

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND AGRICULTURE ADVISORY GROUP: 7 SEPTEMBER 2022

REPORT – NESAAG PARTNERSHIP REVIEW

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 This reason for this report is to facilitate a partnership review of NESAAG. Members are recommended to approve the continuation of NESAAG, endorse the review documents and the updated terms of reference.

2.1 The Group is recommended to:

2.1.1 Confirm support for the continuation of NESAAG

2.1.2 Consider and endorse the partnership review documents required under Aberdeenshire Council's Partnership Working Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 (Partnership Review) and Appendix 2 (Risk Assessment) to this report

2.1.3 Consider and endorse the updated terms of reference for NESAAG in Appendix 3 (prior terms are attached as Appendix 4)

2.1.4 Consider whether the current membership fairly reflects the land-based sector which has undergone significant change in recent years.

3 Decision Making Route

3.1 Aberdeenshire Council's Partnership Working Policy requires that a short assessment be undertaken on all partnerships every two years. For NESAAG, the first step is to consult NESAAG members. The second step is a report to Infrastructure Services Committee to approve the review.

3.2 NESAAG has met regularly since at least 1999 and while periodic partnership reviews have been carried out, NESAAG's Terms of Reference have not changed since 2003. The group's Terms of Reference will also be reviewed on this occasion. **Appendix 3** proposes updated terms of reference for the group and includes the current membership while the original terms are attached as **Appendix 4**.

4 Discussion

4.1 North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group (NESAAG) is an advisory body comprising elected members from four councils in NE Scotland, representatives from industry, economic development bodies and agencies, commerce, academia, NGOs and regulators. NESAAG aims to support the regional interests of the land-based sector, commissioning reports, sharing

information and lobbying on policy and other matters of strategic significance. NESAAAG is hosted by Aberdeenshire Council and is described on its own webpage as 'a major cross-sectoral forum that lobbies on behalf of the sector as well as providing support and advice both to the agricultural sector and the wider rural economy of the North East'. Presentations from prior meetings are available on the webpage. Links are also provided to the Land Based Study published by NESAAAG in 2016. <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/business/support-and-advice/industry-sectors/agriculture-and-rural-development/the-north-east-scotland-agriculture-advisory-group-nesaag/>.

- 4.2 NESAAAG is unique in Scotland. Prior to the pandemic, meetings in Woodhill House were very well attended, typically attracting 30-35 members. Two special meetings hosted by the James Hutton Institute – most recently in November 2019 – also attracted a strong turnout. In September 2020, NESAAAG transitioned to a 'virtual' format due to the pandemic. Despite this, member engagement continues to be excellent. The virtual format has enabled key speakers from outwith the region to attend.
- 4.3 Previous review reports have referred to a favourable cost: benefit analysis showing that the costs of the partnership, principally officers' time, are minimal in comparison to the benefits of working in partnership with neighbouring authorities and with the wider land-based industry and its representatives. Members are invited to support the continuation of the NESAAAG and to consider whether its remit and membership continue to reflect fairly an industry sector which has undergone significant change in recent years.
- 4.4 The work of NESAAAG is consistent with the ambitions of the Regional Economic Strategy for sustainable growth in food, drink and agriculture and aligns with the Strategy's four key themes of Innovation, Internationalisation, Infrastructure and Inclusivity. <https://investaberdeen.co.uk/images/uploads/RES%20Action%20Plan%202018-2023%20FINAL.pdf>
- 4.5 The membership of NESAAAG has grown and developed in recent years to reflect the increasingly diverse range of organisations with a stake in the land-based sector of NE Scotland. Lantra, RICS, Visitscotland and the Bank of Scotland have all joined relatively recently. At the suggestion of members, Food and Drink Federation Scotland was contacted and joined NESAAAG in 2021. An approach to the Scottish Association of Young Farmers for a representative is awaiting a response. Members are invited to consider other relevant organisations for membership.

4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 4.1 This report is relevant to all of the following Council priorities:

Pillar	Priority
Our People	Education Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation

4.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial			X
Staffing			X
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland			X
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			X
Climate Change and Sustainability			X
Health and Wellbeing			X
Town Centre First			X

5 Scheme of Governance

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 NESAG is able to consider this item in terms of its remit to provide a NE Scotland focus to enable issues and concerns across the agricultural and related sectors to be addressed. This includes strengthening economic development links across the wider land-based sector and food industry, contributing to regional and local priorities, improving links between industry, the environment and biodiversity and contributing to policy development and consultations.

