



RDOC/2019/0067

Scottish Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 Information and Publicity Strategy

Annual Strategic Communications Plan 2019/20



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Key communication objectives for 2019/20	3
SRDP Priority 1 - Enhancing the rural economy	4-5
SRDP Priority 2 - Supporting agricultural and forestry businesses	5
SRDP Priority 3 - Protecting and improving the natural environment	6-7
SRDP Priority 4 - Addressing the impact of climate change	7-8
SRDP Priority 5 - Supporting rural communities	8
Annex A - Summary of communications activity in 2019/20	9
Annex B - SRDP scheme priorities matrix.....	13

Introduction

1. This Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) Annual Strategic Communications Plan for 2019/20 is part of the SRDP 2014-2020 Information and Publicity Strategy. The Strategy sets out the key messages, target audience, budget, communication aims and methods. This document outlines the key strategic communication objectives from 1 April 2019 until 31 March 2020, and sets them in the context of the five SRDP priorities.
2. The Rural Development Regulation requires the Rural Development Operational Committee (RDOC) and the Joint Programme Monitoring Committee (JPMC) to be informed of:
 - Progress in the implementation of the Strategy and any analysis of results – Annex A summarises communications activity over 2018/19 including quantitative data of some of the monitoring measurements from the Strategy.
 - Any substantive changes to the strategy.
 - Any planned information and publicity to be carried out in the following year.

Key communication objectives for 2019/20

3. The key communication objectives are listed below and reflect the overarching aims of the SRDP Information and Communications Strategy:
 - The overarching objective of SRDP communications in 2019-2020 is to demonstrate the value of SRDP schemes and initiatives to policy makers and the wider public as they visualise a post-Brexit landscape and for messaging to reflect progress made as the current Programme moves towards its end.
 - The SRN will work with Scottish Government colleagues and SRDP schemes, stakeholders and beneficiaries to produce a range of communications materials that outline progress and achievements, including an audit of current case studies across the Programme to identify where gaps exist, a new comprehensive suite of case studies for distribution in a range of digital and physical formats, ongoing social media promotion, infographics, flyers and video content. Messaging will centre around the economic and social impact on rural communities, including lived experiences and statistical information relating to spend, outputs and impact.
 - To promote SRDP opportunities and achievements across the rural events calendar wherever appropriate.
 - To monitor and communicate the latest information relating to Brexit, possible impacts on SRDP funding guarantees and the implications of Scotland's future relationship with the EU and the rest of the UK after exiting the European Union.
 - To continue to inform applicants and stakeholders of scheme dates for applications, approvals and payments
 - To manage expectations about the support available, including targeting and budget limitations
 - To encourage high quality applications through discussions with potential applicants prior to submission as well as rejection feedback, guidance

updates and promotion of good practice, and to effectively communicate the latest information about the closure and wind down of schemes.

- To communicate any changes to the SRDP, including technical and budget changes expected through Programme modifications.
- To engage with key stakeholders, including through the RDOC, JPMC and European Network for Rural Development.
- To inform stakeholders and the public about monitoring and evaluation key findings through communications materials and digital content.

SRDP Priority 1 - Enhancing the rural economy

All SRDP support helps deliver the overarching objective of enhancing the rural economy to help deliver sustainable economic growth.

The Food Processing, Marketing and Co-operation (FPMC) scheme provides direct investment into food and drink processing businesses; the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) provides support for the forestry sector and LEADER supports rural businesses across a range of sectors.

Beyond this, a number of schemes directly support farm and forestry businesses through income support under the Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS) and business development for new entrants, crofters and small farms. The Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund (KTIF), the Farm Advisory Service (FAS) and the Rural Innovation Support Service (RISS) also help support farm businesses by embracing innovative techniques and sharing best practice through the formation of operational groups.

The key communications actions to support delivery of this priority are:

- Publicising scheme opening and closing dates.
- Keeping stakeholders fully up to date with the progress and implications of Brexit.
- Producing a range of materials (e.g. infographics, case studies and a new publication) that communicate how the SRDP has enhanced the rural economy, working with schemes, stakeholders and the Rural & Environment Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS) to collate key statistics.
- Promote through LEADER ideas for innovation and diversification in rural enterprise through published case studies, materials and events.

