

**Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity Meeting with Duncan Cameron,
Managing Director of First Bus Scotland**

Monday 4 November 2024

Attendees

Jim Fairlie (JF) - Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
Duncan Cameron (DC) – MD First Bus Scotland
Jackie Dunbar MSP (JD) – Aberdeen Donside Constituency
Michael Hutchinson (MH) – Councillor Aberdeen City Council
[name redacted] - PS for Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
Transport Scotland Officials [name redacted] – note taker

Note of Meeting:

[redacted]

DC referenced [Prosper](#) whose plans around transport hierarchy sought solutions over the longer term and budgeted for short term pain to achieve lasting benefits and felt this was the correct approach.

[redacted]

DC asked about BPF funding continuing in light of UK budget announcement as important to find ways to speed up journeys and put bus priority measures in place. **JF** noted that this would become clearer in time but cannot say more at this time.
[redacted]

DC provided update on decarbonisation of the fleet [redacted]

Meeting ends : 12:10

Attendees present:

- Jim Fairlie - Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
- Tim Bailey - Chief Executive for SAOS
- Bob Yuill - Former Director of ScotEID and SAOS
- Scott McDowell - General Manager for ScotEID
- [name redacted] - ScotEID Office Manager
- [name redacted] - ScotEID staff
- [name redacted] - ScotEID staff
- [name redacted] - Branch Head of Disease Prevention
- [name redacted] - IRM Policy Manager
- [name redacted] - Livestock Policy Advisor

A demo of the following systems was provided on the day:

- ScotMoves+ and ScotMoves.

- Sheep and goat movements and recording.
- Pig movements and recording.
- MyHerdStats.
- Scottish Kept Bird Register and Avian Registration Hub.
- Mapping system and BVD.

Meeting minutes and key actions:

- It was noted that ScotMoves/ScotMoves+ is a much more efficient system than equivalent systems in other parts of GB, and in light of the recent Blue Tongue outbreak, for tracings and disease control.
- The Minister observed the current operations and requirements for sheep movement recording on ScotEID. It was acknowledged that paperless recording, in future, would be beneficial for sheep and a substantial improvement to the current system in place. However, that there are sensitives around staffing and head count should Government move to full paperless recording. The Minister agreed that this would be progressed in future and in line with the planned timetable for livestock IRM.
- The issues around pig movement reporting and pig pyramids were highlighted during the demonstration. The Minister recognised the importance of pig pyramids/traceability on a GB level.
- Issues were raised by ScotEID regarding RPID IT systems procurement and the 15M company turnover limit for tendering. Concerns were raised about the rationale behind this requirement for software companies in Scotland. The Minister agreed to request further clarity before any decision-making is progressed. (**NB**: this has been flagged to RPID officials as of 5/11).
- Efficiencies were highlighted and the data gathered shown as part of the MyHerdStats demonstration. The Minister noted the significance of the data gathered and re-emphasised the need for this data to not be lost to Industry.
- The Minister welcomed the demonstration of the various systems on ScotEID and thanked everyone for their participation on the day.

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity – Visit to PYRUS, cut flower farm – 5 November 2024, 11 – 12, Pencaitland.

Attendees: Jim Fairlie (JF), Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity; Claire Dyce (CD) – Chairwoman of Flowers Grown in Scotland and Business Development Manager of Grampian Growers; [name redacted] (S1) - runs PYRUS; [name redacted] (S2) - FGIS and Blooming Bees Flower Farm; [name redacted] - Blooming Bees Flower Farm, [name redacted] (SG) - Horticulture Policy Officer.

- JF was welcomed to PYRUS and introduced to the attendees. He was then shown into the walled garden where he was told of the history of the estate and flower growing by [S1]. Since 2010 there has been an increase in demand for cut flowers by the public. Following Brexit and during Covid, there was a surge with people starting small cut flower businesses at home.
- There was discussion about the higher value of cut flowers per square metre compared to vegetables and about how there are often small areas of land sitting vacant on farms or estates that can create a high yield of flowers if used

appropriately. Discussion moved to how cut flowers do not fit into any funding criteria and are often not included in policy discussions.

- [S1] highlighted the impacts of imports of Dutch flowers. While some Scottish flower growers need to top up their own bouquets with imports, the regulations on these imports are not the same as the UK regarding pesticide use as they are not grown in Scotland.
- The route to market for flower growers is one of the biggest barriers for flower growers. Many businesses are small scale and remote, it is therefore expensive to transport flowers to other parts of the country.
- FGiS have been trailing using an online market place hub on the Open Food Network, using funding from SAOS. One issue is that businesses might not be able to provide enough product for the hub due to the cost of transportation of flowers.
- JF asked what the cut flower industry needs; [S1] answered technical help and help marketing Scottish branded flowers. [S2] highlighted that DAERA have a cut flower official who provides advice. FGiS feel this shows good support from the NI Government and would like to see similar support in the Scottish Government.
- FGiS will be doing a census in 2025 to gather data of the cut flower industry and show the significant contribution of the sector in terms of economic impact, trade volumes, employment and sustainability/biodiversity benefits
- FGiS requested that the Scottish Parliament, Bute House and other government offices are encouraged to use Scottish grown flowers in any displays in the future.

ACTIONS

Action Point 1: [SG] to send details to Claire Dyce on the Small Producers Hub. The Small Producers Hub offers advice on starting your own small horticulture/agriculture business. There may be an opportunity for funding from the Small Producers Fund. [SG] is currently gathering information on this to send to Claire Dyce.

Action Point 2: [SG] to send details of The Women in Agriculture Practical Training Fund that offers funding for women to progress their careers and employment opportunities.

Action Point 3: [SG] to stay in contact with Flowers Grown in Scotland and let them know of future funding opportunities

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity meeting with Shetland Members of Scottish Youth Parliament

5th November 2024 – 17:30 to 18:00

Attendees

Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity (JF)

Joe Smith - Shetland Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (JS)

Bertie Summers - Shetland Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (BS)

[name redacted], Transport Scotland

[name redacted], Transport Scotland

[name redacted], Private Office

Key Points

Welcome and Introductions

1. JF welcomed and introduced attendees.

Ferries for under 22's

2. BS mentions the importance of transport in his constituency as it is such a remote area
3. JS asked about the situation for Ferries and under 22's. The Scottish Government confirmed in 2023 that the ferry scheme for young people – offering four free single (two return) journeys - would be extended to all island residents under the age of 22.
4. Transport Scotland highlighted the Island Connectivity Plan (ICP), which is looking into the ferry fares. Also flagged the free ferry journeys for people living on the island. A link to the ICP was shared with SYP.

Rural Bus Services

5. SYP queried what Ministers are doing to introduce new bus services as not all routes are covered.
6. No bus routes on Sundays in some parts of the island which is making it difficult for people to get to work and young people to access social activities.
7. The Minister recognises the challenges and explained that services are run by private operators in conjunction with local authorities, routes are not set by Transport Scotland.
8. Local authorities have responsibilities with regards to designing bus routes and Ministers help fund through the Community Bus Fund.
9. The Minister advised he is working with officials to look into local communities to take control of their own bus routes and if there are ways we can help to achieve this.

Fixed Links Inter Isles

10. SYP asked what the Scottish Government stance is on fixed links. JF recently had a meeting with Chief Executive and leader of Shetland Islands Council. Ministers agree that fixed links would be beneficial but considerable funding challenge – particularly in current fiscal environment. Recognises general principle of fixed link is great, makes getting around the island not conditional on weather conditions/ tides.
11. SYP queried whether SG is in position to fund fixed links. JF confirms we cannot fund the fixed links at present,
12. Cabinet Secretaries have to look at the Path to Balance – looking into all the funding we have within the portfolio and how best we can meet all our legal requirements and commitments.

