FIFE COAST & COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

Board of Management Meeting

Friday 20th March 2026 at 10:00am – Kinghorn Coastal Office

In attendance: Jill Miller (JM-Chair), Jeremy Harris (JH), Sheila Boardman (SB-Treasurer), Fiona Partington (FP), Sarah-Jane Latto (SJL), Robbie Blyth (RB), Margaret McArthur (MMc), Caroline Warburton (CW), Rhona McInroy (RM), Sarah Lonie (SL), Cllr. James Leslie (JL), Cllr. Brian Goodall (BG), Cllr. Colin Davidson (CD), Neil McCormick (NMc), Carol May (CM-Minutes), Marjory Wood (MW-Minutes)

Suzanne Roberts (SR-Vice Chair) joined via Teams

Apologies: Ed Heather-Hayes (EHH), Cllr Fiona Corps (FiC), John Rodigan (JR)

1. Welcome and Apologies, Resignations & Appointments

JM welcomed all. Apologies were noted from EHH, FiC, JR.

JH confirmed JR appointment to the Board pending formal appointment by FC.

SR is stepping down this time next year and members were asked to consider serving as Vice Chair.

2. Chair's Update

JM reported the individual 1:1 discussions with Board members were helpful in gathering organisational insights and plans to meet with all members again in the coming months.

JM asked whether any members were interested in joining the board of the Trading Subsidiary; Countryside Services Fife.

JM met with individual members of the SMT and will meet with RB next week, with EHH to follow. These meetings are helping JM better understand the organisation and enabling her to better support JH.

3. Declaration of Interest

None.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The meeting minutes were approved by SL and seconded by CW.

5. Matters Arising

JH provided an update on the previous Board meeting actions, confirming all 3 actions have been completed.

BG had been hoping to thank EHH in person for the Rosyth Restoration Project and the amount of money it was attracting. It was important for council members to recognise FCCT's ability to attract money from external sources.

6. Health & Safety Report

RB presented the Health & Safety report, noting:

- 5 accidents/near misses
- 4 vehicle accidents
- 0 incidents with members of the public
- 2 RIDDOR reports – vehicle written off, staff member off work for 5 weeks (we were not at fault)

RB noted the introduction of mandatory vehicle check reminders for staff.
Flood awareness training, as well as hot and cold weather awareness training, is being rolled out for operations staff through online MET Office courses.
JH reinforced the key messages and confirmed that a dedicated Fleet Manager is now in place.
NMc commented positively on the thorough H&S reporting now being shared with the Board.

7. Risk Register Review

JH reviewed the Risk Register reporting little movement since the last update

- 1 New Risk 026 being worked on
- 3 Changed risks
    - Risk 002 has decreased following the introduction of internal fundraising meetings.
    - Risk 007 has decreased as Board Members registration codes have now been submitted to Companies House.
    - Risk 013 (data breach) FP and JH confirmed that, although FCCT may be technically defined as a public body, appointing an internal Data Protection Officer (DPO) is not in our case practical. Fife Council's (FC) DPO provides backup support. FP continues as data lead and undertakes Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA), which JH fully supports. RM asked if the backup support from FC was formally documented. JH advised that it is an agreed arrangement as they are the sole member of the Trust. BG asked if this had been raised with Fife's other Trusts in the same situation and JH confirmed he will take this forward.
- 5 Existing Moderate Risks – (005). (014), (017), (021), (022)

CD raised concerns about the increased use of AI and requested FCCT's policies be reviewed. FP confirmed an internal policy is in development. CW queried the scope of AI and whether external facilitation was required; FP advised current staff understanding is sufficient. NMc suggested seeking input from St Andrews University. JM proposed a session for staff and Board members on AI use, potential, and implications, and requested time at the next Board meeting for further discussion.

Actions:

- JH to contact other Fife Trusts to enquire about their Data Protection Officer arrangements.
- CM to include AI discussion in agenda for next Board meeting.

8. Committee Reports

SB spoke to the Audit & Finance Committee meeting giving an overview of results to end Q3.

SB outlined the new report format which provides a whole-organisation view by separating restricted SLA income from unrestricted generated income (such as car parks and dog washing). She noted that the philanthropic income stream is still being developed—income is straightforward to track, but expenditure is more challenging—and the updated format now gives a clearer picture of how the deficit is allocated. The next stage is to produce a full organisational budget.

End of Q3 shows a smaller deficit than expected, and overall performance is ahead of projections. Some planned activity has not yet been completed and may impact next year, but the Trust is expected to be in a reasonable position by year-end.

SB reported on the investment position, noting the fund fell from £650k to £530k following the start of the Ukraine conflict but has since recovered to £631k, illustrating ongoing volatility. She outlined options discussed with Gair Brisbane (LGT Wealth Management), including investing £200k of unrestricted funds in low-risk Government gilts with staggered maturity dates (2028/2029) and placing £220k in the Trust's bank account to secure 3.8% interest. SB highlighted ethical considerations and asked for Board feedback. JM noted this approach would provide greater flexibility. SL queried the investment risk, confirmed as medium–high, and JL requested 2–3-year cash-flow projections.

