

## NORTH EAST SCOTLAND AGRICULTURE ADVISORY GROUP

### VIRTUAL TEAMS MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2021

**Present:** **Aberdeenshire Council** – Provost W Howatson (Chair),  
Councillors J Hutchison, I Taylor and J Whyte  
**Aberdeen City Council** – Councillor N MacGregor  
**Angus Council** – Councillor K Braes and B Myles  
**Bank of Scotland** – P Reid  
**Food & Drink Federation Scotland** – M Stalker  
**James Hutton Institute** – Prof D Roberts and L Sutherland  
**Lantra Scotland** – S Howden  
**Moray Council** – Councillor D Bremner  
**NFU Scotland** – R Hay, L Paterson  
**RSPB** – H Maggs  
**Scottish Agritourism** – C Millar  
**Scottish Enterprise** – G Ford  
**Scottish Land and Estates** – F Van Aardt, S Young  
**SRUC** – R Graham

**Apologies:** **Aberdeen City Council** – Councillor A Mackenzie  
**Angus Council** – Councillors C Brown and A Macmillan  
Douglas  
**Moray Council** – Councillor T Eagle  
**NFU Scotland** – A Connon  
**Rural Payments and Inspections Division – Scottish  
Government** – J Stuart  
**Scottish Forestry** – J Nott  
**Scottish Land and Estates** – D Fyffe  
**SEPA (National Rural Unit)** – P Wright  
**Visit Scotland** – J Robinson

**Officers:** **Aberdeenshire Council** – F Brown, Committee Officer; N  
Chidester, Assistant Committee Officer; J Davidson,  
Environment Planner; D McDonald, Industry Support Executive  
ED & PS; M Stewart, Planning Service Manager.

### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed Moira Stalker (Food and Drink Federation Scotland) to her first meeting as a new member of NESAAAG. It was noted that James Nott would no longer be attending as he has moved on to a new position within Scottish Forestry as National Head of Tree Health.

## 2. EQUALITIES

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. MINUTES OF MEETING 28 APRIL 2021

The Draft Minute of Meeting of the North East Scotland Agricultural Advisory Group (NESAAG) of 28 April, 2021 was circulated and **approved** as a correct record.

## 4. MATTERS ARISING

The Industry Support Executive, Derek McDonald updated NESAAG on four items, namely:

- (1) A further presentation on Seedpod would be arranged for a future meeting.
- (2) Additional membership to be sought from Young Farmers. Contact had been made with the former Chair of Young Farmers and it was hoped that a new member would be identified shortly.
- (3) Additional food industry representation was sought, and Moira Stalker from the Food and Drink Federation Scotland had been appointed a member
- (4) Arrangements were being made to hold a Rural Forum on 24 November 2021.

## 5. PRESENTATION: AGRITOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY CAROLINE MILLAR, FACILITATOR, SCOTTISH AGRITOURISM MONITOR FARM

The Chair introduced Caroline Millar (Manager Facilitator, Scottish Agritourism) to the meeting. Members **noted** her presentation on the Scottish Enterprise Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme.

Ms Millar advised the Group that the Monitor Farm Programme was set up as knowledge exchange to support business growth. Potential Monitor Farms/Families apply to the programme and were selected on their willingness to share information, desire to grow their business, and potential to influence the wider Core Community Group. Confidential discussions, site visits, benchmarking, and additional support were provided. Wider community engagement was available through public meetings held online and in person.

Ms Millar highlighted a few Monitor Farm case studies, demonstrating the impact of the programme and how agritourism can complement farming businesses. Increased enterprise diversity leads to more flexibility, wider employment opportunities, and increased business income. VisitScotland notes current tourism trends include localism and authentic experiences, adaptable adventure, 'workcations', artisanal retail, food & drink, 'voluntourism', and wellness. Providing high quality agritourism experiences and accommodation while prioritising sustainability are key to the future.

After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Ms Millar for her time and her insightful presentation.

## **6. PRESENTATION; EMERGING THEMES OF LAND MANAGEMENT POLICY BY STEPHEN YOUNG, HEAD OF POLICY, SCOTTISH LAND & ESTATES**

The Chair introduced Stephen Young (Head of Policy, Scottish Land & Estates) to the meeting. Members **noted** his presentation on the Emerging Themes of Land Management Policy.

Mr Young explained that Scottish Land & Estates is a not-for-profit organisation serving the interests of members ranging from small farms to large estates, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and institutional landowners on matters including agriculture, forestry, tourism, housing, wildlife, conservation, sporting and employment.

The Scottish Government Climate Change Plan 2018-2032 aims to reduce overall emissions from 41.6Mt CO<sub>2</sub> to 18.3MT through increasing tree planting, peatland restoration and reductions across every sector, with a specific reference to Rural Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs). Mr Young highlighted the demands upon industry including emissions reductions, increased carbon sequestration and enhanced biodiversity while still producing affordable nutrition, maintaining the rural economy, and providing wellbeing services. Mr Young emphasised how challenging achieving all these goals would be.

