

SIMPLIFICATION TASKFORCE
All Sub-Group Meeting
Wednesday 24th April 2019 – Saughton House

ATTENDEES

Scottish Government

Douglas Petrie (Chair)
Marcus Mackenzie
Brian Stevenson
Yvonne Nova (Secretariat)
Eddie Turnbull - Head of ARE
Information Services
Heather Campbell – ARE Head of
Continuous Quality Improvement

External Members

Anne Rae MacDonald
Malcolm Morrison
Claudia Rowse
Kirsten Williams
Hamish Lean
Sion Williams
Gail Watt

Apologies

Lindsay Bisset – SG
Jonnie Hall
Jennifer Struthers
Donald McKinnon
David Lawrie
Aimee Budge

1. Introductions

Douglas welcomed everyone to the meeting, with introductions around the room. Douglas stated that the meeting would be held and reported on the basis of discussions being held on general principles and not referencing specific case history which it is accepted will inform experience and views around the table..

2. Minutes from previous meeting

Each subgroup discussed minutes during following discussions

3. Sub-group Discussions

- Each sub-group reviewed the minutes from their individual subgroup meetings and reporting back on the key findings (detailed in the following sections).
- All minutes from subgroups have been circulated to all members for reference.
- Members of each sub-group present are listed in relevant section.

3.1. Forestry Grants – Anne Rae McDonald, Malcolm Morrison, Claudia Rowse

Marcus apologised for Lindsay's unexpected absence. The draft Review paper of FGS to Small Scale Landowners paper has not been circulated but is due shortly

and will be circulated to the sub-group when approved. The group had agreed that rather than duplicate work there would be one response covering the barriers and potential solutions to encourage small scale woodland creation.

Key points from sub-group minutes:

- RPID and Forestry doing work around payment processing
- Application process review (For Farmers/Crofters/Agents)
- Cash flow – shorter payment timescales?
- Complexity of application process – streamline?
- Small woodland creation – be re-designed to be farmer friendly?
- Cost of scheme preparation
- Streamline and simplify/reduce consultation process
- Cultural divide – Agro-forestry - combining forestry and farming, how to reduce the divide?
- Budgets- assistance needed with preparation of plans
- Grant rates
- Clarity of guidance needed

Discussion:

- What are next steps - When?
- What are the perceived barriers? Are they regulatory or personal
- Expectations around what simplifies FSG process against customer impact which could be negligible
- Further consideration and an agreed way forward once the full review document has been shared with sub group.

Actions:

- Circulate Draft Paper to all members of STF – Look to identify RPID and SNH contacts to do Impact Analysis and report back (short, sharp look)
- Look into why Agro-forestry uptake was limited - (Anne)
- Barriers – collect information in tandem with Forestry Commission at whether barriers are regulatory or perceived.
- Link Forestry subgroup with the Future Rural Policy Group for a meeting when established.
- Continue work around process mapping for Forestry payments. SG Improvement Team to help/support whilst liaising with Lindsay Bisset

3.2. Mapping and land Inspections – Wayne Bowden (SG), Alan Elder (SG)

Marcus apologised for the absence of any external panel members and talked through the minutes of the subgroup meeting.

Key points from previous minutes:

- Managing expectations (SG and public) is key to what can be delivered within current legislative constraints

- Changes to regions/crop diversification could bring positive benefits
- Land Parcel links old/new
- New LPIS Viewer and the benefits for both SG and customers to be able to make and manage changes to field parcels
- Should there be a link inspection form with SAF?
- Stability required during SAF window – fixed window for land parcel updates
- Form updates
- Guidance (Customer) – LPIS tutorials by video clip have been shared as an example of a new way of providing guidance
- Communication – Letters need to be more understandable and clearer to save customers calling for clarification of content. Video tutorials/FAQ's guides could assist understanding.
- Utilise guidance issued by FAS as a starting point.
- Make guidance relatable by planning seasonal campaigns for relevant schemes.
- Keeping change to a minimum to aid stability of processes

Discussion:

- Inspections are a difficult area to improve/simplify due to regulatory/legislative constraints. This has been visited many times in past, with no real big wins identified.
- Letters need more investigation - any changes made may lead to late letters which could lead to late payments
- Much of the complexity is driven by regulation
- Scheme design should align to customer needs but also our experience of delivery to date
- Mapping – rules around changing the application process
- Size of maps and format (paper/online) is always an issue. An example is of a 54 page map being issued which is very difficult to reference when completing a SAF. A PDF would be better. PDF and shape files are currently available on request.
- IT have a future plan to improve this through the introduction of the new customer facing LPIS viewer and mark up, expected at the end of August.
- Move towards all online as multiple formats very expensive. Some customers may still demand paper format and that will be available.
- There is a cultural shift needed to embrace a full electronic system?
- Area Tolerances – can these be changed? – Not presently due to regulations and would make system even more complex but should be looked at in the future.
- Expectations around what simplifies the `process for businesses against the actual customer impact which could be negligible

Actions

- Letters – make them more understandable (tutorials/FAQ's) – Cost and impact analysis required – SG
- Think around and focus on cultural shift to embrace full electronic system – SG
- Engage with SAF regarding support available.

AECS Hot House Update

Heather Campbell gave an overview of the methodology behind the ARE Hot House initiative, and updated on the progress of the AECS Pilot Project. A number of improvement areas have been identified (both internal and external impact), the five key priorities are:

- Training - ARE and SNH joint sessions currently underway, Buddy/Mentoring
- Planning
- Resourcing
- Communication
- Process – heavily manual processes identified with duplication in many areas. How can this be changed.