AOB

13. The Minister asked SYP for their experience of inter island ferry services.
14. SYP highlighted challenges with ferries including staffing issues and reliability.
15. The Minister queried if both SYP Members had bus passes (confirmed they do) and asked if when the members are 22+ if they would opt to continue using buses or felt they would need to get a car / learn to drive.
16. Both SYP Members advised they would need to consider a car to ensure they could travel reliably, but stressed how beneficial the concessionary bus passes are for young people.
17. Both Members advised they regularly rely on family members cars if buses aren't on time or regular. Highlighted that many young people live considerable distance from the main town and if the buses don't run it cuts them off from the town/ events

ACTIONS

- **JF invited to meet with Scottish Youth Parliament and supporting groups in Shetlands in January – SYP to send MICASE**
 - **TS officials also invited to attend**
 - **SYP to send formal invitation for PO consideration and liaison**
-

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

Visit to SOPA Organic Conference

06 November 2024

10:00 – 10:45

Attendees

- Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
- [name redacted] (Organic and Community Growing Policy Officer) – official support
- Debs Roberts – SOPA Director
- Roger Baird – SOPA Chairperson
- SOPA Members

Notes

The Minister met with a small number of SOPA members including [name redacted] who provided a high level overview of the ability of trees and soils to capture carbon, and [name redacted] who provided an overview nature friendly farming practices at Kinclune and their work on Scottish agri-tourism. The Minister was also introduced to Roger Baird, SOPA Chairperson.

The Minister provided a short opening address welcoming members to the SOPA conference, noting it is important for non-organic and organic farmers to work together to improve biodiversity rates on Scottish farms and of the importance of sustaining market demand for organic produce.

Attendees: Minister for Agriculture & Connectivity; Steven Thomson, Professor of Agricultural Economics & Policy SRUC, Nigel Miller, Livestock Farmer (NFUS President 2011-2015)

ARE officials: [name redacted] ARE-RPID – Head of Scheme Management, [name redacted] ARE-APD, Head of Agricultural Support Policy Development

Summary: The Minister had requested an informal meeting with Nigel Miller and Steven Thomson to discuss the origins and background to the policy currently in place. Acknowledging their respective contributions in the pre-implementation policy development that led to the 2015 changes.

There was a briefing on LFASS and a presentation outlining the key 2015 Pillar 1 policy choices supported a wide ranging discussion of agricultural policy evolution since the early 1990's. Key points included:

1990s - 2004

- The introduction (amongst other things) of quotas to sheep and suckler cow (headage) premiums, the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) along with the associated penalty / sanction regime and tighter EC audit scrutiny was discussed.
- The late 1990s saw the EU force a move from headage based (coupled) Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances to the first version of an area based Less Favoured Area Support Scheme. This early 2000s LFASS remains the basis for the scheme that exists today (including grazing categories based on historic stocking densities. The SRUC [2011 Response from the Hills](#) and [Original 2008 retreat from the hills report](#) and 2016 Rural Scotland in Focus Report [Rural Scotland in Focus 2016](#) were mentioned as a good reference to the history of agricultural support over the years.

2005-2014

- The EU CAP reforms of 2003 forced the decoupling of most support from 2005. The move to area-based direct support saw the introduction of the so called “freedom to farm” era of Single Farm Payment (2005-2014). Farmers’ historic support payments were divided by their eligible hectares to provide Single Farm Payment rates that were unique to each recipient. The pie charts at Annex A drawn from the Bew review sets the relative values across the UK and the supported sectors.
- The decoupled Single Farm Payment introduced the cross compliance (XC)/ good agricultural and environmental conditions (GAEC) that form the basis of the cross compliance system we retain today.

- The high profile concept of slipper farming/ naked acres was an accepted if unwelcome consequence of allowing the decoupled Single Farm Payment entitlements to be traded (to give farms flexibility, particularly tenants' whose capitalised livestock quota values evaporated under decoupling). Claimants were able to draw down considerable sums of money on poor quality rough grazing through meeting the requirement to keep and in good agricultural and environmental condition. This led to a seasonal rental market for poor quality land. A similar practice existed in the previous regime where similar quality of land was rented to boost cattle based Extensification premiums.
- Voluntary coupled support payments were retained for beef in the 2005- 2014. At that time the suckler beef sector was highlighted as being particularly economically vulnerable to the move to decoupled support both in terms of wider economic impact and downstream processing activity/ value add. For that reason the option to adopt a VCS scheme for suckler calves was introduced in 2005 and has continued broadly speaking along the similar lines (although the budget allocation was increased from 2015).

In the discussion, it was noted that whilst the VCS payment did not stop a decline in suckler numbers, it did provide additional support to those who continued with suckler cows, delivering a variety of benefits depending on the scale/location of claimants. It was also noted that in the same time period there was a considerable drop in breeding sheep numbers which in turn drove the need to rebase LFASS in 2009/10 (see the SRUC response from the hills maps and charts).

The 2005-2014 background set the frame of reference for the discussion in relation to the current model.

2014-Present

- 2013 CAP reforms required breaking the link to the historic basis for direct support that the Single Farm Payment was based on. Given the diversity of land type and scale a regional model was adopted. Such an area based model had to be based objective and non-discriminatory criteria such as their agronomic and socio-economic characteristics, their regional agricultural potential, or their institutional or administrative structure.
- The policy challenges from these CAP changes in 2013-14 were highlighted. Officials (with stakeholders) had to develop a new area based model that had to: (i) live within a fixed budget (ii) meet the requirements of internal convergence to unify payment rates; and (iii) be distributed across a widely variable/localised agricultural sector in terms of the land quality, scale, remoteness and level of agricultural activity.
- The internal convergence process helped support a stepped transition from individual historic payments to uniform payment rates across the 3 regions.

- It was outlined that there continued to be a challenge in how to deal with the large area of poor quality rough grazing that did nonetheless support extensive sheep and cattle grazing, at the same time needing to ensure that the slipper farming concept was brought to an end - it was observed that this continues to be a challenge looking forward. Annex A Average rates per hectare 2013 helps set the context of that challenge.
- It was mentioned that considerable in depth / complex modelling including multiple budget scenarios/ land type combinations was carried out before the existing 3 region model / SUSSS was adopted.
- SUSSS was a key scheme for the most extensive (region 3) areas to ensure that those maintaining agricultural activity continued to have access to direct payments to underpin financial viability. (Note: although not drawn out in the discussion, there has been a wide range of recent research outputs that have been used to support policy discussions in the context of the region review work that has been presented to ARIOB).
- It was also discussed that there are a range of views as to how effective SUSSS has been – and that perceived effectiveness depends on individuals' circumstances. Noting that one of the key drivers behind the final design of SUSSS was satisfying the EC verification/ compliance requirements at the same time ensuring that inspection burden on claimants was not disproportionate. Without those strict EC inspection requirements a payment on gimmers could have been a more effective solution.

The Future

- The conversation moved to the forward look with a view expressed that the EU CAP 2023-27 model was a good starting point as that sets out similar objectives to those needed in relation to food production, climate change and biodiversity.
- The key requirement of a continuation of baseline income support was stressed. This baseline direct support provides the foundation for agricultural activity, viable food production and the platform to deliver further social, economic, environmental and climate outcomes in line with the tiered vision.
- It was acknowledged that future change could have a disproportionate impact on smaller scale claimants and that there was already a [concept note prepared by SRUC](#) that explored the impacts on smaller claimants which was also considered in the recently published [Island Report- Rural and Agricultural Development: Maximising the potential in the islands of Orkney, Shetland and Outer Hebrides](#) (see [page 24-26 here](#)).
- Specific mention was made in relation to the important role that methane inhibitors/ selective breeding/ flax- hemp production/ protein crop support could play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the sector. However, the need for

appropriate (new) market infrastructure to be in place to support the adoption of these options was highlighted. Across the arable sector the advances in technology to support precision farming coupled with the price pressure on inputs is already to mark change with potential climate/ environmental benefits.