Further discussion on investments continued.

SB sought Board approval to return to LGT to confirm the Board's intention to withdraw £220k and transfer it to the Trust's account. RM noted that the supporting detail had not been provided in advance and requested that a full proposal be brought back to the Board. She also asked that any future decisions be clearly flagged on the agenda.

Actions:

- MMc to provide cash-flow projections for the next 2-3 years.
- MMc/JH/SB to provide a summary outlining the options and key terms related to reallocation of reserves currently managed by LGT and bring a full proposal back to the Board.

It was agreed that, to save time, the minutes of the HR & Remuneration Committee and the Communications & Fundraising Committee would not be presented. Questions were invited, but none were raised.

The meeting broke at 11:20am, during which CD Left.
The meeting resumed at 11:40am

9. Executive Team Strategy Review

JH noted the organisation is midway through the last iteration of the strategy, with SMT reviewing its impacts. Highlighted one significant structural change: the countryside maintenance function has moved from Operations to the Conservation & Engagement team.

FP spoke to the Support Services strategy, highlighting priorities around people, digital development, governance, data, and continuous improvement. Key updates included: HR implementing new SharePoint pages to hold the staff handbook. Finance is enhancing organisational financial awareness to strengthen understanding of project financial data when communicating with funders. Admin leading the shift to paperless working. Communications strengthening data and policy alignment and Data Administration streamlining processes and progressing automation, supported by Aswin, who joined on 9th March and is currently triaging two processes as part of the next phase of technological improvements.

SJL presented the C&E report noting the department has undergone significant change over the past 6–12 months, and the strategy continues to develop. Changes include onboarding the maintenance team, assuming the access function from FC, and expanding smaller teams such as the tree team.

SJL presented her long-term vision (5-10 years) for the department: to improve quality of life in Fife, enhance its appeal to visitors, and ensure FCCT remains a positive place to work. SJL sees her department strategy focussing on three things: Landscape & Nature moving toward alignment with EHH and supporting landscape-scale nature restoration across Fife; Access, Path and Site Management; and Education & Engagement growing the education team and volunteer involvement.

Delivery plans include developing a Landscape Restoration Centre/Hub (ideally countryside-based) for teams to collaborate on landscape-related work and develop the space for partners, investors, and farmers. Also, creating site management plans for busy beach locations and updated signage, strengthening links with FC Education Services, and expanding on-the-ground engagement, tourism support, and skills development, with volunteer/student opportunities.

JL asked about school engagement. SJL confirmed the education programme targets primary schools and that the team responds to requests from other schools.

SJL noted the Fife Forest & Woodland Strategy remains in draft format.

RB presented the Operations report highlighting that FC wants us to manage an additional 3 toilet blocks, which will bring the total to 17.

While all the contents of FC bins go to landfill, 95% of our bins now offer recycling, and further promotion of recycling is planned. Work with the NHS Fife team is progressing well, with additional recycling bins installed at the Victoria Hospital entrance. The secondment ends in December, and a permanent arrangement is being explored alongside development of an SLA.

The winter maintenance programme worked well in partnership with FC.

Parking is entering a new phase, with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) being installed at Aberdour Silver Sands and wider monitoring planned to support sustainable tourism. The parking-charge notification scheme is expected to generate income. At other car parks, honesty boxes raised £12.5k in 2024–25 despite frequent break ins. BG raised concerns about inappropriate parking at Aberdour Silver Sands, including pavement parking and damage to grass verges. He suggested seeking support from the FC parking team to help manage the issue. RB advised a seasonal parking attendant has been recruited to provide education and engagement, though enforcement is not possible. Overflow parking will be directed to the field, and signage will be placed at the entrances to the village when the car park reaches capacity.

Water safety audit will be completed soon and sent to Board members.

Collaborating with other groups to restore two open-air swimming pools to functional use.

JM noted that all three presentations were extremely important.

EHH will provide an update on the Development projects at the next meeting.

JL left meeting at 12:29pm.

10. AOB

RM proposed a horizon-scanning session at the start of the next Board meeting to help focus key project priorities.

JM recommended setting the meeting time at 10:00–12:30 for future sessions.

A Christmas-time Development Day was proposed, with ideas for an outdoors Board activity to be submitted.

Meeting ended at 12:38pm.

Next meeting: 19th June 2026

Summary of Actions & Decisions:

Actions:

- JM to contact other Fife Trusts to enquire about their Data Protection Officer arrangements.
- CM to include AI discussion in agenda for next Board meeting.
- MMc to provide cash-flow projections for the next 2-3 years.
- SB to provide a summary outlining the options and key terms and bring a full proposal back to the Board.