

**Simplification Task Force (STF) – External Panel Meeting
18 Dec 2018**

Attendees:

Scottish Government
Ian Davidson – STF, Joint Lead
Douglas Petrie – STF, Joint Lead
Marcus Mackenzie – STF, Project Manager
Julie Dick – ARE Communications Manager

Kirstin Williams – SAC Consulting
David Lawrie - Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs
Rory Christie – Dairy Farmer
Jonny Hall – NFUS Director of Policy
Hamish Lean - Shepherd & Wedderburn, Specialist in Agricultural Law
Gail Watt - Morton Fraser, Agricultural Law and Rural Property Team
Donald McKinnon, Crofter
Robert Fleming, Beef Farmer
Jennifer Struthers, Sheep and Beef farmer and SAC consultant
Sion Williams, Estate Farm Manager
Claudia Rowse, SNH
Aimee Budge, Sheep and Beef farmer
Anne Rae MacDonald, Farmer

Ian Davidson opened Highlighting the purpose of the Taskforce:

- To focus on what can be simplified, rather than informing new policy. As things evolve it can be used a sounding board for any new policy ideas.

He noted that those on the Taskforce are here as individuals rather than representing a particular sector. Further points included:

- There were 2 questions within the consultation were specifically about simplicity the Taskforce will initially look at the feedback for these questions.
- There are 3 main themes from these questions - Mapping, Inspections and Penalties.
- There are 3 phases going forward,
 1. What changes could be made immediately (recognising current regulatory constraints) – likely to be guidance, process and practice.
 2. Look at what is possible in the 2021 to 2024 period, paying particular attention to the main themes coming out of the Stability and Simplicity consultation responses, e.g. around mapping, inspections and penalties, and at the same time ensuring that any pilot work in that period it has simplification at its heart.
 3. A critical sounding board from a simplification perspective as the post 2024 policy emerges – the Taskforce will have an important role but it will not be the only stakeholder input.

General discussion:

- Scottish Government engaged with delivery teams, FCS, SNH and asked for ideas. Nearly 400 simplification ideas have been collected to date, the themes will be shared with the Taskforce.
- Possible reports that the Taskforce could reference for include:
 - The Brian Pack Report was pre current CAP,
 - Agricultural Champions Report
 - Greening Report
 - Dame Glenys Stacey Report
- Europe are moving to a more outcome based approach
- Guidance – how can we communicate technical details and make them easier to read and understand? This is seen as a short term priority
- Mapping, Inspections and Penalties cut across all schemes
- Good ideas may not be able to be delivered up to 2021 but should keep as reference going forward with simplification at the heart of any post 2021 thinking
- New policies for 2024, we will need to develop for 2022 to allow for pilots, understanding, implementation etc.
- We are currently a single paying agency, as Europe dictates. There are offsets as we use various agencies to support delivery. Could we look at this process and alternatives?
- Interpretation/Guidance – The regulations can be difficult to interpret - from an appeal point of view its always the regulations (and not guidance) that are looked at
- Could the delivery of advice be made simpler and more emphasis on compliance advice?
- Could RPID possibly go down the same road as SEPA who advise how to be compliant when issues are found – post 2021 opportunity.
- Simplification should not be to the detriment of compliance.
- The assumption is that Rural development comes to an end between 2021-24. A broader policy is needed and pilots developed.
- There is a lost link currently between compliance and commerciality , one should not be to the detriment of the other
- Cultural and behavioural change is as important as any other change being looked at
- Bio-diversity, species and environment outcomes should also be core to change
- Need to promote better business sense – huge divide between those who have a handle on it and those who rely heavily on subsidies to keep in business

Volunteers for the Sub groups to take forward key themes:

- Interpretation of guidelines and flexibility – Hamish, Gail, Rory
- Mapping (will include land inspections)– Jonny, Jennifer , Donald
- Inspections(non-land)/Penalties – Aimee, David, Sion
- Information gathering on what other countries are doing – Claudia, Robert, Kirsten

Timelines/Comms:

Timeline of the group: None set at the moment however it is anticipated that the group would run for 18 months and be a reference point for preparation for the 2024 preparation work.

Communications: Scottish Government will provide some lines to support getting the message out about what the Taskforce is and what we are. We will set up a page to share updates on gov.scot or RP&S.

Frequency of Meetings: Maximum 6 per year, can be face to face or Area Offices can be used for VC facilities, next meeting w/c 11th February 2019

Scottish Government Internal feedback update:

All 400 ideas/suggestions have been scored from a public value, business and customer point of view to allow us to prioritise. They have been broken down into 3 phases. Now, post 2021 and post 2024.

Scottish Government will continue to categorise using input from subject matter experts and feedback at next meeting. This includes changes we can make during the current phase (approx. 100).

A lot of the themes chimed with the responses from the consultation. Summary of topic themes for the current phase:

- Scheme applications (tick boxes rather than questions, online only applications, improved clarity on minimum activity)
- AECS – guidance, variations, pre-populating the forms, management prescriptions, standard rates for capital items.
- Inspections – currently letting people know 0-3 hours before, this seems setting up to fail rather than support, livestock ID – avoid duplication, seasonal and permanent need to be treated the same
- Cross Compliance – reduce the numbers of standards to be met, mutual benefits
- Communications – customer log on RP&S – finding comms is tricky, letters can be hard to read and interpret, views on dedicated customer service points for telephone queries etc.