- Reference was also made to “[The Green Shed](#)” pilot project installation at SRUC’s Bush Estate complex. **Action – Arrange a Ministerial visit to the Green Shed.**
- The case was made for a “farming for nature” approach to deliver for biodiversity and carbon in alignment with the recommendations from the [Farming for 1.5 Farming for Nature sub group](#). The suggestion was that all recipients should have a minimum 10% of land, including existing ineligible features, contributing to biodiversity outcomes in the context of baseline payment. In the uplands this could increase to 30% at farm level - but actions to support this would need to be paid for actions. This would contribute to 30 by 30 commitments.
- The potential for a more localised universal support rates was discussed but quickly highlighted the unintended consequences of any significant change to monetary flows on agricultural production - the potential to end up concentrating the money in the “wrong” place was agreed.
- It was noted that Scotland carries a disproportionate UK burden in terms of (i) woodland cover and tree planting targets, (ii) peatlands and required peatland restoration targets; (iii) environmental designations such as SSSIs and Natura 200 sites. Despite this, and the expectations of land managers to restore nature, sequester more and to reduce peatland emissions UK Government budget settlements do not reflect this burden – nor provide Scottish Ministers adequate resources to compensate land managers for the required changes.

The Minister requested that further discussions of this nature should be arranged on a topic by topic basis.

[name redacted]

ARE-RPID

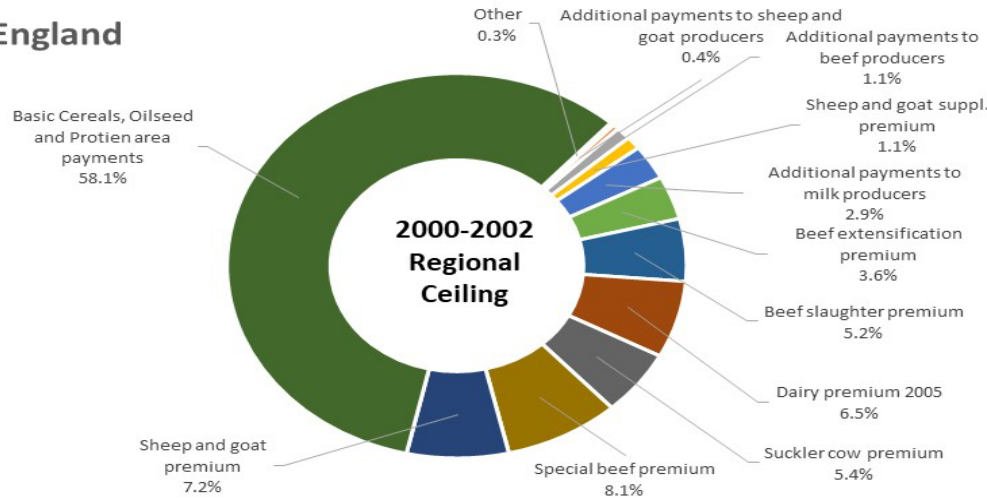
8 November 2024

Annex A Average direct payments per hectare and proportion of EU average in 2013

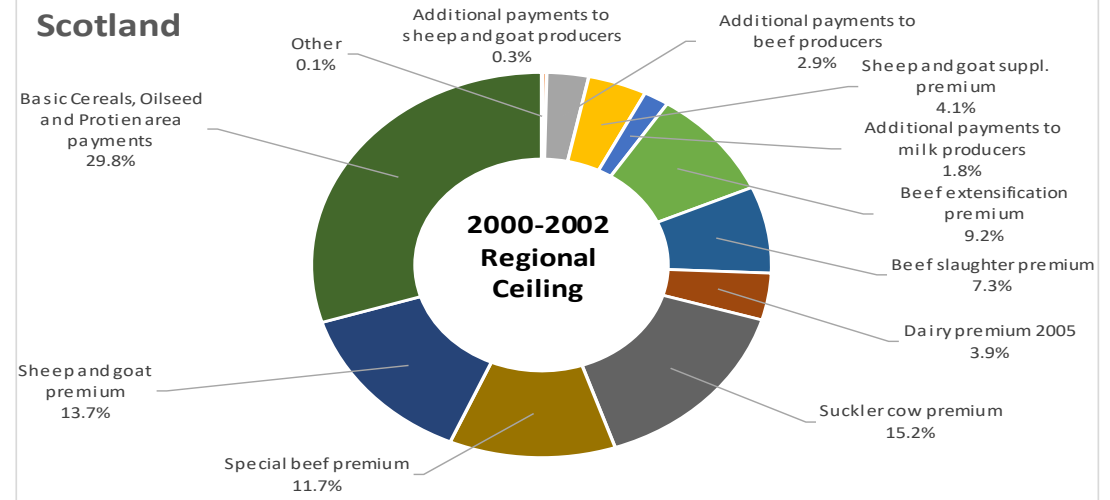
Country	Average direct payments per hectare in 2013, €	Average direct payments in 2013 as % of EU average
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England	€265	99%
Northern Ireland	€339	126%
Scotland	€130	48%
Wales	€247	92%
UK	€229	85%