Alan Wood, Director of Environment & Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Derek McDonald, Industry Support Executive (Rural & Maritime)
29 August 2022

Partnership Working Policy - Partnership Assessment: North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group

This should be completed every two years as per the terms of the Partnership Working Policy.

This information will be presented to the relevant policy committee to inform its decision on membership of the partnership

Areas for consideration	Assessment	Comment/Proposed Action
Is the partnership a statutory partnership?	No ▼	
If yes, please state the legislation in the comment box. (Please continue to go through the assessment for best practice purposes, rather than to assess whether there should be participation in the partnership).		
The partnership has set outcomes or objectives to be achieved	Yes ▼	Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy; protect our special environment, including tackling climate change and reducing emissions
The partnership's aims and any commitment of budget fit with the council's strategic plan and priorities (http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-plan)	Yes ▼	NESAAG's aims align with the Regional Economic Strategy
If yes or partly, please specify which priorities in the comment box		
The partnership follows the Account Commission's Code on Following the Public Pound / financial regulations and agrees appropriate arrangements for allocating start-up and running costs (http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2004/nr_040311_following_public_pound.pdf)	N/A ▼	
The partnership makes links to the CPP's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities where relevant (http://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/our-priorities/local-outcomes-improvement-plan/)	N/A ▼	
All other appropriate bodies have been invited to participate in this partnership	Yes ▼	
The partnership ensures equality of opportunity for all and complies with statutory duties (equalities, socio-economic, town centres first principle) as required	Yes ▼	
The partnership has a document such as an agreement, remit or memorandum of association to define its role, powers and how it carries out its business	Yes ▼	Terms of reference

Start-Up Assessment

The partnership makes a formal annual report that includes annual accounts and performance to its members and other bodies if necessary	No ▼	
Appropriate status and voting rights are accorded to the council in the partnership	N/A ▼	
Members of the partnership's top-level decision-making group can be recalled by their nominating bodies	N/A ▼	
The risks faced by the partnership are shared between partners	N/A ▼	
Routine sharing of personal data will take place within the partnership	No ▼	
If yes or partly, please consider if a Data Privacy Impact Assessment, an Information Sharing Agreement or a Privacy Notice is required. All guidance and templates can be found at this link https://aberdeenshire.sharepoint.com/sites/Arcadia/services/Pages/Business%20Services/ICT/Information%20Management%20and%20Record%20Management/Data%20Protection/Data%20Protection.aspx		
The partnership has a complaints process or agrees to adopt the complaints process of a member organisation	N/A ▼	
Meetings of the partnership's top-level decision-making group are open to the public	Yes ▼	
The public is entitled to see reports considered by the partnership's top-level decision-making group	Yes ▼	
Minutes of the partnership's meetings are made publicly available	Yes ▼	
The partnership's top-level decision-making group has a quorum for meetings	No ▼	
Members of the partnership's top-level decision-making group are appointed for a limited period of time	No ▼	
There are agreed arrangements for dissolving the partnership	No ▼	
There are clear arrangements for the council to exit the partnership	N/A ▼	
There is a procedure for ensuring members who declare conflicts of interest take no part in decision	N/A ▼	
The partnership recognises the obligations placed on Elected Members due to the Code of Conduct and has a procedure for ensuring members who declare conflicts of interest take no part in decision.	N/A ▼	
Cost / Benefit Analysis	Response	
Please detail the staffing and financial implications of running the partnership, including those on other council services and partners	Officer time only	
Please state the source of any funding received by the partnership	n/a	

Start-Up Assessment

Please describe the benefits of council participating in the partnership	Leadership and coordination role for council in representing land-based sector interests
The partnership is sustainable and is the best way of achieving its aims and outcomes	Yes <input type="button" value="v"/>
	<input type="button" value="v"/>

APPENDIX 2
Annual Risk Assessment

Partnership Name:	Completed by:	Date:
NE Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group	Derek McDonald	26.8.22

All partnerships must be recorded in the Register of Partnerships on Arcadia

This table assesses whether your partnership should be recorded as a **significant** partnership requiring a Risk Register (from the Risk Management Team).

Please enter the score in the last column for the statement which most closely represents your partnership.

