

Agriculture Reform Implementation Oversight Board

Terms of Reference

Purpose and scope

1. This Government was elected on a manifesto that made the following commitments:

“We will support farmers to produce more of our own food needs sustainably and to farm and croft with nature, including through enhanced animal welfare and health approaches and better adoption and deployment of technology and innovation, as recommended by the recent work of farmer-led groups set up in the last parliament. A single implementation board with representation from key farming sectors and types will be established to drive this work forward.

2. The Scottish Government’s Vision for Agriculture outlines our aim to transform how we support farming and food production in Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture. This commitment sits at the heart of a robust and coherent framework to underpin Scotland’s future agriculture support regime from 2025 onwards.
3. The Scottish Government is committed to a service design approach to policy making involving user-centred co-development, working jointly with farmers and crofters to develop future policy.
4. Building on the work of the Farmer Led Groups the Board will assist the Scottish Government by providing advice on how it can deliver the Vision to support agriculture in becoming more economically and environmentally sustainable.
5. The Scottish Government is committed to take early action on nature restoration and on implementing measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture to address the twin crises of climate and nature/loss of biodiversity. The Board will assist in the development of a package of funded measures, based on the work of the Farmer Led Groups that will work across the generality of Scottish agriculture.
6. The Board will contribute to Scottish Government’s work to implement policy reform, incorporating the relevant recommendations of the farmer-led groups to cut emissions across agriculture, support the production of sustainable, high quality food, and design a new support system and approach as part of the National Test Programme. The Board will also consider how we use our land and the role that agriculture can play in restoring biodiversity and improving ecosystems.
7. The Scottish Government is committed to ensure a Just Transition to net zero, and the Board will be expected to embed this consideration in all they do as we transition from the current system.

8. From time to time the ARIOB may be asked to note and discuss wider topics connected to the scope of their work to ensure that they are sighted on the breadth of issues which Scottish Ministers are required to give regard to, and which may have a bearing on Ministers' decisions on future rural policy development and implementation.

Communication and outputs

9. All papers will be placed in the dedicated [ARIOB Knowledge-Hub](#). Prior to each meeting, members will receive an email which includes both papers as attachments, and a link to the papers' location in the K-Hub.
10. In the interests of transparency, minutes of the Board will be documented and placed in the ARIOB Knowledge Hub for member access, and summarised, anonymised minutes of meetings will be placed in the public domain via the [ARIOB webpage](#) on the Scottish Government website.
11. Following each meeting, a communiqué will be issued by Co-Chairs on behalf of the ARIOB which summarises the points discussed at each meeting. This communiqué will be circulated by email, and placed in the ARIOB Knowledge Hub. A copy will also be published on the [ARIOB page](#) on the SG website for public information.
12. To assist in this crucial aspect of the co-design work to which Scottish Government is committed, Scottish Government communications specialists will work with the ARIOB to develop meaningful and informative messaging and will ensure that members are provided with the means and knowledge to share that messaging more widely.

Membership

13. Membership of the Board comprises a balance of farming, geographical and environmental interests. Members have been appointed to provide the necessary breadth of expertise and knowledge required to take this work forward.
14. Confirmed Board members are set out in the Annex to these terms of reference (TOR).

Governance and accountability

15. The Board will be co-chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, and Martin Kennedy, President of the National Farmers Union Scotland.
16. Recommendations to the Scottish Government will be as far as possible, by a consensus agreement, failing which the Board should indicate that consensus was not possible and provide options for consideration.
17. The final decision in all matters rest with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands.

18. A register of member interests will be held by the Board secretariat in order to maintain transparency.

Quorum

19. The minimum number of attendees required at each Board meeting in order to properly execute its business shall be 12.

Terms of engagement

20. Each member of the Board will bring their own experience to discussions, taking a holistic approach. It is expected that all members will be mindful of the different approaches each member may have, listen carefully to understand, and be tolerant of different views and perspectives, even if they do not agree with them. It is expected that members will treat each other, and officials providing support to the Board, with respect, courtesy and dignity at all times.

