NFU Scotland

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Shaping the Future of Scottish Agriculture

Just for the Record

The one 'certainty' for NFU Scotland and our members is that 'uncertainty' is still the main event for our industry just now, *writes President Andrew McCornick.*

That makes planning what we, as farmers and crofters, are currently doing or are needing to do to ensure our businesses are sustainable and profitable very difficult.

Behind all of that is a considerable amount of political noise from all parties and all parliaments. This needs to be tackled but will not detract from our clear focus about what we need as an industry to deliver the food that the country wants with all the downstream and upstream benefits to the economy, jobs, environment, climate change, landscape and communities.

That focus then makes the task of a lobbying organisation such as NFUS much clearer and cleaner to do. Set down clearly the goals that are essential to our future, drawing in all the outcomes highlighted, and then direct the decisionmakers to what needs to be done.

At the very start of the Brexit process NFUS set out the three main priorities that need to be in place to deliver for our ambition: trade, labour, and support. The series of CHANGE documents produced and distributed to members, politicians and stakeholders since then all relate to this set of priorities and lead back to the main messages.

We have undertaken an unprecedented amount of lobbying in the last year, at a level that NFUS has never been able to achieve before. There will be no easing back on this work going forward.

In 2019, there will be more evidence sessions, more high-level meetings, more consultations to deal with while a new agricultural policy, funding levels and trade deals are being developed within the UK and Scotland.

Be assured, despite all the intensity of what is the most significant change our industry is facing in almost half a century, nothing will be disregarded in what NFUS does for you and your business.

Brexit aside, some of the major issues that are currently being dealt with are greening, climate change, milk contracts, labour needs, electronic identification in cattle, supply chain, rent reviews, plant protection products, species management, animal health and welfare. The list of policy priorities being tackled is inexhaustive while we also retain the capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to any unforeseen events or issues.

We have in place a superb professional team, both within the regions and at head office, that are working on all these issues, and more. Behind that are your elected representatives from branch through to region and then on to committees, working groups, board and the presidential team. Alongside this are the group secretaries giving the branch support that you need with the monitors network influencing policy.

In short, "we are here to help" and we have everything in place to give this support no matter what the future holds or what the uncertainties and current turmoil throws up. We are also especially keen to listen to your views to guide the direction and path that our work and lobbying should be pursuing to secure a good result for you and your business.

It is a privilege to be your President and I am committed to fighting for every last scrap, through NFUS, that I can get for our industry on your behalf.

NFU Scotland in 2018 - A Snapshot

OVER

16,000

MILES COVERED THIS YEAR

MORE THAN

500

PEOPLE

AT OUR AUTUMN ROADSHOW

THE PRESIDENTIAL TEAM ATTENDED OVER

500

MEETINGS IN 2018

WE HAVE GIVEN EVIDENCE

17

TIMES TO

11

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

94

POLITICIANS WE'VE MET WITH,

INCLUDING THE FIRST MINISTER

MENTIONED WITHIN

30

DEBATES, PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

IN SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

BEEN MENTIONED IN

11

DEBATES

IN THE UK PARLIAMENT

SPENT

45

DAYS

IN OUR PARLIAMENTS

SPENT

10

DAYS

AT PARTY CONFERENCES

NO. OF DISCOUNT PARTNERS

35

NINE NEW ONES THIS YEAR

OVER

£2 MILLION

OF DISCOUNT SAVINGS TO MEMBERS

NEW MEMBERS

307

SIGNED UP THIS YEAR

NFU SCOTLAND MENTIONED

1,300

TIMES IN ONLINE ARTICLES

NFUS FEATURED OVER

500 TIMES

IN SCOTTISH DAILY NEWSPAPERS

OVER

180 NEWS RELEASES

ISSUED BY NFUS

MORE THAN

16,100

FOLLOWERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

COUNTED OVER

5,500 PACKS OF LAMB IN 2018

VISITING

100 SUPERMARKETS ACROSS SCOTLAND

ATTENDED

40

SHOWS DURING 2018

From the 'Beast from the East' to the Moment of Truth for Brexit Talks

What this exceptional year has given us is a fair share of both natural disasters and man-made problems. The challenges faced by our members have never been greater and the potential changes ahead for our industry are the greatest for a generation, *writes Chief Executive Scott Walker.*

Our united strength gives us the ability to be resilient to the immediate challenges while we continue to influence and shape the future for farming and crofting in Scotland.

