

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND AGRICULTURE ADVISORY GROUP

COMMITTEE ROOM 5, WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN

WEDNESDAY, 6th DECEMBER, 2017

Present: **Aberdeenshire Council** – Councillors W Howatson (Chair), S Duncan, I Taylor and J Whyte.
Aberdeen City Council – Councillors N MacGregor.
Angus Council – Councillors K Braes.
Moray Council – D Bremner.
Aberdeen University - Profs K Thomson and D Roberts.
James Hutton Institute - LA Sutherland
SGRPID – J Kinnaird
RSPB - H Maggs
SRUC – K Black and K Rundle
Forestry Commission Scotland - J Nott
LANTRA – H Graham and J Adamson
NFUS - L Paterson
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce – J Muir

Apologies: Aberdeenshire Council - Councillor J Hutchison, J Ingram and D Robertson.
Aberdeen City Council - Councillors B Crockett and A MacKenzie.
Angus Council - Councillor C Brown, A Macmillan Douglas and B Myles.
Moray Council – Councillor T Eagle
Angus Council - H Tasker
Opportunity North East – P Cook
RSPB – K Cunningham
James Hutton Institute – B Slee
Scottish Enterprise – G Ford
LANTRA - S Howden and K Patrick
NFUS – A Connon, R Catto and J Hall
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce – C Phillips
Ringlink (Scotland) Ltd – G Robertson
Ringlink Services Ltd - P Wood
SEPA - P Wright
SLE – D Fyffe
OBE - Dr B Pack
SAC Consulting - A Laing
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – L Irwin and M Havers
Visit Scotland - Jo Robinson
RICS – D Smart
SAOS Limited – J Booth

Officers: D McDonald, Industry Support Executive (Aberdeenshire Council)
A Ziarkowska, Committee Officer (Aberdeenshire Council)

In presence of: Simon Turner (Peter Chapman' office MSP)

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed everyone present to the meeting. Members were asked if they had interests to declare. No declarations of interest were intimated.

2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In taking decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Partnership **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality and opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (2) to consider, where an equality impact assessment had been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 20th SEPTEMBER, 2017

The Minute of Meeting of 20th September, 2017 was circulated and **approved** as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Derek McDonald went through the action sheet from the last meeting to provide the update on progress in respect of each point and confirmed that the presentations from the previous meeting were available. There were no further matters arising

5. PRESENTATION: FARMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW ENTRANTS BY HENRY GRAHAM, CHAIR OF LANTRA SCOTLAND

The Chair invited Mr Henry Graham – Chair of Lantra Scotland - to deliver a presentation on the Farming Opportunities for New Entrants (FONE). Mr Graham reported that there has been much discussion and debate about the need to attract and encourage new entrants to Scottish farming. He outlined that the structure of farming creates significant challenges for new entrants as farming businesses are overwhelmingly small or micro businesses, mostly family owned and run and generally operating as sole traders or partnerships. It was further observed that the number of farm occupiers aged 40 years and younger has dropped to around 9% while those aged 65 years and over has risen to over a third. Mr Graham continued by stating that new entrants in agriculture tend to drive innovation and best practice, improve efficiencies, contribute towards the economic vitality of the sector and are generally recognised to be vital for the future of the industry. Thereafter, Mr Graham presented the Farming Opportunities for New Entrants programme and highlighted that the Scottish Government is determined to facilitate entry for the next generation by lowering capital and land barriers, supported by a first-class skills, knowledge and training package. He concluded by citing some potential entry routes for the next generation of Scottish farmers including contract farming opportunities, and share farming models.

During discussion Members expressed their support for Scottish Government measures to support New Entrants and young farmers to secure the long-term future of the agricultural sector.

The Chair thanked Mr Graham for his informative presentation. Thereafter, it was **agreed** to note the information provided in the presentation.

6. PRESENTATION: WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE STUDY BY LEE-ANN SUTHERLAND, JAMES HUTTON INSTITUTE

The Chair invited Ms Lee-Ann Sutherland from James Hutton Institute to deliver a presentation on Women in Agriculture Study. Ms Sutherland outlined that in 2016 the Scottish Government commissioned research to investigate the role of women in farming and agriculture in Scotland. The purpose of the study was to establish a baseline position on women in the agriculture sector under 5 headings, namely daily life, aspirations, career paths, leadership and comparative analysis with women in other family businesses, with a view to informing future policies to enhance the role of women in the sector. Ms Sutherland continued by indicating that the research showed that women play a major role in Scottish agriculture and participate fully across a range of farming activities. However, women often encounter major barriers to advancing their roles on-farm and in farming organisations due to a lack of time, practical training opportunities and male domination amongst the elected leadership of national farming organisations. The importance of inheritance, training and farm safety also emerged as important issues. Ms Sutherland concluded by presenting recommendations from the study: that the long-established practice of passing on large farms intact to one son needs to be challenged; that there should be a 30% quota system for women on farming organisation boards and committees; the establishment of a 'talent bank' of suitably qualified women for farming positions; the development of financial incentives for farmers to purchase equipment suitable for women to use, and to encourage the use of childcare facilities.

During discussion Members focused on the role of women across the full range of farming activities and measures to enhance their involvement and inclusion within it.

