

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND AGRICULTURE ADVISORY GROUP: 7 SEPTEMBER 2022

BULLETIN: NEW AGRICULTURE BILL CONSULTATION

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 This reason for this report is to inform members of the new Agriculture Bill consultation issued by Scottish Government on 29 August 2022.

2.1 The Group is recommended to:

2.1.1 Note this bulletin

2.1.2 Consider in due course contributing to the NESAAG consultation response – to be circulated to members during September 2022 – and/or for members to respond directly to Scottish Government on their own behalf

3 Discussion

3.1 The latest step in Scotland's journey to a new Agriculture Bill was announced on 29 August 2022. Following on from the agri-transition consultation undertaken August-November 2021 - to which NESAAG responded - and the subsequent work of the Agriculture Reform Implementation Oversight Board (ARIOB), the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands set out seven key themes in the consultation for the new Bill which continues to align broadly with the EU Common Agriculture Policy and its ten specific objectives.

3.2 The seven Scottish themes are high quality food production; protecting food and health quality; ensuring a fair income for farmers; payments, mechanisms and powers to help Scotland meet its climate change objectives; the protection of biodiversity and nature restoration, maintaining the vibrancy of the rural economy; and fostering knowledge exchange and innovation. The overall aim is to make Scotland 'a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture' and reflect the Scottish Government's commitment to reduce agricultural emissions by 31% by 2032. The consultation closes on 21 November 2022 and can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.scot/news/delivering-for-scottish-agriculture/>

3.3 The consultation goes beyond the scope of its 'agri-transition' predecessor to explore how agricultural tenancies could be modernised to enable tenant farmers to contribute more effectively to climate change and biodiversity targets (ie undertake 'diversification' activities outside the scope of the lease). There are proposals to integrate Fair Work conditions, including the real Living Wage into the agricultural workforce in Scotland. Views are also sought on draft livestock subsidy payments which set a minimum threshold for animal health, welfare and biosecurity and it is proposed that the new Agriculture Bill has powers to collect and share livestock data in this regard.

- 3.4 The consultation text notes recent global shocks affecting food and energy supply chains and the consequent short-term challenges but states ‘we need to keep an eye to the long-term and the action needed now to ensure we have a healthy environment and thriving communities for years to come’. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (January 2022) is summarised and provides the basis for this long term view. Post-Leader support for communities and for woodland creation are also set out in the text.
- 3.5 The Future Support Framework sets out four support tiers: ‘Base Level Direct Payment’; ‘Enhanced Level Direct Payment’; ‘Elective Payment’ and ‘Complementary Support’, with Tier 1 and 2 (Base level + Enhanced) within the ‘one umbrella of direct payments’. Tiers 3 and 4 are described as indirect payments, some of which may be offered on a competitive basis. A ‘crises reserve’ is also proposed to address exceptional conditions.
- 3.6 A draft response will be circulated to NESAAG members during September for their consideration. The deadline for consultation responses closes just before the next scheduled meeting of NESAAG on 23 November. Accordingly it is proposed that members convey their views on the NESAAG draft by email or by telephoning Derek McDonald. Contact details will be circulated along with the draft response.

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

4 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