The unprecedented amount of lobbying work undertaken by the Union's officeholders and staff during this year was unparalleled in the Union's history and will need to be sustained next year and in the year's ahead.

The challenges to our industry are relentless - from single issue pressure groups determined to reduce production on farms or demonise what we do, to officialdom set on a mission to complicate the every day tasks of farming with no comprehension of the impact of their decisions.

Ensuring that the issues important to you are heard and that those operating in government or in the supply chain understand our industry is what we do with the single purpose of securing a profitable future for farmers and crofters in Scotland.

This year, more than ever, our work has been focused on changing the actions on our own farms and crofts. Our campaigns on health and safety issues have been targeted at changing practices in the industry in order to reduce the number of devastating accidents that occur. Finding ways to deal with the problems caused by the weather drove our #NFUSHowDoYouPlan campaign when we successfully urged straw and feed buyers and those who grow for them to plan, look at alternatives and collaborate in order to mitigate the problem faced by many across the country. That resilience work will stand us in good stead long-term.

Recognising that agriculture is very much a family affair, we launched our Family Membership at the end of 2018, allowing members to add their partners and children to their membership free of charge. This means that everyone from the wife, husband, business partners and children can make the most of the benefits of being a member of NFU Scotland - from attending meetings, receiving information by email and text, to being invited to events and giving their views and opinions. And of course, they can also benefit from the many member discounts NFU Scotland now has with over 35 affinity partnerships to choose from, all with the potential to save your business time and money. It feels right that all the family can now enjoy the benefits of NFU Scotland as much as the named subscription payer.

> "Recognising that agriculture is very much a family affair, we launched our Family Membership at the end of 2018."
>
> **Scott Walker**
> CHIEF EXECUTIVE, NFU SCOTLAND

While we have had many inspirational speakers at numerous events in 2018, no one received a more positive response than the speaker at our Autumn Conference who opened up about the mental health issues he has faced and the importance of seeking help. We talk a lot about building the resilience of our farming businesses, but we don't talk enough about how we support and build the resilience of the people who work in our fantastic industry. With the challenges ahead, supporting each other and being willing to seek help when it is required will be vitally important.

As we enter our 105th year, I thank you for standing alongside your Union as we use our united strength to support one another and shape a future for the farming and crofters sectors that is vibrant and profitable.

In an effort to get children thinking about what happens on farms and crofts across Scotland throughout the year, NFUS launched a poster competition. With over 240 entries submitted, it was clear the children were aware of what happens throughout the seasons – with some getting highly creative to showcase their ideas. This effort will continue into 2019 as we look to tap into the younger minds for creative ideas and educate them about what's happening around them and about where their food comes from.

January

Competition winners Ben McClymont and Jen Craig attended the Oxford Farming Conference on behalf of NFU Scotland. The pair were treated to a range of interesting speakers and discussions which included Michael Gove discussing the government's environmental ambitions and a food culture journalist speaking about veganism and its impact on food and farming.

NFUS for All the Family!

NFU Scotland recognises that it is not just one person that makes up a business and that in our agricultural industry many are a family affair.

And as such at the end of this year we launched a new Family Membership, allowing a NFUS Farming or Crofting membership the ability to add your family and additional business partners to your subscription.

The whole family can now enjoy the benefits of being part of NFU Scotland – from attending meetings, receiving information by email and text, to being invited to events and giving their views and opinions. And of course they can also benefit from the many member discounts we have negotiated with our partners. Their voice matters as much as the main person on the subscription and we want to recognise that. More importantly they can get access to all of this, and more, for no cost over and above the main membership subscription.