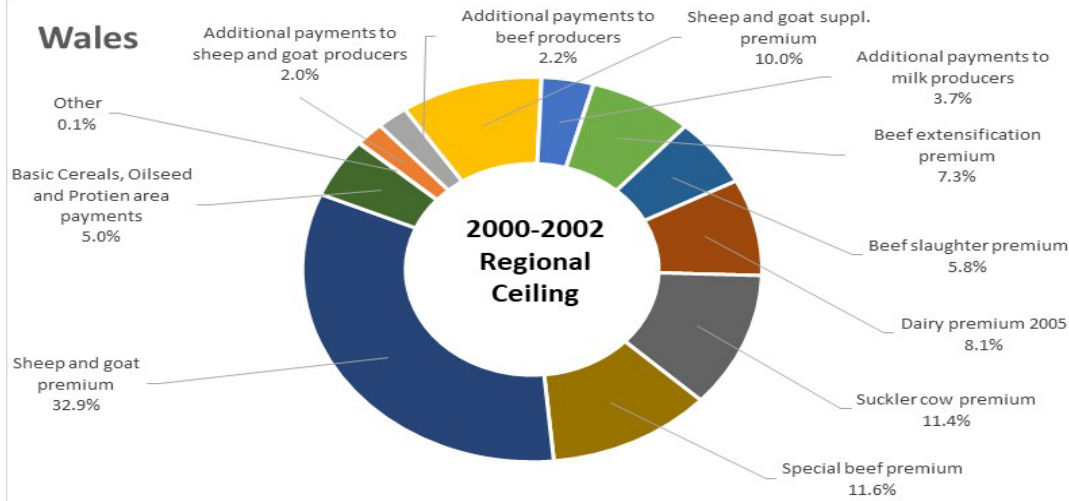
England



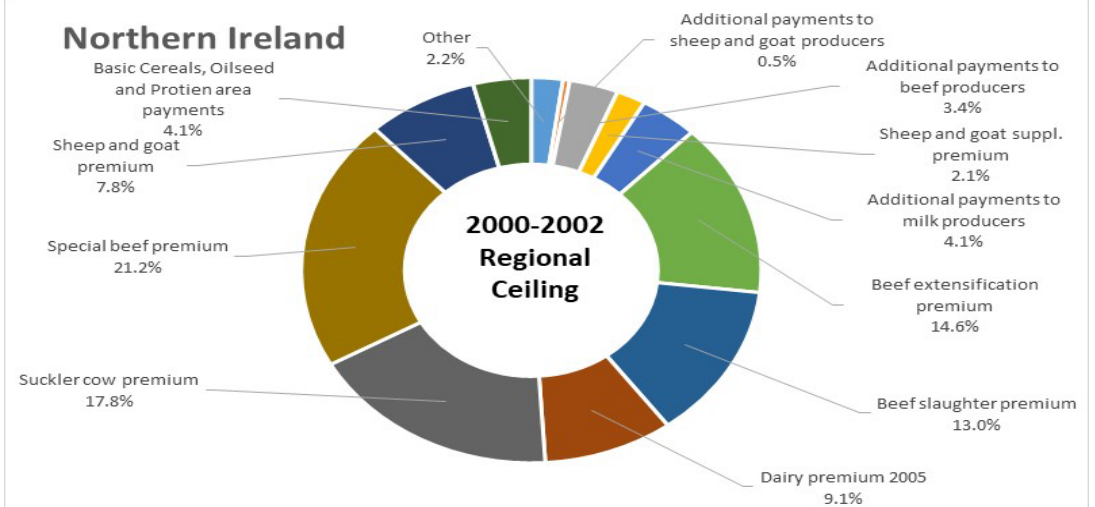
Scotland



Wales



Northern Ireland



Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity – Gardening and Horticulture Cross Party Group) – 6 November 2024, 18:15 to 18:45, Holyrood Committee Room 5 (The Smith Room)

Attendees: Jim Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity (JF), Rachael Hamilton MSP, Tim Eagle MSP, Annabelle Ewing MSP; Horticultural Trade Association representatives; David Lydiat (DL), Stan Green (SG), [name redacted] (NC); Trellis Scotland: Fiona Thackeray (FT); Lantra: Liz Barron-Majerik (LBM); National Trust: Ann Steele (AS); SRUC: Ruth Vichos (RV). Scottish Government: [name redacted – policy official], [name redacted – policy official], [name redacted – Private Secretary]. Further attendees were present from eNGOs, charity organisations, educational institutions and horticulture businesses.

- JF thanked the CPG for his invitation to the meeting, delivering a short speech which recognised challenges currently faced by horticultural businesses, and the value of gardening activities to health. He highlighted his recent engagements with the sector, including Scone Palace, McLaren Nurseries and the Horticulture roundtable.
- The Q&A session started with JF listening to concerns from attendees regarding the ban of peat use. JF was asked about SG support for horticulture businesses transitioning away from peat, and he reassured those present that views from the sector are being considered in development of the policy.
- DL noted that earlier in the day, a Liberal Democrat MP lodged a motion for a Bill in the UK Parliament to provide for the prohibition of the sale in England of horticultural peat by the end of 2025. This is significantly sooner than the timeframe Scottish officials envisage for 2030.
- JF was asked about SG support for therapeutic horticulture. He replied that while he recognises the excellent work carried out across Scotland by organisations such as Trellis, the current budget situation means that he cannot commit to any funding at this time.
- FT of Trellis responded to highlight that a programme with GP practices is being planned to pilot social prescribing. This work cuts across both horticulture and health portfolio interests. JF was asked to write to Ministerial colleagues in Health to highlight the need for government support and funding for therapeutic horticulture.
- JF was asked about provision to ensure professional horticulturalists have adequate skills. JF invited LBM from Lantra to provide input, and she spoke about a variety of workstreams to address the skills gap in horticulture.
- Discussion moved to the importance of incorporating gardening activities at school level to encourage uptake of careers in horticulture. JF shared his experiences of growing vegetables at school as an example of how growing food can teach children a variety of STEM skills. FT shared examples of how the activity can improve wellbeing at school. Attendees agreed that lifting barriers requires engagement of teachers. RV from SRUC offered to engage further to develop a ‘teach the teacher’ programme.
- AS highlighted the importance of domestic and school gardens for establishing greenspace. She stated that gardens and urban areas are not yet included in the NatureScot’s metrics for enhancing biodiversity, and asked that they should be. CG confirmed that AS can be put in contact with biodiversity policy officials for further discussion.

MEETING NOTE	
Minister	Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity (JF)
Type of engagement	<p>Meeting on the PfG Commitment to Review the Government's landholdings to explore opportunities to create openings for new entrants into farming.</p> <p>Henry Graham (HG) – <i>Chair, FONE</i> Ian Davidson (ID) – <i>Advisor, SLMS</i></p>
Date	7 November 2024
Key points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. JF extended a warm welcome to HG and ID. 2. JF requested that officials write to public and local authorities on his behalf setting out the Scottish Government's expectations to meet the PfG commitment to create openings for new entrants into farming on publicly-owned land. 3. JF stated that he would like this letter to include an invitation to a gathering of public authorities, or suggest that such an invite would follow. This event should include case studies of New Entrants and call public authorities to action. JF noted that he would like to make early progress and for this event to take place in January. 4. [redacted] 5. JF and HG discussed Forestry Land Scotland's acquisition of Glenprosen and the opportunity this could present to New Entrants. ID noted that emerging innovations, including electronic collars for cattle could negate some previous infrastructure challenges faced by FLS in readying land for New Entrants. 6. JF asked officials to speak to John Kerr about previous discussions on Glenprosen and noted the impact it had on depopulation in a very remote area. 7. HG noted existing SG programmes for New Entrant support, including the Next Generation Practical Training Fund. HG reflected positively on the procurement of these programmes in helping to progress them onto surer footing. 8. HG and ID discussed some lessons learned from New Entrants that should be promoted, including money-saving exercises in leasing cattle.

	<p>9. HG and ID discussed the potential impacts of the Land Reform Bill on New Entrants seeking land. HG noted a recent discussion with official Alison Griffin, and her ongoing work on land reform with public authorities. JF asked that officials work across these policy areas to ensure that work on this PfG commitment is informed by work elsewhere and is not being duplicated.</p> <p>10. HG requested that the next Farming Opportunities for New Entrants (FONE) meeting agenda includes actions from today's discussion.</p>
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials to engage with Private Office (PO) to establish when the Minister is available to attend a gathering on New Entrant opportunities on Publicly-owned land. • Officials to engage with SG comms at an early stage to build a comms plan surrounding activity to reach this PfG commitment. • Officials to discuss Glenprosen with DD John Kerr. • Officials to discuss with Alison Griffin to ensure synergy between policy areas. • Officials to draft letters to NDPBs, councils and other land managers for publicly-owned land. • Officials and PO to arrange a meeting with the Jardines. • Officials to include the PfG commitment actions on the next FONE group meeting agenda.
Attending officials	<p>[name redacted], Head of Agricultural Development</p> <p>[name redacted], Policy Advisor, Agricultural Development</p>

Raasay Loose Freight service discussion Minutes

Date 8/11/2024 Time 12:30 – 13:00

Location - Microsoft Teams

Attendee List:

Mr Fairlie Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity (JF)	
Kate Forbes Deputy First Minister (KF)	Constituency MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch
[name redacted] TS Ferries Contact Management	Transport Scotland
[name redacted]	PO
[name redacted]	Constituency office
[name redacted]	Constituency office
[name redacted]	Transport Scotland, Note-taker

MATTERS DISCUSSED

KF – brief overview of the Loose freight protocol and asked [name redacted – Constituency office] what was the view of the constituents. [redacted]

JF joined the call and asked KF what where the concerns of her constituents.

KF the pilot initiated by CalMac was going well until CalMac enforced a new policy. There is a need for refrigeration for freight. I have 3 asks

1. the current arrangement continues
2. Freight and mail vans are prioritised. This did not always happen during the busy summer season.
3. CalMac ensure there are facilities to store food supplies. There is a huge growth in Raasay and they need this service to continue. If CalMac can do this for the small isles it can continue for Raasay.