21. Discussions will be held under Chatham House rules which allows for members to reference discussions outwith the Board and its membership, but not to attribute any aspect to an individual.

22. Any suggested items for future discussion, or proposals (sub-groups, for example) must be raised in a way that allows all Board members have the opportunity to agree. Members may therefore raise as AOB during meetings, or ask Secretariat via email to circulate the proposed topic for consensus. Secretariat will maintain a list of those topics for scheduling at a future meeting and will liaise with the Agricultural Reform Programme Board and SG officials to ensure that these items are scheduled and relevant papers are commissioned.

23. An Actions Log will be maintained.

24. In-person meetings shall be used to allow substantive discussion of issues, at which ARIOB shall receive papers prior to the meeting to frame the discussion and the key points on which ARIOB advice is sought.

25. Virtual meetings shall be used to allow ARIOB to hear updates or information about matters relevant to its work.

26. Apologies must be notified to the Secretariat in advance of each meeting.

Remuneration

27. Membership of the Board is on a voluntary basis. Members will not receive any remuneration for participation, but are eligible to be reimbursed for any reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred in consequence of their participation in Board functions, such as travel to in-person Board meetings.

Timescales, frequency and location of meetings

28. The Board's terms of reference and membership will be reviewed every 6 months to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.
29. The Board has agreed to meet bi-monthly and to hold interim meetings where necessary. In the main, meetings will be held virtually to accommodate the geographical spread of the membership and to minimise costs, but in-person meetings will be arranged to allow for all-day discussions of substantive issues.

Support to the Board

30. The Board will be supported by the expanded Scottish Government Academic Advisory Panel (AAP) that will supply robust evidence to help its progress and ensure that ARIOB's advice is based on the best available science, knowledge and expertise and evidence that exists in a rapidly growing evidence base. The Board will also have access to analytical support via the Scottish Government's Rural and Environmental Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) which provides analytical and scientific support to help improve rural and environmental policy.
31. The ARIOB will commission the AAP to undertake such work as is deemed necessary to assist the ARIOB in making its recommendations to Government. AAP will provide feedback to the ARIOB at dates agreed by AAP at confirmation of it undertaking such commissions.
32. The Board's work will also be supported by a Policy Development Group (PDG) which is a working group comprising officials and external stakeholders, to undertake tasks looking at the detail and mechanisms of proposed changes to agricultural policy. The recommendations and advice of the PDG will be reported back to the ARIOB as agreed at the time of commission.
33. The PDG and representatives from the AAP will be invited to attend all ARIOB meetings.
34. The Board will also be supported by a Scottish Government Civil Service secretariat who will manage the flow of information to and from the Board, and who will respond to stakeholder queries and provide updates to stakeholders as required. They will also arrange meetings of the Board and will issue an agenda and papers 5 working days in advance of Board meetings. They will also be responsible for processing of any expenses claims and other administrative duties.
35. The policy development and scheme design work underpinning the work of the Board will be supported by Scottish Government policy, rural payments and inspections and information systems teams working jointly within a managed programme of work that will report on progress to the board. These teams will draw on expertise from other areas within the Scottish Government and organisations within the sector as the work develops. This managed process of

policy and delivery design and planning linked to the engagement with users will ensure the final outcome meets the needs of the sector and delivers on Government's Vision for Agriculture.

Constraints

36. The Scottish Government has set out a number of policy objectives however it is required to comply with certain statutory legal obligations which apply to the work the Board is to undertake including, but not limited to continued EU alignment. These obligations must be borne in mind by the Board when making recommendations to the Scottish Government. The Board will be provided with guidance on these matters in the course of its work.

37. These TOR will be updated as required going forward.

ANNEX

Board Membership

Tim Bailey
Adele Jones
Scott Henderson
Martin Kennedy
Marion MacCormick
Donald Mackinnon
Andy McGowan
Andrew Moir
Vicki Nash
Anne Rae MacDonald
Mark Reed
Pete Ritchie
Mike Robinson
Kate Rowell
Claire Simonetta
Sarah Simpson
Nikki Yoxall