This change will allow us as a Union to build on the wide demographic that we represent and engage with all who are actively involved in the farming business. This will help to strengthen our voice when we go about our daily work of representing our members.

CASE STUDY

NFU Scotland has had a number of members caught out this year by regulations which saw them lose their greening payment. In one case the members, a young couple, had been unfairly penalised for overclaiming by 0.01ha of Nitrogen Fixing crops as part of their EFA requirement (EFANIX) which caused their ratio to sit at a balance of 75 per cent for EFANFIX peas and 25 per cent EFANFIX beans. Regulations deemed that the EFANFIX must be under 75 per cent.

NFUS pressed SGRPID on this case and after much correspondence, including with the local MP, the Cabinet Secretary deemed the outcome unfair and the members have now received payment of £27,000.

The Lothians and Borders member said: "We had become extremely frustrated and unsure of what to do next before contacting Jenny at NFUS. The help that NFUS provided gave us much reassurance and it was great knowing we had them fighting our corner. Finally receiving payment has been a huge relief and we are so glad that we contacted NFUS rather than accepting the penalty received."

Any members with issues over payments are encouraged to contact NFUS for help or advice. Call 0131 472 4000 to speak to one of the team.

Reaching New Levels

NFU Scotland's ability to lobby at the very highest levels has never been stronger.

It has been a year of unprecedented political engagement that has seen more manhours spent in both Westminster and Holyrood in any one year than ever before, with that robust approach underpinned by countless briefings and meetings with politicians both at a local level and at party conferences around the UK.

In the past 12 months, the Union has attended the UK Tory Party conference in Birmingham, SNP party conferences in Glasgow and Aberdeen; the Scottish Labour Party Conference in Dundee, the Scottish Liberal Democrat conference in Aviemore and the Scottish Greens conference in Greenock.

While we have had a long-running programme of meeting MSPs and MPs of all political parties regularly at a regional level, the world of political party conferences is new to NFU Scotland. In recent years, conferences have increased in size and profile, with thousands of non-party observers attending the events to get in front of political movers and shakers and to lobby.

More than 11,000 delegates attended the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham in October, and it would be easy to feel like a little fish in a big pond. But these are extraordinary political times – and for NFU Scotland, as a lobbying organisation, it was felt that if we did not jump in to that pond now, then when would we ever?

The power of networking cannot be underestimated and NFU Scotland's attendance at these events is as much about opening doors with key political decision-makers so that they are easier to access whenever the Union might need to lean on them for support on any given issue.

Opening those doors at Westminster has never been more important – particularly as the Houses of Parliament scrutinises the Agriculture Bill - the first piece of domestic legislation directly impacting upon agricultural policy in two generations.

That work at Westminster was complemented by our representation at all levels in Holyrood.

Across all workstreams in which we represent our members, NFU Scotland's political credentials have never been higher.

In the past year, NFU Scotland has requested or been asked to give evidence to no fewer than 11 parliamentary committees at Westminster and Holyrood – a record for the organisation.

There can be no let up. NFU Scotland's primary role as a lobbying organisation has never been more important as we chart our way through post-Brexit times, set a new agricultural policy for Scotland, and enable our members to make the most of new opportunities.

Top: First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was guest of honour at a packed Turriff Show.

Bottom: NFU Scotland driving home the importance of seasonal staff to leading MPs.

February

February saw some of the most difficult weather in recent memory hit the UK, and Scotland's farmers bore the brunt of it. The 'Beast from the East' snow storm resulted in a high number of stock losses for Scottish farmers and crofters, an issue which NFU Scotland took to the Scottish Government and successfully pushed for compensation for fallen stock losses during that period.

Both the Scottish Green Party Conference in Greenock and the Scottish Labour Party Conference in Dundee were on NFU Scotland's lobbying calendar this year.

> ... national staff and members are firmly committed to seeking the best possible outcome for those affected.

The Challenges of Species Reintroduction

NFU Scotland has been robust and resolute in its efforts to reduce the impacts of beavers, sea eagles and geese on farmers and crofters across Scotland.

