General Fund: Herefordshire Parkland Conference 2026. The Trustees approve up to £6,500 for a one-off event in 2026. The multi-disciplinary conference organised by The Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club (to be held on 1-3 July 2024) aims to celebrate Herefordshire parkland and to bring the scientific community together with landowners, land managers, and the general public to consider the current challenges of climate change, tree diseases and overgrazing, facing Herefordshire treescapes.

Bursary Fund: Fungi, cultivation or fertiliser? The Trustees approve up £6,900 in the next financial year, subject to the applicant providing acceptable details on their planned methodology. This addition to a PhD project aims to investigate novel techniques for woodland creation in order to improve current practices. Members of the Projects and Research Committee agree this is a highly topical issue and any contribution to mycorrhizal fungi research would be welcome; however, the robustness of the methodology was questioned.

Action 26/10: SG to contact applicant for Fungi, cultivation or fertiliser? with guidance from IKL to clarify methodology.

General Fund: Mycoviruses in the red band needle blight fungus. The anticipated full application was not received in advance of the meeting but will be provided soon.

General Fund: Scottish Trees – A limited documentary series. Trustees approve up to £14,200 in next financial year subject to match funding being in place within the next 3 months. HM declared a conflict of interest with this project and did not participate in this discussion. Dendro Films have progressed with the pre-production phase and are now looking for funding towards production costs (Phase 2), with the bulk of this activity taking place throughout 2026. IKL and DB confirmed that the application has proposed plans for dissemination, but that these will only be costed into Phase 3 of the project.

General Fund: Working Woods Scotland 2026. Trustees approve up to £1,000 within the next year. The Working Woods Scotland is a well-respected and proven 3-day training course that brings together professionals from across the homegrown Scottish hardwood (and premium softwood) industry. The course content covers all aspects of the industry.

Following the presentation of these nine full applications, HM presented a number of interim reports from existing grant recipients that had been received and considered by Projects and Research Committee:

P19-294B. Enhancing integrated pest management in forestry. Interim payment of £5,410. Following the previously extended deadline, the revised completion date is now March 2028. The Projects and Research Committee is content with the interim report.

P22-308. Quantifying the magnitude and duration of tree water stress. Final payment has already been made. There were several challenges but was brought to a reasonable conclusion and produced a good report.

P24-318. Inspiring Future Foresters with STEM activity in schools.
Members of the Projects and Research Committee are unable to recommend the release of the scheduled interim payment as no interim report was provided in time. Members of the Projects and Research Committee will consider the report at the next scheduled meeting on 4 June 2026.

P24-323. Landscape scale lowland deer management. Final payment of £2,950.
HM declared a conflict of interest with this project and did not participate in this discussion. The project experienced delays, which led to some participants leaving the scheme, but five individuals are now fully trained. The Projects and Research Committee is satisfied with the final report.

P24-324. By Trees We Live: The untold story of people who work in forestry and why we need them. Members of the Projects and Research Committee are unable to recommend the release of the scheduled interim payment as no interim report was provided in time.

The chair thanked all members of the Projects and Research Committee for their work.

10. Paper from the Projects and Research Committee: Definitions of eligibility criteria

SG spoke to the paper T26-03-07, which clarifies eligibility definitions and criteria for funding applicants on the following points.

A need to leverage funds: the Projects and Research Committee agreed applicants should be strongly encouraged to seek third party funding, but it would not be a 'deal breaker.' In exceptional circumstances, the Projects and Research Committee can support projects without additional funding.

The definition of overheads: Regarding the definition of major capital costs within overheads, the Projects and Research Committee had decided to use the threshold applied by the UK Research and Innovation Council (UKRI). After this decision, however, it transpired that the UKRI threshold has been increased from £10,000 to £25,000 in 2025. SG requested Trustee input, and after some discussion the proposal to apply the UKRI threshold was passed by majority vote.

The definition of in-kind contributions: the Projects and Research Committee is content to continue with the existing in-kind policy.

The Projects and Research Committee has created several examples that they would like to publish to the website to show potential applicants what is likely or less likely to be funded.