JF asked [name redacted – TS] for a summary of the differences again – [name redacted – TS] the Small Isles protocol is completely different. Delivery of goods cannot be done on the same day due to timetables etc. Deliveries to Raasay is a 20 minute journey and can be done in the same day.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

JF asked who owns the storage unit. (Highland council) again could the local businesses not employ someone to do the deliveries.

[redacted]

[name redacted – TS] Advised that staff at Mallaig (small Isles) are trained in H&S and food compliance but are not trained in H&S at Raasay – they only record and track the deliveries. (CalMac put this in place at Raasay to ensure they can track and audit the goods delivered to safeguard any challenges)

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Action Points

Revisit this after further explanation on why the local businesses need this pilot to continue.

Action	Action Owner
	TS Officials
	TS Officials
	TS Officials

Visit to Achnacone Farm, Appin and Pier Hotel, Port Appin 10-13.30, 12 November 2024

Present

Jim Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
David Colthart, Achnacone Farm
Donny Buchanan, Achnacone Farm
Euan Warnock, NFUS local rep
Lucy Sumsion, NFUS
Philippa Middleton, NFUS
Donald Fraser, NatureScot
Rae McKenzie, NatureScot
Andrew Kent, NatureScot
Hugh Dignon, Scottish Government
[Private Secretary], Scottish Government

The party drove to a high vantage point on Achnacone Farm. David Colthart explained how sea eagles had affected his sheep farming business:

[redacted]

- The farm has had sea eagles on or near his land since 2006. Currently a pair of sea eagles were nesting on the island of Shuna – a short flight distance from the farm.
- Mr Colthart estimated the farm was losing around 40 lambs a year to these sea eagles. Buying in replacement sheep was expensive and did not

completely solve the issue because replacement sheep were not hefted to the ground and there was also a loss of genetic adaptation to the local conditions.

- The inherent genetics were one of the big losses in this situation where bound and hefted flocks were being diminished and as result genetic survivability in these remote areas when not enough quality ewe lamb replacements can be kept was a compounding problem.
- Mr Colthart is the Chair of the Argyll & Lochaber Sea Eagle Management Stakeholder Group.
- Mr Colthart has participated in Sea Eagle Management Schemes (SEMS) since 2009.
- Through SEMS, Mr Colthart has received [redacted] funding from NatureScot since 2009 to implement management to reduce the impacts of Sea Eagles on his farm.
- SEMS support includes development of lambing parks, additional shepherding and support for improved flock health management.
- Diversionary feeding had been tried at Achnacone but the birds had ignored the carcasses put out
- Enhanced shepherding had been supported under SEMS. It had been partially effective at Achnacone, but the £5k limit for this was nowhere near enough to provide sufficient additional shepherding to cover the ground

[redacted]

The party drove to the Pier Hotel in Port Appin. Over lunch there was discussion in which following points were raised:

- Sea Eagle numbers are rising, and probably entering an exponential growth period. There are currently approx 150 Sea Eagle pairs. This would be 500 pairs within a few years.
- The development of Sea eagle territories had followed the location of sheep farms.
- A review of SEMS had been submitted to the Scottish Government. The main points from the review were a) the budget need to be significantly uplifted b) there should be a commitment to multi-year funding and c) the scheme should be more flexible providing bespoke solutions on a farm-by-farm basis.
- SEMS had provided workable solutions for some farms suffering Sea Eagle impacts
- Enhanced shepherding roles under SEMS could provide a good way into farming for young people. However they would need to be supported with eg training, equipment, transport and possibly accommodation
- There were parallels with other issues where farmers were operating alongside protected species that had an impact on their farming, eg geese and beavers.
- There might be lessons from farming and support schemes in other countries, but farming systems were not the same.

Attendees

Ministers: Dr Allan, Minister for Climate Action; Mr Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

Just Transition Commission: Prof. Dave Reay, Satwat Rehman, Steven Thomson, Stephen Smellie, Lang Banks

Officials: Catriona Laing, [names redacted]

Minute

1. Introductory Overview from Commission

- DR gave background on ministerial meeting in June that identified a series of game changers across portfolios for remainder of Parliament. Follow up bilaterals aim to get into depth on particular issues.
- DR provided overview of just transition issues as they relate to agriculture and land use. Reflecting on place-based approach JTC have taken to their work this year, he noted the topics of peatland and housing that had come up in Shetland and forthcoming Dumfries and Galloway and Aberdeen reports which have focus on land use and communities. Highlighted JTC are keen to help SG to improve JT elements of its approach and ensure it is embedded in large set pieces.
- JF strongly welcomed JTC's approach underlining need to improve engagement with communities about the opportunities of transition, enabling them to play a part rather than feeling alienated from process.

2. Rural Economy and just transition

- ST outlined need to embed JT across all work related to the sector, noting the number of forthcoming documents, including the Rural Delivery Plan, Rural Support Plan and Forestry Strategy. Opportunity to outline what JT means for people and ensuring it becomes an ingrained part of what SG does. More broadly, need to embed principle in both policy design and metrics highlighting that JT issues already apparent in agricultural sector and development of Small Farm Plans.
- [redacted] CL noted JTPs as important stepping stone to advancing agenda across government.
- NN reflected on broader embedding of JT across SG and noted example of Scotland's National Adaptation Plan (SNAP) as well as ministerial bilaterals as key avenue for drawing portfolios into approach.
- DR agreed on examples of SNAP and flagged further opportunity in forthcoming Climate Change Plan and ministerial engagement will could enable further action.

3. Adopting a just transition approach

- Advancing discussion on applying just transition approach, AA asked how JT is being embedded outside SG to local authorities and housing associations. In response, DR highlighted strength of Grangemouth JTP process in providing reassurance to wider community around the site on employment and investment in the area. [redacted] JF requested copy of Grangemouth JTP.
- AA raised Shetland as another key community in consideration of JT and DR raised recommendation in JTC's Shetland report around community ownership to secure financial benefits for communities .

- JF raised land use as key consideration in relation to community benefit. Noted need to ensure value extracted from land use in Scotland (including carbon credits and biodiversity credits) benefits those in impacted communities and need for clear understanding of investment required, where it should come from and benefit derived. DR noted similarities with deriving benefits from renewables and need to consider conditionality and approaches to protection. [redacted]
- ST highlighted land managers, crofters etc. do not have same financial levers as energy companies, which poses risk to justice element of transition and ensuring they derive benefit from investment, flagging impact of scope 3 emissions regulations on small business [redacted]

4. Next Steps

- Agreement for follow up conversation within 6 months to discuss progress and continue conversation [**ACTION**].
- Officials to send a copy of Grangemouth JTP to JF [**ACTION**].