Significant challenges remain, but local and national staff and members are firmly committed to seeking the best possible outcome for those affected.

Those efforts have led to management plans for beavers, geese and sea eagles, trials of new approaches to reduce the risk of sea eagles predating sheep and lambs, and increased shooting of geese to reduce their impact.

Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing MSP met with NFU Scotland and concerned members on farm to discuss the issues they have with beavers and the damage they are causing to farmland.

Beavers

The illegally re-introduced population of beavers in Tayside, which has trebled in size in recent years, is here to stay and is scheduled to receive protected status. Publicly, NFUS has acknowledged that in some locations beavers and people can co-exist happily, but we are also at pains to emphasise repeatedly that when they locate and breed in highly productive agricultural areas, they undermine river banks and protective flood banks and impede farmland drainage as a result of burrowing and damming.

NFU Scotland has been working tirelessly to ensure that when beavers are formally protected there is a comprehensive management framework in place to give farmers confidence that they will be able to deal with problems should they arise, or indeed prevent problems from arising in the first place. Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing MSP was welcomed on to a farm in Perthshire earlier to see for himself the damage beavers are doing to farmland.

March

NFU Scotland representatives were pleased to meet with the Leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, Ruth Davidson MSP, in March as part of continued engagement with her party in the Scottish Parliament. The meeting followed previous discussions with Ruth Davidson about the priorities of Scottish agriculture in the Brexit negotiations.

Geese

Goose numbers have increased massively and many of our members are trying to deal with the impact on their farming businesses.

Barnacle goose schemes must be widened to other areas and we welcome the fact that Scottish Natural Heritage is to bring forward new schemes on Luing, Uist and Tiree. NFUS continues to push for goose management funding to be safeguarded and the full delivery of the Islay Sustainable Goose Management Strategy.

In addition, there is a resident Greylag population to deal with. In recent years funded 'adaptive management' pilot projects have been undertaken where local groups have sought to control the population. These have come to an end and the government intends to move to a 'self-help' approach that local groups are not yet in a position to make work, risking a rise in numbers again.

Sea Eagles

Predation of hill flocks by sea eagles is also having a huge impact on affected crofting and farming communities and is rarely out of the headlines. NFU Scotland Board of Directors undertook a two-day study trip of hill farming during the summer taking valuable time out to visit a Sea Eagle monitor farm implementing aspects of the Sea Eagle Action Plan, hearing first-hand about the impact that predation can have on a hill unit. Mitigation options are being actively trialled in Argyll with the intention of applying the lessons learned more broadly across the sea eagle range. The Skye Sea Eagle Group is now back up and running and we hope that we will see more progress in this area soon.

Crofting Legislation Reform Focus

NFU Scotland has continued to lobby Scottish Government on crofting law reform and is actively involved in the Crofting Bill Group, which has been set up to progress the crofting legislation reform.

NFU Scotland has held regular meetings with the Crofting Commission and has highlighted members' concerns over the administration of regulatory applications. Going forward we will be lobbying Scottish Government on future support policies for crofting and support that targets the active management of common grazings.
In August the Crofting Highlands and Islands Committee welcomed Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing MSP to its meeting prior to its visit to nearby Lynbreck Croft.

Top: Barney Macaskill took over chairmanship of the Crofting Highlands and Islands Committee from long-standing crofter Sandy Murray.

Bottom: Following a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary, the Committee visited Lynbreck Croft.

BSE Case Confirmation

On 18 October Scotland's livestock industry received the disappointing news that BSE had been detected in a fallen stock animal from Aberdeenshire and Scotland would lose its BSE Negligible Risk Status (NRS). The Union worked with industry stakeholders, including Scottish Government from the outset and provided extensive support to the farmer involved.

Scotland achieved NRS in May 2017 and now reverts to Controlled Risk Status, in line with the rest of Great Britain. According to the rules surrounding BSE the earliest we can reapply for NRS would be 2024.