Impact No.	Description	Minor (Score 1)	Important (Score 2)	Significant (Score 3)	Major (Score 4)	Score
1	The Council contributes to the partnership by direct funding and/or indirectly through staff resources, work done etc.)	< £10K per annum	£10K to < £50 k per annum	£50K to < £100k per annum	> £100k per annum	1
2	The partnership's success is critical to the achievement of one or more of the Council's Strategic Priorities.	Not directly linked to a strategic priority (this needs to be flagged up to the policy committee in this case)	Linked to a strategic priority	Significant contributor to success of a strategic priority	Essential to the achievement of a strategic priority	3
3	Failure of the partnership would have an impact on the Council's reputation.	Threat of adverse comment in local press or the equivalent that Corporate Communications consider to be of material concern to the Council.	Actual adverse comment in local press or the equivalent that Corporate Communications consider to be of material concern to the Council.	Individual press reports in national media that Corporate Communications consider being of material concern to the Council.	Concerted, widespread or recurrent critical coverage of the Council or for a specific event in the media	1
4	The extent to which partnership expenditure is controlled by the Council.	The Council has full control over expenditure decisions.	The Council has veto on expenditure decisions.	The Council is a party to expenditure decisions.	The Council has no control over expenditure.	1
5	The partnership takes decisions on behalf of or which are binding on the Council.	The Partnership does not take decisions on behalf of the Council	The Partnership does not take decisions on behalf of the Council but representatives with decision-making authority attend the partnership and consider and influence its recommendations.	The Partnership does not take decisions on behalf of the Council but representatives with decision-making authority attend the partnership and agree to be bound by its decisions.	The partnership has decision-making responsibilities directly delegated to it from the Council.	1
6	The Council has set up the partnership in order to receive additional funding and/or meet Statutory or Regulatory requirement.	Not required by law or to receive funding.	Indirect or limited links to successful achievement of funding.	Direct links to successful achievement of funding.	The Council is required to participate in this partnership by law or to receive specific funding.	1
Total Score						8
Maximum Possible Score						24
Impact %						33.33%
Evaluation						Not Significant

Appendix 3

Aberdeenshire Council

Review of Working Groups: 2022 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title of Group	North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group (NESAAG)
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Lead Officer	Derek McDonald, Industry Support Executive (Rural & Maritime, Planning and Economy)
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Remit	A major cross-sectoral forum that lobbies on behalf of the sector as well as providing support and advice both to the agricultural sector and the wider rural economy of North East Scotland
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Current Membership	7 Aberdeenshire Council members, 5 Aberdeen City Council members, 5 Angus Council members, 5 Moray Council members and representatives from the farming and land-based industries, agencies, education and research organisations and NGOs.
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Organisation	Places	Current Representatives
Aberdeenshire Council	7	Cllrs Blackett, Evison, Goodhall, Joji, Powell, Ross, Walker
Aberdeen City Council	5	Cllrs Clark, MacGregor, van Sweeden
Angus Council	5	tbc
The Moray Council	5	Cllrs Van Der Horn, Robertson
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce	1	Clive Phillips (Brodies LLP)
Agricultural Communications Ltd	1	Eddie Gillanders
ANM Group Ltd	1	Grant Rogerson
Bank of Scotland	1	Philip Reid
Confor	1	April Armstrong
Food and Drink Federation	1	Moira Stalker
Food Standards Scotland	1	Lorna Murray
James Hutton Institute		Prof Deb Roberts, Prof Lee-Ann Sutherland

Lantra Scotland	2	Dr Liz Barron-Majerik MBE, Niall Evans
Moray Council	1	Jim Grant
NFU Scotland	5	Lorna Paterson, Andrew Connon, Allan Simpson, Robert Hay, Kevin Gilbert
Opportunity North East	1	Peter Cook
Press & Journal	1	Farming Editor
RICS	1	Larry Irwin
RSPB	1	Hywel Maggs
SAC Consulting	1	David Ross
SAOS	2	Bob Yuill, Jim Booth
Scottish Enterprise	1	Jamie Bell
Scottish Forestry	1	Steven Hutcheon
Scottish Land & Estates	2	David Fyfe, Fiona van Aardt
SEPA	1	Peter Wright
SGRPID	1	John Stuart
SRUC	2	Prof Neil Foster, Rob Graham
The Courier	1	Nancy Nicolson
VisitScotland	1	David Jackson