Scottish Land & Estates is aligning its policy to achieve Climate Change goals, reflecting a desire for greater integration of land use, rewilding, regenerative agriculture, the development of RLUPs, greater co-operation, more use of natural fibres, based upon accurate and usable data, informed buying decisions, better relations between urban and rural Scotland and novel private funding models. The major drivers of change for SLE include Land Reform, the 'wellbeing economy', COP-26/Scotland's role as a Global Leader, green recovery, and trade deals. More widely in Europe (which Scottish Government aims to mirror) CAP 2023-2027 provides 25% of its resources for Pillar 1 (eco schemes), 35% for Pillar 2

(environmental measures), a minimum level of internal convergence (between Member States), social conditionality, and more support for smaller farms. Mr Young emphasised the importance of balance when setting goals and measuring success holistically.

After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Mr Young for his stimulating presentation and invited him back to present at a future meeting.

**Action point 1: Mr Young to be invited to a future meeting of the group**

**7. PRESENTATION: TREES AND TIMBER: OPPORTUNITY IN A TIME OF CHANGE BY STUART GOODALL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CONFOR**

The Chair introduced Stuart Goodall (Chief Executive, Confor) to the meeting. Members **noted** a presentation Trees and Timber: Opportunity in a Time of Change.

Mr Goodall's presentation highlighted the significant increase in demand for and value of timber in the context of land use challenges and net zero goals. The demand for wood has increased due to increased home working, investment in homes/gardens, government stimuli for house-building, and increased demand world-wide. Growing economies use more wood and global timber consumption is predicted to treble by 2060.

Despite having an ideal climate for growing trees, the UK has one of the lowest levels of forest cover in the northern temperate zone (13% against the European average of 46%), due to historic deforestation. The UK is also the second biggest net importer of wood products in the world, exceeded only by China. Demand will continue to increase due to climate change targets, the transition to a circular economy, and the construction of high-quality and sustainable buildings.

By 2035, the UK will have less wood available than is currently harvested due to low levels of planting over the past 25 years. Only in recent years has productive planting recovered. The UK's path to net zero requires a reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions of 78% by 2035 relative to 1990, or a 63% reduction from 2019. Forestry and timber offers carbon benefits of 7.3 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare per year, and through substitution of more energy intensive construction materials.

Farmers and landowners have significant opportunities to invest in forestry, which - as the SRUC website notes - can enhance biodiversity, increase productivity, aid business diversification and create future resources while locking up carbon dioxide. Mr Goodall concluded by noting that the North East is particularly well-served by the timber processing industry with strong demand for timber from sawmills, panel and other manufacturing plants and biomass companies.

After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Mr Goodall for his excellent presentation and suggested a return visit to a future meeting.

**Action point 2: Mr Goodall to be invited to a future meeting of the group**

## **8. REPORT: NORTH EAST SCOTLAND REGIONAL LAND USE PARTNERSHIP PILOT BY SHEENA LAMONT, SENIOR PLANNER, ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**

Members were asked to consider the report and offer views on the type of board to be set up to progress the North East Scotland Regional Land Use Partnership Pilot by the Planning Service Manager (Mairi Stewart).

The report provided the background to the Regional Land Use Partnership Pilot project, a three-year project with three phases. Phase One will review existing / established groups and key stakeholders to identify any gaps for future engagement. Phase Two will consider the best governance options for the Region in collaboration with the Scottish Government while Phase Three will involve the appointment of Board Members in order to have them in place to prepare a Regional Land Use Framework by 2023.

The group **agreed** to recommend a hybrid partnership structure with both industry and political representatives (similar to NESAG's structure).

**Action point 3: RLUP progress to be reviewed at the next meeting of the group**

## **9. REPORT: SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: AGRICULTURAL TRANSITION**

The Chair invited the Industry Support Executive to present the report on the Scottish Government Consultation: Agricultural Transition. Members were invited to submit their views towards a collective NESAG response.

Members **agreed** to submit their views as part of a collective response.

**Action point 4: Members to be consulted electronically on the draft response prior to submission for further comment and approval.**

## **10. BULLETIN: NATIONAL FOOD STRATEGY: PART TWO**

The Chair invited the Industry Support Executive to comment on the National Food Strategy. Mr McDonald encouraged members to read the bulletin and explained that although the Food Strategy had been designed for England there would be implications for agriculture and food/drink in Scotland.

Members **noted** the bulletin.

## **11. AOB**

It was **agreed** the meeting recording and presentations would be circulated.

**Action point 5: Presentations and recording links to be circulated to members**

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of NESAG is due to take place on Wednesday 24 November 2021. The meeting will take the form of a rural forum, starting at 09:30, held virtually.

**Action point summary**

**Action point 1: Mr Young to be invited to a future meeting of the group**

**Action point 2: Mr Goodall to be invited to a future meeting of the group**

**Action point 3: RLUP progress to be reviewed at the next meeting of the group**

**Action point 4: Members to be consulted electronically on the draft response prior to submission for further comment and approval.**

**Action point 5: Presentations and recording links to be circulated to members**