The finding is far from a disaster and will have minimal impact. The nature of BSE means we expected to see a very long 'tail off' of cases, following the peak in the 80s/90s with 'spontaneous' cases expected to be detected far into the future.

Despite the media's best efforts to make a story and create a panic, this is not the beginning of a new crisis and there will be no ongoing impacts for industry. Over the course of 48 hours following the case being made public NFU Scotland fielded 43 media inquiries from a range of channels and publications from across Europe – all but three queries were satisfied.

The Dark Side of Journalism

In any one year, NFU Scotland sends out hundreds of news releases and press comments and responds to media requests for interviews daily. In Scotland, we are blessed compared to other parts of the UK in the column inches, website articles, TV footage and radio coverage that NFU Scotland can secure on farming, food and environmental issues.

NFU Scotland's communications team prides itself on the relationship it has established with the media over many years, due in no small part to the assistance of many members and staff in fulfilling any media request.

However, it is right for us to expect certain standards to be met by those reporting on our sector.

In our opinion, the BBC's broadcast in autumn 2018 of the Despatches programme – *Dark Side of Dairy* - about the legitimate live export of dairy bull calves was sensational, misleading and inaccurate and fell far short of the standards which the BBC sets for itself. In addition, the programme's treatment of NFU Scotland's input was heavily edited and did not represent our views.

The backlash from members about the content and tone of the programme was unprecedented in recent times, providing NFU Scotland with the strongest of mandates to pursue a formal complaint against the BBC.

After initial correspondence with BBC Scotland failed to secure the apology and retraction NFU Scotland believed was merited, the complaint was formally escalated on behalf of members to the Executive Complaints Unit at the BBC.

NFU Scotland's relationship with the BBC, a hugely important broadcaster, remains strong but our anger over the programme, and the inadequate initial response from BBC Scotland, left us with no option other than to pursue a formal complaint against the BBC for the first time.

April

NFU Scotland were invited to host a fringe event at the Scottish Liberal Democrat's Conference in Aviemore, in April. The union's top team were joined on the panel by the Lib Dem's rural spokesperson Mike Rumbles and discussed the need for a new agricultural policy for Scotland post-Brexit that delivers financial stability, improved productivity and environmental benefits.

Tackling Climate Change

> This Bill will set new targets for reducing emissions and has the potential to be pivotal in framing the future of agricultural policy.

Climate change is high on the public and political agenda with a Climate Change Bill currently in the Scottish Parliament.

This Bill will set new targets for reducing emissions and has the potential to be pivotal in framing the future of agricultural policy. We are seeing unprecedented activity and attention on this area in a manner that could undermine the future of our industry.

Autumn reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change put the spotlight on diets and prompted calls for a reduction in meat consumption while the Committee on Climate Change criticised the progress made in reducing agricultural emissions and called for the government to move towards introducing mandatory measures to force farmers to reduce emissions and livestock numbers.

We have been resolute in our defence, pointing out that livestock production in Scotland is based on a sustainable, grass-based system that makes the most of our landscape and geography and is the cornerstone of many rural economies throughout the country. We have continually pointed out that more than 80 per cent of Scottish farmland is grass, heather and rough grazing - not suitable for growing fruit, cereals and vegetables - but ideal for ruminants to turn that forage into locally-produced top quality milk, beef and lamb. The strength of our grass-based systems is that it reduces our reliance on imported feedstuffs making our production very distinct from those in other parts of the world. As climate change poses significant risks to global food security, that may give Scotland and the UK a competitive advantage and increase our importance as a food-producing nation.

At the same time, however, we must accept that farming has an important role to play in helping tackle climate change. It is important that farming is seen as part of the solution and not simply part of the problem that needs regulatory intervention to solve.

This is an area that is only going to grow in importance and it is critical that the Union and the industry engage meaningfully with this agenda, backed by robust science and impact assessments so that we do not simply get draconian measures imposed on us.

Any changes driven by new legislation or policies must be managed sensibly and any impacts on agriculture's full role in terms of the social, environmental and economic benefits it delivers must also be taken into consideration.