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity visit to Moredun Research Institute (MRI) for World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week 2024

20th November 2024

Attendees

Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity (JF)

[name redacted], Private Secretary to the Minister

[name redacted], Veterinary Adviser Scottish Government

Tom McNeilly, MRI Scientific Director and Moredun Group CEO (TM)

Alasdair Nisbet, MRI Deputy Director (AN)

Stewart Burgess, MRI Head of Vaccines and Diagnostics (SB)

Jo Moore, MRI Head of Disease control (JM)

Eleanor Watson, MRI Principal investigator (EW)

David Longbottom, MRI Principal investigator (DL)

Kevin Mclean, MRI Head of Proteomics (KM)

Stephen Anderson, MRI Head of Bioservices (SA)

Stephen Fitzgerald, MRI Moredun Fellow (SF)

Andrew Kelloe, MRI Communications Manager (AK)

Minutes

Welcome and Introductions

- 1) TM and AN welcomed and introduced attendees at the visit, in recognition of World Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Awareness Week 2024.
- 2) AN introduced history of the MRI, established in the 1920s by farmers and vets investigating sheep deaths. He described how MRI is located in the Pentlands Science Park and has two study farms on site, and a secure Containment Level 3 (CL3) unit. This is the only CL3 unit in Scotland; JF asked what pathogens are handled there and AN advised that the pathogens include louping ill virus and *E coli* bacteria. The secure unit has received significant investment. AN advised that Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) also have a presence on site and that the MRI conducts research into aquatic as well as terrestrial livestock.
- 3) AN described that MRI employs approximately 100 scientists, across two departments (vaccines and disease control). Regarding AMR, he stated that vaccines are the most effective (and cost effective) means of infection prevention in animals, coupled with good diagnostics to ensure that infections are treated with the most appropriate antimicrobial. He gave an example of lameness and abortion in sheep, two conditions that can potentially result in heavy antimicrobial use, but which can be controlled with vaccines for which the cost benefit is high. JF commented that an abortion outbreak in a sheep flock is a devastating experience for farmers.
- 4) Aquaculture was discussed, relating to the massive drop in antimicrobials used in Norwegian salmon production following the introduction of furunculosis vaccine. JF queried how to administer vaccine en masse to fish, and AN replied that this was either done via feed or a bath. TM commented that vaccination can be a labour-intensive process.

Technologies for detection of AMR

- 5) EW then gave a presentation on the technologies for the detection of AMR. She described how traditional methods, such as agar plate cultures, are time consuming and too targeted for specific bacteria. The modern way is MALDI mass spectrometry, which can rapidly identify a bacterial culture, and EW referred to Scottish Government (SG) funding which has gone towards methods to differentiate harmful from harmless *E coli* bacteria. This technique can also be used to identify resistance genes responsible for AMR through DNA extraction. EW described further SG-funded studies aimed at extracting quality DNA for analysis, including exchange of genes between Orkney geese and livestock, and the EPIC study into transmission of AMR via water on farms.

Vaccine development for infection prevention

- 6) DL gave a presentation on the development of vaccines to combat reproductive disease in sheep (*Chlamydia abortus*), estimated to cost the UK £20m in losses per annum. DL described how this pathogen enters the sheep cell and multiplies. JF asked if this kills the cell, DL replied yes, and this process causes a breakdown of the cellular interface between the uterus wall and placenta, leading to abortion and stillbirth. DL also mentioned that this infection can lead to severe disease in pregnant women, along with potential for miscarriage/stillbirth. DL described how antimicrobials can limit losses, but vaccination is the best solution [redacted]

Visit to proteomics laboratory

- 7) JF then visited Moredun's proteomics lab to see the biotyper approach in action, as explained by KM, followed by departure from MRI.

Minister for Agriculture & Connectivity Meeting on Orkney Abattoir project Wed 20 November, 1500-1530

Attendees

In person

Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture
Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP
Liam McArthur MSP
[name redacted], Food & Drink Division, SG

On Teams

Jennifer Alexander, Orkney Auction Mart Manager
Alan Corrigall, OAM Chair
Derek Tait, OAM Vice-Chair
John Loughton, Orkney Branch NFUS
Janette Park, Flett's Butcher
Gareth Watson, Orkney Islands Council
Sweyne Johnston, Orkney Islands Council

- JF invited the project to start the meeting. JHJ welcomed the opportunity to explain the background and progress of the development and handed over to AC.

- AC explained that the local perception is still that there is no progress with the project but that there has in fact been a lot of work on-going in the background. Most recently this has been to cement the creation of an entity where SAOS had supported an exploration of models and arrived at a multi-stakeholder coop being taken forward – a further meeting on next steps scheduled for 21 November.
 - Securing capital funding being progressed – backing from local butchers. Early study shows ongoing viability as long as borrowing is not too high. There is no revenue funding being sought – [redacted]
 - AC explained that their livestock needs to leave the islands heavier than from e.g. Aberdeen, given the journey. There has also been issues in the past with boats not running and so there is a need for resilience around slaughter. Also explained the need for cattle to be born, reared and slaughtered in Orkney to secure Protected Designation of Origin.
- JF enquired about the previous situation which led to the PDO no longer being in use.
 - AC explained the background of Orkney Meats and that the overheads were too high – not achieving the ‘sweetspot’ of either economies of scale or small enough to benefit from derogations. Waste also had to be shipped off island. The new project would see waste incinerated on site.
- JF asked if the facility would be multi-species. AC explained that they have figures around sheep and cattle in the viability and for pigs too but that pigs are a more complex proposition. AC described the modular approach to the build plan and that they were to visit a plant in Gloucestershire which had built on a similar basis.
- JF then asked about the partners involved and who the employer would be. AC described the steering group in place and that he is also the Chair of Orkney Auction Mart which would play a role in running the new business, taking rent from the slaughter side. The modelling has staffing built-in including a manager, vet and slaughterman.
- [Mr Alexander?] then recounted issues with the previous model around selling Orkney Gold, particularly to customers in the south of England who only wanted prime cuts, leading to waste. The new model would supply local butchers on a kill only basis. This would support the local food & drink industry and e.g. custom from cruise ships.
- [redacted] Recounted issues last year with weather/ferries which resulted in rationing product across the islands. Wish is to supply the local market to showcase local produce and also for tourism angle. Feels that a local plant could result in improved welfare and environmental outcomes.

- LMCA then explained the lessons learned from the previous facility. View held that it is counter-intuitive that a community such as Orkney would not have its own slaughter facility. Reiterated that the previous plant was too large/couldn't seek derogations or economies of scale. But a project like the one proposed is integral to the economy and view is that a creative approach to the support required can be taken ie it is not simply an agriculture project.
- JHJ agreed with the points made and invited JL to comment. JL asserted that the project has the full backing of the community. Explained that currently cattle need shipped to Dingwall and then transported back. They have now found the sweet spot for sustainability. Important to limit their debt balanced against grants received.

[redacted]

- RK added that there are also rare breeds and private kill available and those numbers may scale up. Emphasised that the the plant would be killing only, not wholesale. Also the issue of casualties. MC committed to continuing to work closely with RK on progress and support and to keep the minister informed.

Note of meeting between Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity and Kevin Stewart MSP

21 November 2024

11:15 – 11:45am.

Attendees

Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity (JF)

Kevin Stewart MSP (KS)

Andrew Stevenson, Concessionary Travel Policy

Extending concessionary travel to all

KS: acknowledged that proposing to extend free bus travel to all was a big ask. However, he pointed out that rail has a huge subsidy and is not used by nearly as many people, nor does it have the same coverage as bus.

In addition, if the Scottish Government is to achieve its modal shift ambitions, radical action will be needed.

JF: confirmed that Mr Stewart was not the first to ask for something along these lines. Indeed, a bus operator had made the same point in a recent conversation. However, it comes down to how you would pay for such a huge expansion in provision.

Had been giving a deal of thought to modal shift and how you might get people out of cars and on to public and active transport, in particular among the middle aged, who seem to be the most reluctant to give up the comforts and practicality of their own cars.

KS: acknowledged that things are different in rural areas where travel choices are not as extensive. However, the bus pass offers ease of use and is free. Although extending the scheme to all in Scotland is unrealistic in the current climate, perhaps the Minister can consider pilots on certain routes (rural and urban) to gauge the level of interest in moving from cars and analyse the benefits of doing so.

This could raise expectations, but if managed carefully, should not be beyond Transport Scotland. In reference to the ending of the rail peak fares pilot, there was no good exit strategy. However, if the message could be that the Scottish Government was looking at, for example 6 months of free travel on certain routes or moving to other routes after this time, in order to determine the effect on modal shift and the Scottish Government's climate ambitions, this should not be seen as proposing free travel for all in the current financial climate.