The Chair thanked Ms Sutherland for her informative presentation. Thereafter, it was **agreed** to note the information provided in the presentation.

7. PRESENTATION: GENDER ACTION PLANNING WITHIN SRUC BY KYRSTEN BLACK, SRUC

The Chair welcomed Kyrsten Black from SRUC to deliver a presentation on bridging the Gender Gap in Land-based Education. Ms Black advised that SRUC offers education and training across a wide range of land-based disciplines and works with a number of universities and research partners to provide taught and research opportunities which are designed to enable young people to maximise their future employment or research choices. In 2014/15 male students comprised 49.1% of Higher Education students within SRUC while 50.9% were female. However in Further Education the ratio was 64% male and 36% female. Ms Black reported that in order to progress the issue of gender equality SRUC had established a project with the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) to review and take positive reinforcement action through images, discussion with students and high profile role models. Ms Black concluded by saying that project leaders will continue to work with Focus Groups and industry to promote careers including "broaden your horizons" events for school pupils.

The Chair thanked Ms Black for her valuable presentation. Thereafter, it was **agreed** to note the information provided in the presentation.

8. UPDATE ON OPPORTUNITY NORTH EAST AND THE LOCAL DAIRY SECTOR BY PETER COOK - ONE

As Mr Peter Cook was unavailable, the Chair invited Derek McDonald to provide a verbal update on the NE dairy situation and the project currently underway in support of the local dairy sector. Mr McDonald gave a brief overview of the current position of the local dairy sector. Following the closure of the Muller Wiseman dairy in Aberdeen, milk from the NE is being transported to Bellshill near Glasgow for processing at a cost to dairy farmers of 1.75 pence per litre, putting local producers at a major commercial disadvantage. ONE and Aberdeenshire Council had jointly funded a project to seek an inward investor and examine the viability of alternative processing options to help secure the future of local dairy production. With assistance from SAOS, dairy farmers had set up NE Milk Producers Association and raised funds from members for a dairy industry specialist to carry out a detailed feasibility study and business case assessment of a potential dairy processing facility in North East Scotland. Mr McDonald advised that the association is currently working on an application to the Food Processing Marketing and Cooperation (FPMC) grant scheme and engaging closely with existing buyers of dairy products to determine potential markets and product requirements with a view to future supply contracts. Mr McDonald concluded by advising that a further update would follow at the next meeting of the group.

The Chair thanked Mr McDonald. Thereafter, it was **agreed** to note the information provided in the update.

Action point 1: Dairy Sector study progress update to Members at next meeting.

9. REPORT: CONSIDERATION OF ENLARGED GROUP MEMBERSHIP

There was circulated a report dated 28th November, 2017 by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which invited Members to consider the enlargement of a Group Membership. The report outlined that NESAAAG is a cross-party, a cross-sectoral group which provides communication channel between the agricultural industry and political representatives at all level. It was noted that the importance of communicating the unique perspective, challenges and opportunities of the agricultural and related sector in NE Scotland to political representatives at all levels will play an important part in helping to ensure as favourable an outcome post-Brexit for the region as possible, including influencing the shape and form of any policy succeeding CAP. The Group was therefore recommended to consider whether the membership of NESAAAG should be enlarged to include MPs, MSPs and MEPs.

During discussion Members expressed their concerns about inclusion of the high-level politicians as this may impact on the quality and dynamic of discussions at the meetings. It was observed that any politician is welcomed to attend the NESAAAG meetings as they are all open to public, however, their formal membership at NESAAAG needs to be consulted with the Legal Team.

After discussion, Members **agreed** to allow MPs, MSPs and MEPs attendance at NESAAAG meetings in the observer capacity and refer this matter to Legal Team for advice.

10. UPDATE ON ISSUE WITH BRISKET TAGS ON CATTLE

The Chair invited Derek McDonald to provide a verbal update on use of cattle brisket tags. Mr McDonald informed Members that the use of brisket tags on cattle in the Aberdeenshire area was widespread, but that they were not an approved form of identification (on animal welfare grounds) and that farmers using such tags faced penalties if they were detected during official inspections. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) confirmed that the use of brisket tags was not permitted and advised against removing any tags already inserted to minimise pain and distress to cattle. There was therefore no way of avoiding a non-compliance penalty once attached. The Group's assistance was sought to find a solution. A member of the council's Animal Health and Welfare team had contacted APHA and been advised that it would be guided by the advice of the British Veterinary Cattle Association (BCVA). It was suggested that brisket tag removal under veterinary supervision might be permissible without incurring penalties but written confirmation had still to be obtained. Regular contact had been maintained with NFUS which was working to advise members that no new brisket tags should be used. Members will be updated at the next meeting.

After discussion, Members **agreed** to note the information provided in the update.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ms Jennifer Kinnaird advised that she is leaving her post as Principal Agricultural Officer at SGRPID at the end of 2017 and that she will be unable to attend future meetings of the Group. The Chair thanked Ms Kinnaird for her regular attendance and valuable input to NESAAG discussions.

Action point 2: presentations to be posted on NESAAG webpage and members to be advised accordingly.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **agreed** that the next meeting of the North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group would take place on:

- Wednesday, 18th April, 2018 at 10.00 a.m. in Woodhill House, Aberdeen