The Projects and Research Committee Chair that the Projects and Research Committee should discuss the idea of retained value for high-value equipment purchased for short projects at a future meeting.

11 Best practice on policies recommended for charities

SG spoke to paper T26-03-08. He noted that OSCR does not have a master policy list, but the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) provided recommended policies on governance, transparency and trust, risk management, finance, fundraising, operations, and safeguarding. SG has used this, in conjunction with existing policies, to form a master policy list, outlined in appendix 1. This is another area where the new administrator may help.

It was agreed that a new HR policy may be required as there will now be multiple staff members, but that otherwise the presented list is suitable.

11 Artificial Intelligence Policy

SG provided a verbal update, as the policy itself has not yet been written. The Executive Director thanked Trustees who had provided examples and welcomed further examples. The policy will be written alongside the review of all Trust policies.

12 Key Performance Indicators in the Trust's 10-Year Development Strategy

SG spoke to the paper T27-03-09 on KPIs for the Trust's 10-year development strategy. He indicated he would not be speaking to each element but would be happy to take questions. He spoke to the following points:

The suggested payroll giving scheme was unlikely to show much return, and a tribute giving scheme would be more worthwhile.

SG suggested that in advance of the review in July, KPIs should be assessed for continued relevance or possible evolution. For example, replacing the proposed annual forestry lecture with an event related to a funded project, such as a screening or book launch.

There was some discussion about the possibility of future funds from another enforcement undertaking. SG stated that although there is no formal process to register for funds, the Trust now has a good relationship with SEPA and that this would be the best chance of recommendation in the future.

13. Any Other Business

SG confirmed the details of the Confor dinner.

Helem McKay asked for an update on the Hylobius Industry Research Programme (HIRP), which SG provided.

Dates of meetings in 2026

The approved application and reporting deadlines, Projects and Research Committee Meeting dates and Trustees' Meeting dates are as follows,

Application and Reporting Deadlines	Projects & Research Committee Meeting Dates	Trustees' Meeting Dates	Decisions Communicated to Applicants
16 January 2026	5 February 2026	5 March 2026	w/c 9 March 2026
15 May 2026	4 June 2026	2 July 2026	w/c 6 July 2026
11 September 2026	1 October 2026	5 November 2026	w/c 9 November 2026

The dates for 2027 will be considered at the Trustees meeting in July 2026.

Summary of Action Points

Action Point 23/6 (ongoing): SG to consider how information and dissemination of results managed within SFT contracts and own website. Incorporate feedback from Margaret Morton.

Action Point 24/4: New Executive Director to adjust application and concept forms with new question to identify how applicants heard about the Trust. Also to develop a proforma case study final report to be issued to all projects from now on.

Action 24/8: SG to ensure that the Trust's insurance policy is fit for purpose considering the hot-desk arrangements with Confor. The wording of the insurance policy needs to cover Trustees and other visitors to the office (22 Forth Street).

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Action 25/34: SG to ensure Trustees are informed of events that the Trust is sponsoring in case Trustees wish to attend the event.

Action 26/01: SG to contact LL about a room for one of the in-person meetings in July.

Action 26/02: SG to share quote for dinner with trustees and confirm timings as soon as possible.

Action 26/03: All trustees to put dates (1st and 2nd July) in diary as a placeholder for in person meetings.

Action 26/04: SG to produce fundraising plan and detailed financials in advance of the July strategy meeting.

Action 26/05: SG to review risk 4 on register.

Action 26/06: SG and Ralland Browne to discuss and present on a comparison for the July meeting.

Action 26/07: SG to communicate with applicant for Tree-Related Microhabitats (TreMs).

Action 26/08: SG to speak with Scottish Forestry or Future Woodlands Scotland to get a sense of the Clyde Climate Forest Community Tree Warden Programme's sustainability. Trustees to make final decision by email.

Action 26/09: Projects and Research Committee Chair the Projects and Research Committee to discuss whether longevity should be considered as part of projects going forward.

Action 26/10: SG to contact applicant for' Fungi, cultivation or fertiliser?' with guidance from the Projects and Research Committee to clarify methodology.

Approved by Trustees on 2 July 2026

Chair ____