JF: any proposal would have to have specific and measurable targets, for example reducing car journeys and increasing bus patronage in a certain area by a percentage.

KS: statisticians could come up with measurable aims for any proposal, tying in to emissions reductions and corresponding improvements in public health, although this would take time and would not be captured by any pilot scheme.

JF: in principle, not against the idea but has serious doubts as to financial viability in the near term. Any proposal would also require to have clearly defined targets, including for the period after any pilot has finished, such as any effect on modal shift.

Mr Fairlie confirmed that he would consider this proposal but that he was keenly aware of the financial situation and was making no promises.

Andrew Stevenson

25 November 2024.

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity – Airlines UK Conference, London – Minutes

25 November 2024 – 12.00 to 17:00

Attendees

Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
[name redacted], Transport Scotland (TS)
[name redacted], Private Secretary to the Minister

For the panel discussion:

Ken O'Toole, CEO, Manchester Airports Group

Luke Farajallah, CEO, Loganair
Ali Gayward, UK Country Manager, easyJet (AG)

For easyJet meeting:
Ali Gayward, UK Country Manager, easyJet
Thom Rawlinson, UK Public Affairs, easyJet

Key Points

1. The Minister made a speech on the theme of “What increased responsibility can the UK nations and regions make in supporting aviation and economic growth?”. The speech focused on key messages arising from the Aviation Statement, including on the Scottish Government’s approach to route development and supporting aviation decarbonisation. The Minister emphasised that Scotland is ‘open for business’ and noted his desire to work with the UK Government to ensure that its ‘Jet Zero’ aviation strategy benefits Scotland.
2. In the subsequent panel discussion, Mr Fairlie made various points of substance including that: some sectors, particularly farming, are concerned that aviation is not undertaking its fair share of decarbonisation, therefore, the aviation sector should improve its messaging; decarbonisation will require a range of actions to be taken (on SAF, hydrogen and electric) rather than a single approach being adopted; aviation taxation can allow for the development of the infrastructure required to further promote tourism and develop connectivity, therefore, Air Passenger Duty/ Air Departure Tax (ADT) should not be seen solely in a negative light; the Scottish Government will introduce ADT in a way that protects Highlands and Islands connectivity and complies with the UK Government’s subsidy control regime. The Minister also emphasised that he saw nothing but opportunities for working on decarbonisation.
3. The Minister had a very brief, introductory discussion with the Secretary of State. He emphasised the importance of SAF for the future of the Grangemouth site.
4. The Minister also had an introductory meeting with easyJet, who noted the importance of Scotland to their operations and provided data on, for example, their Scottish bases. AG said she was keen to understand what could be done in Scotland to help increase SAF volumes, and TS noted the progress to date of the SAF expert working group established by Scottish Ministers. easyJet would like to have a further discussion on the Scottish Government’s proposals for Air Departure Tax when the subsidy control issue is resolved.

ACTION: TS to highlight to tax officials easyJet’s desire for a future discussion on Air Departure Tax.

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity – Berry Festival – Online meeting with soft fruit producers and potential delivery partners – 28 November 2024

Attendees: Caroline Millar (Scottish Agritourism); Doug Baxter and Liam Stewart (Stewarts of Tayside); Angela Porchez (Angus Growers); [name redacted] (Castleton Farm); Amanda Brown (Scotland Food and Drink); Alice Biggins, [name redacted], [name redacted], [name redacted] (Scot Gov); Mr Fairlie

Apologies – [stakeholder names redacted]

- The Minister introduced himself to the attendees and asked their views on what a Scottish Berry Festival would look like.
- AP replied with a positive response, saying we would need a clear objective for the festival, e.g. to promote producers or manufacturers, or to focus on community or entertainment. She suggested tying in with an existing major event – could it be trialled at the 2025 RHS first?
- DB agreed it would be worth tying in with another event such as the RHS, benefiting from their experience rather than beginning from a standing start. LS suggested that rather than a single event it would be better to develop a brand and resources for use throughout the season – promoting Scottish berries as the best in the world could be the objective.
- CM highlighted the opportunity to attract international visitors to come on holiday specifically to visit and taste the fruit. The festival could enable development of more products and tours around the soft fruit season, showing both the tradition (Scotland's history of soft fruit production and pickers' stories) and the innovation of modern day fruit farms. Open Farm Sunday would be one existing initiative to link to, encouraging more berry producers to sign up.
- AM supported the suggestions to link with RHS and Open Farm Sunday, and suggested an objective of encouraging people to look for Scottish produce in supermarkets.
- The Minister agreed it would be ideal to promote buying local, developing a strong product to offer to both locals and visitors, as well as for Scotland to become the destination to have a berry experience. The festival was a chance for producers to be bold and ambitious.
- AP agreed with the opportunity presented, and suggested it needed more discussion between the producers for refinement. While producers were competitors, they all needed to work collectively for this.
- Amanda Brown highlighted the existing Naturally Scottish resources for soft fruit, which new work should build on: <https://www.naturallyscottish.com/our-industry/fruit> <https://www.appetiteforangus.com/angusberrytrail/>
- The Minister asked Amanda Brown to pull together a plan for the Berry Festival, to include the concepts discussed during the meeting. The producers then offered Amanda support to feed into it.

Meeting between Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands, and NFU Scotland

Thursday, 28 November 2024, 16:00-16:45

Attendees

- Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
- Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
- Martin Kennedy, President, NFUS
- Jonnie Hall, Director of Policy and General Manager, NFUS
- Andrew Connon, Vice President, NFUS
- Alastair Macnab, Vice President NFUS
- George Burgess, Director of Agriculture and Rural Economy, Scottish Government
- [name redacted], Head of ARE Finance, Scottish Government
- Beatrice Morrice, Political Affairs Manager, NFUS
- [name redacted], Deputy Private Secretary, Scottish Government

The NFUS rally that took place earlier in the day was mentioned. NFUS appreciated Ms Gougeon and Mr Fairlie speaking at it and felt it was well received.

There was a general discussion around the impact of the UK Government budget on 30th October including the loss of the ring-fenced budget. The application of Barnett arrangements and how this relates to DEFRA's budget were considered. NFUS noted that having ring-fenced funding was important for confidence within the sector, particularly for direct support. This was something that stakeholders would be looking to see continued in the Scottish Budget on 4 December and would be a good opportunity for SG to show its commitment to agriculture. NFUS also confirmed that the sector would be looking to see funding from prior years being returned. Ms Gougeon confirmed that she would work with the sector on proposals to deploy returned funding.

Ms Gougeon mentioned the future of the industry and that it needed to be sustainable in the long term. There was discussion around the need for new entrants, to bring fresh ideas and they should be supported to enter the sector. NFUS noted that it was costly to set up in the sector and soft loans would be beneficial. NFUS also pointed out that the banking sector was keen to lend. NFUS also noted that there had been concerns raised by some in the industry around proposals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, particularly the suckler calf scheme, but they had been trying to alleviate these.

There was discussion about the NFUS's current roadshow and how that had been going. It was agreed that it was important to secure support of the sector on the transformation journey to 2027 and that they understood the benefits of changes proposed.

Minutes for Meeting Between Mr Fairlie and Bus, Accessibility and Active Travel Officials on Bus – 4 December 2024

Attendees:

Mr Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

Bettina Sizeland, Transport Scotland
[name redacted] Transport Scotland
[name redacted] Transport Scotland
[name redacted] Transport Scotland

Note of meeting

The meeting was to provide updates since the last meeting [redacted]

Bettina provided an update on the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 [redacted]

[name redacted] provided an update on negotiations regarding reimbursement rates for the concessionary schemes. [redacted] The SSI will be laid in January, followed by the committee meeting in February 2025.