The AECS process map was presented to highlight the complexity of the system, and how useful improvement methodology had been in identifying the process and areas for change using LEAN methodology.

Actions:

- AECS Report to be shared with group once finalised
- Once complete, consider if customer impacting issues put in public domain for better customer understanding of process - SG
- Timeline of application process for customer published (initially internal with feedback from external)

3.3. Non-land Inspections and penalties – Sion Williams, Brian Service (SG), Polly Walker (SG)

Sion talked through the minutes of the subgroup meeting.

Key points from previous minutes:

- Penalty spikes and causes
- Changes to penalties
- Ear tagging and wrong sex issues
- Warning letters
- Breaches
- Yellow card system
- Rules - cattle movements
- Penalty Letters – simplification/clarity required around penalty issues
- Communications – required around announced inspections for H&S and staff/customer availability concerns

Discussion:

- Unannounced inspections could involve the farm being inspected being given notice of between 0-3 hours before visit. This should happen, but is recognised that through experience that this does not always happen.

- Evidence that a longer period of notice can cause additional stress to the farmer
- All farms encounter missing ear tags – warnings needed in most cases unless multiple and both tags
- If there is not risk to animal health or food supply then the penalty should be proportionate.
- There should be consistency between the all of the requirements to notify birth/death/on/off/movement requirements (Scotmoves/Scot-EID/BCMS)
- Consensus within the group that this situation may be worse post Brexit
- Any changes need to be consistent with regulations
- FAS step-by-step rules may be of benefit to use more as a one-stop touch point
- Are there any checklists available for livestock producers when applying for sheep and beef calf schemes – FAS support as above

Actions:

- Consider the correct balance around announced/unannounced inspections and consistency around pre warning calls – SG
- Clarity/Consistency around Penalties for cattle movements – different timescales for reporting movements within schemes – SG
- Guidance (utilise FAS guidance) step by step guide as to why to penalties applied – SG
- Flockmark- relates to FAS comment – if resource available, look at application process to streamline with Animal Health
- Checklist for claimants for sheep scheme i.e. highlighting holding – addressed online?

3.4. Interpretation of Guidance (Land Court Appeal Process) – Hamish Lean, Gail Watt, Gordon McMiken (SG)

Hamish Lean talked through the minutes of the subgroup meeting which focused on Land Court cases where lessons could be learned around the Appeal process.

Key points from previous minutes:

- An instance of overzealous approach to the regulations
- A presumption of guilt should not be the starting point
- Guidance and interpretation is different across RPID Area Offices
- There were also examples of good practice,.

Discussion:

- Consistency of approach is required to make sure decisions are consistent across similar cases
- Consistency of approach required for both SG and customer rather than only the customer being tied by the 60 day rule. Whereas SG consequences of failing to meet 60 day deadlines are direct recourse to Land Court rather than the case falling altogether.

- There should be measures and triggers in place to ensure RPID do not go over set time limits for their response
- Training around Appeals is currently underway (refresher and New-start) to maintain consistency of approach across all area offices.
- Encourage customers to speak to SG staff quickly re any issues before it gets to appeal stage – Communications issue SG.
- Executive summary should be at the start of communications not the end (e.g. inspection results letters) – Communications issue SG.
- How do we test customer response – user experience sessions to test how letters are structured and understood– Communications issue SG.
- Possible use of reference videos/fact sheets/rough guides could benefit

Actions:

- Letters - clarity required defining when a claimant can start an Appeal
- Letters – consider re synchronise payment letters, decision letters and appeal letters
- Letters – Clarity required on how/why payment decision has been made
- Investigate cultural approach to 60 day notice – SG
- Investigate receipting process from ScotEid and Scotmoves
- Guidance –Investigate use video tutorials/FAQ's)
- Future work around using working groups to sense check new guidance/letters etc

3.5. Information Gathering – Kirsten Williams, Claudia Rose.

No sub-group meeting had taken place, as no clear direction for this sub-group has been established. The sub-group topics from the task force could to be used to identify areas this group could focus on. Douglas apologised for lack of contact with the sub-group on this.

Discussion

- Kirsten has a contact in the European Network who may be available for information gathering
- Take top 3 suggestions from each subgroup to take forward?
- NOT about future policy, but the here and now. Different countries have different cultural approaches to the same regulations currently in place. This currently happens within the UK with each nation having a different approach to SRDP.
- Look more at how different countries approaches could be implemented in Scotland's to make them better

4. Actions from discussion

Minutes will be circulated, detailing the actions from the meeting as an Annex. Timeline for the next 6-8 months (Project plan) will be made available

5. Future Task Force direction/actions for next meeting

- Mid and longer term (post 2021 & post 2024) ideas to be reviewed and comments to be received
- Comments and feedback from NFUS submissions and Simplification Spreadsheet requested
- What would the Task Force recommend ARE to focus on for future pilots post 2021
- What would the Task Force recommend ARE to focus on for policy post 2024
- What would the Task Force recommend as the principals of Simplification to form future policy, within the themes of the sub-groups (with any other themes welcomed)
- ARE agreed to conduct Business Impact Analysis on current ideas from internal and consultation responses.

6. Date and time of next meeting

Provisional date Thursday 27th June 2019, 10:30 - 12:30pm.

Members to alert Marcus Mackenzie/Yvonne Nova of availability and any Area Office VC requirement.