SRDP Priority 2 - Supporting agricultural and forestry businesses

The key direct support that addresses this priority is delivered through the Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme (CAGS); Small Farm Grant Scheme (SFGS); the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS); and Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS). The Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund (KTIF) and the Farm Advisory Service (FAS) also provide innovative techniques, key training and education support to agriculture businesses.

The Rural Innovation Support Service (RISS), will continue to support farmers, foresters and crofters to problem solve and innovate through connecting them with facilitators from other sectors to form operational group.

The Food processing, Marketing and Cooperation scheme (FPMC) will support agricultural businesses through providing an outlet for primary produce and improving supply chain efficiency.

The key communications actions to support delivery of this priority are:

- Publicising scheme opening and closing dates through websites and social media, including via ARE Communications and the SRN.
- Communications about FAS and RISS including how they work, who can apply and the associated benefits through a programme of regular stakeholder events, presentations at stakeholder events, digital promotion through website activity, direct mail newsletters and production of physical and digital communications materials. Promotion of outputs from training, mentoring and operational groups, including progress throughout the process.
- Ensuring stakeholders are aware of the position and options for LFASS going forward.
- Engaging with an agricultural and forestry audience through ARE Communications and the newly formed Forestry Land Scotland and Scottish Forestry on the latest information regarding Brexit and the implications on future funding.
- Producing a range of materials (e.g. infographics, case studies and a new publication) that communicate how the SRDP has enhanced agriculture and forestry in Scotland, focusing on producing farming, crofting and forestry case studies and promoting them through SRN, ARE Communications and agriculture/forestry stakeholders.

SRDP Priority 3 - Protecting and improving the natural environment

The key direct support that addresses this priority is support for the environment through Agri-environment Climate Scheme (AECS); Improving Public Access (IPA), and agroforestry under the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS). The environment will also be one of the priorities for the Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund (KTIF) and the Farm Advisory Service (FAS).

The key communications actions to support delivery of this priority are:

- Publicising scheme opening and closing dates through various media outlets, including via the SRN and delivery partners.
- Producing a range of case studies and communications materials that convey how the SRDP has enhanced and protected the natural environment in Scotland, ensuring an even spread of scheme outputs and impacts under their specific remits.
- Communications about FAS and RISS including how they work, who can apply and the associated benefits through a programme of regular stakeholder events, presentations at stakeholder events, digital promotion through website activity, direct mail newsletters and production of physical and digital communications materials. Promotion of outputs from training, mentoring and operational groups, including progress throughout the process.
- Engaging with an environmental audience about the implications of Brexit on the future of funding for the natural environment.

SRDP Priority 4 - Addressing the impact of climate change

This priority is addressed through support for woodland creation under the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) and, more broadly for environmental management through the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS). In addition the Beef Efficiency Scheme (BES) aims to deliver economic and environmental improvements and improve efficiency. The environment is one of the priorities of the Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund (KTIF) and the Farm Advisory Service (FAS), including the provision of farm carbon audits.

The key communications actions to support delivery of this priority are:

- Publicising scheme opening and closing dates through a comprehensive communications programme that includes the SRN and delivery partners.
- In conjunction with stakeholders, provide on-going information about the requirements of the Beef Efficiency Scheme (BES) alongside clear guidance for staff, applicants, agents and case study promotion.
- Under the FGS, woodland events will take place along with the development of marketing material.
- Communications about how the FAS works to address climate change, particularly through carbon audits.
- Promoting the links between the work being done under the SRDP for this priority, and the wider work on agriculture and climate change under the Climate Change Plan.
- Ensuring that the positive impact of SRDP spend on projects that addressed climate change is reflected in communications materials.

SRDP Priority 5 - Supporting rural communities

The key direct support that addresses this priority and the programme's contribution to the social fabric of rural Scotland is LEADER with further support from Improving Public Access.