[name redacted] provided an update on the 2025-26 draft budget in relation to bus. The budget for Bus Concessionary Travel has increased from £370.4 million in 2024-25 to almost £415 million in 2025-26. This will provide free bus travel for 2.3 million people in Scotland and extend free travel to asylum seekers. The budget for the Network Support Grant remains the same at £49.5 million. This allows the rate to continue at 14.4 p/km in 2025-25, and provides administration and legal support for the scheme as well as small grants to Bus Users Scotland and Community Transport Association Scotland. The budget also allocated £22 million for the second year of the Scottish Zero Emission Bus Challenge Fund (ScotZEB2). A Bus Infrastructure Fund has also been agreed to continue bus priority measures and support improvements to bus infrastructure. Final amounts are still to be confirmed.

[name redacted] discussed options for promoting bus in 2025. Due to current spending controls, including a freeze on marketing, it was advised that marketing was avoided. It was suggested that a schedule of events and visits over the coming year was developed in a similar manner to a travelling cabinet. Based on discussions, officials will provide a more detailed note to Mr Fairlie on the proposal.

Actions

[redacted]

Officials will provide a more detailed note on how we will seek to create a schedule of events and visits for bus in 2025.

**Meeting between the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity and Strathclyde
Partnership for Transport (SPT)
10 December 2024 at 13:45 pm – 14:15 pm**

Attendees

Minister for Agriculture & Connectivity
Cllr Stephen Dorman, SPT
Valerie Davidson, SPT
Bettina Sizeland, TS
[name redacted], TS

Key Points

1. Following introductions, SPT began talking about their proposals for bus reform. They explained that they are continuing to review the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) and are preparing to consult on the strategy in the Spring.
2. SPT explained that the public consultation is not a statutory consultation, but it will last 12 weeks. Following the consultation, SPT will finalise the document before it is sent to the SPT Partnership Board in late summer for a final decision on the publication of the SRBS.
3. In addition to finalising the SRBS, SPT is also undertaking other work, where relevant, which focuses on how they build their business case for bus reform options, and are also progressing with exploratory discussions internally on what measures are relevant to fleet, depot, and supporting infrastructure could look like under the reform options.
4. The Minister was advised that SPT would not undertake full municipalisation, instead they would explore small scale 'municipal' operations (i.e. areas where there are no bus services are operating and rural areas). The cancellation of the number 52 service in Barrhead was mentioned in passing and the Minister noted that Barrhead has no bus services are operating in area.
5. There was a brief discussion about McGill's petition for judicial review of the strategy, in particular, the lawfulness of SPT's earlier consultation. The operator withdrew the petition in September 2024.

Approval Panel Process

6. The discussion then turned to the approval panel process, in which SPT explained to the Minister that they did not support this aspect of the franchising model. However, as it is on the face of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, SPT are keen to understand how we ensure that the decision-making of the panel is not challengeable, and that it is completely impartial. TS explained that the regulations on the panel process sets out in detail the establishment and operation of the panels, as well as limiting what the panels must consider. SPT were advised that further information about the panel process will be included in the statutory guidance which will be published in Spring 2025.

Regional Co-Ordination

7. SPT noted that encouraging more people to use bus requires a package of improvements both legislative, as well as, upgrading infrastructure to improve reliability through better access to road space; improving journey times;

information at bus stops and better facilities for passengers. SPT referred to the German system which allows greater regulation at a regional level to control fares, timetables, as well as being funded differently.

8. SPT explained there is no 'controlling mind' over transport co-ordination at a regional level for say events, and proposed the development of a small pilot using Transmit (as an example). **(Action)** TS agreed to raise the matter internally with colleagues who are responsible for the national co-ordination role and would co-ordinate a follow up meeting.

Bus Infrastructure Fund

9. The Minister noted that TS had already reached out to colleagues in SPT this week about the new fund. TS explained that the fund is capital only, and that they are still looking at the various options and will advise Ministers in the new year. SPT suggested a few options, including financial support for a new bus fleet on Arran. SPT explained that funding was sought previously for this proposal but was unsuccessfully via the SCOTZEB fund. It was noted that the cost of the contract is a significant risk as the fleet needs to be replaced.
10. SPT also raised the issue of a regional transport information pilot that compliments the work that TS is leading on nationally. **(Action)** TS noted that it was aware of this proposal and agreed to take this away for a further discussion in relation to a potential pilot project.

Bus Futures Work

11. SPT enquired about the progress of the Bus Futures workstream, in which TS explained that they are currently considering the various options, including funding requirements, and will be advising Scottish Ministers in the new year.
12. SPT informed the group that they will be writing to TS about support for bus reform preparatory work. They noted that this would require resource funding and acknowledged that there may be constraints on resource budgets and wondered whether initially TS could consider if other sources can be used to support preparatory work for sustainable travel.

Actions:

1. TS discuss internally with colleagues who are responsible for the national co-ordination role and will arrange a follow up meeting with SPT to discuss the proposed pilot.
2. TS to arrange a further discussion in relation to a potential pilot project on regional transport information.

Meeting title: Deer Management with Fergus Ewing MSP and Ross Ewing

Date/time: 11 am, Tuesday 10th December 2024

Location: Online (MS Teams)

Attendees:

- Jim Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
- [name redacted], Mr Fairlie's Private Office
- Hugh Dignon, Head of Nature Division Wildlife Management Unit
- [name redacted], Head of Nature Division Bill Unit
- Iain Muirhead, Special Advisor
- Fergus Ewing MSP
- [name redacted], Mr Ewing's office
- Ross Ewing, Scottish Land and Estates
- Nic MacLeod – Scottish Land and Estates
- Nadia Flaherty – Scottish Land and Estates

Issues discussed

The following items were discussed:

- Scottish Government's proposed Natural Environment Bill (the "Bill"), in particular:
 - Proposals for Deer Management Nature Restoration Orders (DMNRO) [as set out in the Scottish Government's Managing Deer for Climate and Nature: consultation]
 -
- SLE/Mr Ewing expressed/made the following views/concerns/comments in relation to the Bill:
 - the criteria to be applied to DMNROs and the perceived difficulties in defining and measuring "nature recovery"
 - How to ascertain at what point an estate should be required to intervene to manage deer numbers to better facilitate Nature Restoration
 - Need to consider the impact of other species of herbivores (e.g. sheep) on habitats, as managing deer numbers alone may not be sufficient to address habitat degradation in some areas
 - Section 7 and 8 of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 (the "1996 Act") are geared towards highland deer management; any future changes to the 1996 Act should take account of the need to also manage lowland deer numbers recognising that different approaches may be necessary
 - DMNROs should only be included in the Bill if it can be demonstrated that they are necessary, proportionate, and will not be unduly onerous to implement. The Better Regulation Unit, that had been led by Professor Russell Griggs might be able to assist in reviewing proposed changes to the legislation
 -
- The following alternative proposals to the changes consulted upon were put forward by SLE/Mr Ewing for Mr Fairlie's consideration:
 - The Scottish Government should instigate a review of the legal and practical limitation of Section 8 of the 1996 Act, as it currently stands, ahead of any changes being brought forward in the Bill
 - Making wider use of existing provisions in the 1996 Act that allow action to be taken in if deer are "likely to cause damage" [Sections 6A(2)(a) and, 7(1)(a)], and if necessary amending those sections to make it clear

that land managers can be compelled to take action if it is likely that damage by deer might be incurred in the future

- Enabling better deer management of lowland deer numbers through amendments to the 1996 Act.

Action points/next steps

There was one action point arising from the meeting:

- Mr Fairlie and officials to continue to discuss approaches for progressing deer management objectives.

