

**BULLETIN REPORT: NE SCOTLAND AGRICULTURE ADVISORY GROUP  
20<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2017**

**FARMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW ENTRANTS (FONE)**

**1 Recommendations**

**1.1 The Group is recommended to note this report**

**2 Background / Discussion**

2.1 One of the key barriers to entry for new entrants to the farming industry is land availability. The Forest Enterprise (FE) starter farm initiative has demonstrated high levels of interest amongst young, prospective tenant farmers for relatively small holdings. Following the success of this initiative the Scottish Government set up an independent group to identify proposals to increase the number of opportunities for new entrants on other publicly owned land. A report was published in November 2016.

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00510416.pdf>

2.2 The report describes the steps all public bodies possessing land can take to create opportunities to new entrants to farming, even on land parcels which might otherwise appear to be too small, remote or lacking productive potential. Following the publication of the report a new group has been set up to develop and promote the Farming Opportunities for New Entrants (FONE) programme to all bodies and organisations which may be able to provide starter business opportunities, including councils.

2.3 The new group, led by Henry Graham, Lantra Scotland Chairman, is actively engaging with councils, their estate departments and others to ensure all potential land holdings are considered. Typically, starter units are relatively small and provide a part-time income for new entrants. But the experience from FE starter farms shows that from a modest foothold, new entrants work extremely hard to develop and grow their fledgling businesses.

2.4 Aberdeenshire Council's Economic Development service is working with its Estates Department to identify suitable opportunities. Other NESAAG members – councils, institutes and the University of Aberdeen - may also be able to provide to starter units. This topic will be covered in more detail at the next meeting of the group on 6 December 2017.

2.5 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**3 Scheme of Governance**

3.1 The Group is able to consider this item in terms of its remit to advise the Councils in North East Scotland on issues encompassing all rural affairs, with particular interest in agriculture and rural employment, farm incomes, farming policy, conservation, diversification of farming including forestry, tourism and

farm industries, the implications of change in farming practice and land use and the provision of infrastructure, services and facilities in rural areas.

#### **4 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There are no equalities, staffing or financial implications arising from this report

**Stephen Archer**  
**Director, Infrastructure Services**

Report prepared by Derek McDonald, industry Support Executive (Rural & Maritime)  
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