The key communications actions to support delivery of this priority are:

- Continued promotion of the opportunities available under LEADER through individual Local Action Groups (LAGs) including events, workshops, local awareness raising, targeted communication support and coordination from the SRN.
- Focus on gathering evidence and insights that demonstrate the value of the LEADER approach and its positive impact on the rural economy and communicating these to the public, decision makers and stakeholders.
- Producing communications materials and delivering events through LAGS and the SRN that gain buy in from policy makers to ensure that community led local development is retained post Brexit.
- Ensuring good communication with the LAGs through the LEADER Communications Working Group.
- Encouraging high quality applications through the EoI process for LEADER and communicating which LAGS are still accepting applications.
- Ensure the latest information on Brexit and the future of LEADER is communicated through LAGS, the SRN, ARE Comms and other stakeholder channels.

Annex A - Summary of communications activity in 2018/19

1. The Scottish Government ARE (Agriculture and Rural Economy) communications team has supported and informed colleagues and stakeholders about SRDP schemes through communications advice and the delivery of high quality communications products. Over 2018/19 ARE Comms have:
 - Released 13 news updates relating to SRDP schemes including the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS), Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS) and Food Processing, Marketing and Co-operation scheme (FPMCS).
 - Released 48 stakeholder updates relating to SRDP schemes.
 - Published 10 SRDP case studies.
 - Ran a social media campaign to promote and encourage applications to AECS and participated in a joint social media campaign celebrating the legacy of LEADER .
 - Produced a toolkit promoting AECS to peatlands/hill farmers.
2. Since its launch in February 2018 the Rural Innovation Support Service (RISS) has expanded its operations and raised their profile through stakeholder events and digital communications. Over 2018/19 RISS have:
 - Attracted 2,425 visits to the RISS website
 - Organised stakeholder events including ‘Futureproof your farm” and three “Futureproof your hill farm” events, leading to the formation of RISS groups, applications for LEADER funding and stakeholder linkages.
 - Produced a communications toolkit on a web pinboard for partners and facilitators
 - Produced a short film on the first RISS group: ‘Speeding up Dairy Breeding’ in conjunction with the Scottish Rural Network.
 - There have been 26 articles mentioning RISS in the national farming press.
 - Wider stakeholder network meetings with organisations such as FAS, Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutes , National Farmer’s Union Scotland, regional managers and Quality Meat Scotland to present RISS, leading to guest web articles and increased attendance at futureproofing events.
3. A Scottish parliamentary reception was held on 27 February 2019 to celebrate the legacy of the LEADER programme in Scotland and rally support for the continuation of the LEADER approach: “LEADER, Past Present and Future”. It was attended by several MSPs including the Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment, who gave a keynote speech in support of LEADER. SRN produced two films for the event and promoted a range of new case studies in a week of social media activity, jointly with ARE Comms.
4. The Scottish Rural Network (SRN) continued to operate at full capacity through 2018/19, expanding its website membership, newsletter subscribers and social media followers, producing new SRDP case studies and promotional content and linking in with SRDP stakeholders on events and policy work. Over 2018/19 SRN:

- Increased their audience across all channels (newsletter subscribers, website views, social media followers, video views and event attendees), continuing to distribute the latest news on SRDP funding opportunities, application windows, updates on Brexit, local events and opinions pieces.
 - Organised the OECD Rural Development Conference in Edinburgh in April 2018. 442 delegates from 27 countries came to Edinburgh to discuss rural innovation and sign the Edinburgh Policy Statement on Enhancing Rural Innovation, promoting the SRDP to an international audience of policy makers.
 - Produced and promoted 20 new SRDP case studies, including 14 films.
 - Promoted what the SRDP has done for young people in Scotland to tie in with Scotland's Year of Young People 2018 by partnering with the LEADER-funded Rural Youth Project and by running a month-long campaign: 'Rural Youth August' featuring case studies of SRDP funded young people's projects. Insights from the Rural Youth Project survey were directly inputted into the National Council of Rural Advisors' report: 'A Blueprint for Scotland's Rural Economy'.
 - Released subtitled versions of the 20 'SRDP on Film' series of short case study films from 2017.
 - Linked in with European colleagues at events such as the ENRD Communications Workshop in Prague, where they delivered a presentation on how the SRDP has been promoted through video.
 - Delivered the Rural Transport Convention in Inverness, collecting input from a rural audience to the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy 2.
 - Hosted delegation visits from Denmark and Estonia, arranging visits to SRDP funded projects across Scotland and exploring opportunities for partnership working.
 - Worked with Scottish Rural Action to deliver the Scottish Rural Parliament in Stranraer in November 2018.
 - Coordinated nominations to the ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards, securing nominations for three Scottish SRDP-funded projects, to be announced in Brussels in April.
 - Organised a two-day UK and Ireland cooperation workshop to facilitate new LEADER cooperation projects and ensure that budget is spent before the end of the programming period.
5. Farm Advisory Service:
- Ricardo have worked to develop further their promotional plan for the one-to-one programme, to ensure that they are promoting the programme through all available channels, working with the press by issuing press articles; social media – providing a schedule of tweets and Facebook feeds, direct mail to new entrants and promotion via advisers – encouraging this via an adviser newsletter and promoting referrals via stakeholders through attending stakeholder meetings, seeking speaker opportunities and issuing a stakeholder pack.
 - SAC Consulting continue to develop their media presence using an ever increasing range of communication channels and focussed messaging to reach a wider audience and to develop the reputation of the FAS.

SRDP Communications 2018/19 – quantitative data

The table below gives a summary of the quantitative data where it is available, against the monitoring measurements laid out in the Information and Publicity Strategy.

Method of measurement	Progress
Number of applications submitted (since 2015)	17,550
Number of applications approved (since 2015)	13,061
Website page views (1 April 2018 - 22 March 2019)	Rural Payments and Services SRDP scheme pages - 240,800 page views Most visited pages: Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (82,000 views) and Basic Payment Scheme (50,200) Scottish Rural Network website - 151,055 page views
Monthly Rural Issues newsletter circulation	Circulated monthly to 18,500 subscribers and includes relevant information on the SRDP (amongst other issues)
Social media activity (1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019)	Rural Matters (ARE comms) Twitter 2656 followers Rural Matters (ARE comms) Facebook 6881 followers Scottish Rural Network 6006 Twitter followers Scottish Rural Network Facebook 2045 followers
Monthly LEADER newsletter (1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019)	12 editions of the LEADER newsletter were issued in 2018/19 to LEADER Local Action Group staff - 263 Subscribers as of March 2019.
Weekly SRN newsletter (1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019)	52 newsletters were issued in 2018/19. Number of subscribers as at March 2018 was 1,471
SRDP project case studies (1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 – ARE Comms and SRN)	30
LEADER Expression of Interest (Eoi) forms	1422
SRN events	6
Qualitative stakeholder consultation via RDOC, CAP Stakeholder Group, bilaterals (1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019)	Qualitative stakeholder consultation via RDOC, Agriculture and Rural Development Stakeholder Group and Joint Programme Monitoring Committee . SRDP-wide updates have been provided at eleven

Annual Strategic Communications Plan 2019/20
Scottish Rural Development Programme

	formal stakeholder meetings throughout the year, along with stakeholder bilaterals and informal meetings.
Farm Advisory Service 2018/19	Events held - 180 Beneficiaries - 4780 Integrated land management plans underway - 159 Specialist advice instances - 197 Carbon audits - 95 Mentoring - 22

Annex B - SRDP scheme priorities matrix

The table below highlights the main priorities delivered by each scheme, although it is acknowledged that support provides secondary benefits to most of the priorities.

	Enhancing the rural economy	Supporting agricultural and forestry businesses	Protecting and improving the natural environment	Addressing the impact of climate change	Supporting rural communities
Small farms	X	X	X	X	X
Crofting	X	X	X	X	X
FPMC	X	X	X	X	X
LFASS	X	X	X		X
AECS		X	X	X	
Forestry	X	X	X	X	X
Broadband	X	X		X	X
LEADER	X	X	X	X	X
KTIF	X	X	X	X	X
BES		X		X	
SRN	X	X	X	X	X
Rural Innovation Support Service	X	X			X
Farm Advisory Service	X	X	X	X	X