Authority to Establish Group	<p>Date - 3 June, 1999</p> <p>Minute of Text in Full - "The Committee agreed to reappoint the sub-committees and working groups with membership as follows:- North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group - Councillors Buchan, Burnett, Cowie, Howartson, Luffman, Millar and Stroud.</p>
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Time Limits	<p>It is intended that the group meets three times per year, with no limit of time for the following reasons:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ongoing work of the Group is consistent with the Regional Economic Strategy and the 2018-2023 Action Plan 2. The Group is a major cross sector, public-private forum which supports and represents the ongoing and future interests of the land-based economy of North East Scotland. 3. As Scotland develops and refines its new policies for agriculture and the land-based economy, NESAAAG will have a key role in helping to shape policy and lobby government to help sustain the interests of the economy of NE Scotland.
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Date of Last Meeting	26 January 2022
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Appendix 4

Aberdeenshire Council

Review of Working Groups: TERMS OF REFERENCE (2003)

Title of Group	North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group (NESAAG)
Lead Officer	Roddy Matheson, Industry Sector Manager, Economic Development
Remit - Please state here the remit of the group and its specific objectives	
To act as an advisory body to the Councils in North East Scotland, 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.	

Current Membership	
7 Aberdeenshire Council members, 5 Aberdeen City Council members, 5 Moray Council members, farming community and industry.	

Name	Organisation
Councillor	Aberdeenshire Council
Councillor	Aberdeenshire Council
Councillor	Aberdeenshire Council
Councillor	Aberdeenshire Council
Councillor	Aberdeenshire Council
Councillor	Aberdeenshire Council
Councillor	Aberdeenshire Council
Councillor	Aberdeen City
Councillor	Aberdeen City
Councillor	Aberdeen City
Councillor	Aberdeen City
Councillor	Aberdeen City
Councillor	The Moray Council
Councillor	The Moray Council
Councillor	The Moray Council
Councillor	The Moray Council
Councillor	The Moray Council
Mr B Pack	ANM Group Ltd

Professor H Miller	University of Aberdeen
Mr Neil Anderson	Baxters of Speyside Ltd
Mr A Massie	Aberdeen Chambers of Commerce
Mr Bellfield	Clinterty Estates Ltd
Mr I Clark	Clydesdale Bank
Steff Ferguson	GFWAG
Mr Douglas Clark	Grampian Conservancy
Ms Allene Bruce	Scottish Enterprise Grampian Ltd
Mr Douglas J Yule	Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise
Mr John Miskelly	NFU Scotland
Mr Cameron Ewen	NFU Scotland (North East Region)
Mr Allan Smith	North East Region NFU (Scotland)
Ms Lisa Roberts	NFU (Scotland)
Mr Bruce Mackie	NFU (Scotland) North East
Mr Jim Stewart	NFU Scotland
Mr W Caldwell	Robert Gordon University
Dr I Francis	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Mr P Leat	Scottish Agricultural College
Mr J Calder	Scottish Agricultural College (Advisory)
Mr Bob Yule	Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd
Mr P D W Timms	Scottish Natural Heritage
Mr P Grant	SERAD
Sir Archibald Grant	TGUK
Mr Ian Keith	UKASTA
Mr D Gray	SAC Veterinary Services
Lynne Smith	Scottish Young Farmers Association (Grampian Branch)
Dr W Slee	University of Aberdeen
Mr A Buchan	Westside, Newmachar
Professor M Lomax	University of Aberdeen
Dr J Paterson	Food Standard Agency Scotland
Prof. Ken Thomson	University of Aberdeen
Authority to Establish Group	
Committee - Infrastructure Services Committee	
Date - 3 June, 1999	
Minute of Text in Full - "The Committee agreed to reappoint the sub-committees and working groups with membership as follows:- North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group - Councillors Buchan, Burnett, Cowie, Howartson, Luffman, Millar and Stroud.	
Time Limits	
It is intended that the group meet at twice yearly intervals, with no limit of time for the following reasons:-	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ongoing work of the Group is enshrined in the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2001-2007 (Objectives 3 and 5) and the current Service Plan. 2. The Group is a cross sector forum representing the developing interest and concern affecting both public and private sector organisations involved in the rural economy of the North East. 3. Ongoing lobbying at various governmental levels on behalf of the agriculture and related sectors. 	

Date of Last Meeting
22 April, 2003.