May

Following their AGM, the Next Generation Working Group re-elected Chair Mark Donald and Vice Chair Sarah Allison. The group set in place a clear plan for the future as they highlighted increasing member engagement and recruitment as key issues which they would tackle in the year ahead. It was also announced that the group now has a representative in every region.

Policy Manager Andrew Midgeley gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Environemnt, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee mid-November reiterating our points and representing the industry in discussions.

Promoting Scottish lamb

Retailers were held to account once again this year as NFUS organised two shelf watch surveys on the look out for their support for Scottish lamb during peak seasons.

Ahead of Easter weekend, over 3,000 packs of lamb from 48 stores were examined with almost 80 per cent being marked as either Scottish or British. Having previously made commitments to go 100 per cent home-produced in Scotland, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Aldi and Co-op were found to be honouring their commitment other than nominal volumes of organic New Zealand lamb found in Marks & Spencer stores.

In August in the lead up to the Lairg lamb sale, over 2,500 packs of lamb from supermarkets were counted. Almost 45 per cent of the lamb available was branded with the Scotch Lamb PGI, with an additional 44 per cent labelled as British or Welsh.

NFU Scotland also joined Quality Meat Scotland, Tayside Contracts and Perth and Kinross Council (pictured right, top) in running a pilot programme to include Scotch Lamb PGI on the menu in schools in Tayside. The campaign introduced a new lamb dish onto the menu every week for four weeks, which was deemed a success following positive feedback from pupils, staff and parents.

Supporting Women in Agriculture

NFU Scotland continued to throw its support behind Women in Agriculture working groups, committees and events this year as the campaign to improve representation in agriculture continued.

In March, the Union continued its support for the Dumfries and Galloway Dairy Women Network. At the Royal Highland Show, NFU Scotland hosted the first ever Women in Agriculture drinks reception on the Thursday night, with women from throughout the agricultural industry coming together under one roof.

NFUS has also lent it's support to a series of Women in Agriculture workshops and events organised by Farm Advisory Service (FAS) this year which have included diversification, bookkeeping and finances.

The Importance of LFASS

The Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS) and the threat of it being reduced by up to 80 per cent within the next two years has been a high priority for the Union and the LFA Committee.

Meeting in Grantown-on-Spey in August, the LFA Committee welcomed Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy Fergus Ewing MSP to discuss their vital payments being cut by 20 per cent in 2019, followed by a possible 80 per cent cut in 2020, with complete uncertainty from then on.

It was made very clear to the Cabinet Secretary that any cut would be wholly unacceptable but an 80 per cent cut would be catastrophic for the hill farming industry.

Committee members had the opportunity to convey to Mr Ewing just how important LFASS is to not only farmers and crofters on less favoured areas but also for the broader rural economy, which requires farmland in these areas to be profitable in order for local businesses to survive.

Top: NFUS getting lamb back on the school menu in Tayside.

Bottom: Women in Agriculture events continue to go from strength to strength.

June

East Lothian farmer Jamie Wyllie was welcomed on as the new Chairman of the Pigs Working Group in June. Jamie, who farms at Ruchlaw Mains, Stenton, East Lothian, is following in his father's footsteps with James Wyllie chairing the Union's pigs committee in the early nineties before going on to be Vice President of NFU Scotland from 1994 to 1996.

Top: The Highland Show continues to provide a platform for NFUS to meet leading politicians

Bottom: Sally Heggie and Louise Graham of the Dumfries office were awarded the Membership Flame at the AGM in February recognising oustanding achievements in member retention.

Show Season 2018

NFUS set out to speak to as many members and stakeholders as possible across the summer attending over 40 shows this year with lots of activity at the local events, including debates, receptions, and lots of teas and coffees served. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was also welcomed onto the NFUS stand at Turriff Show.

The Royal Highland Show saw the Presidential team meet with a range of politicians and stakeholders as the issue of Brexit and future agricultural policy remained at the fore. This included Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Michael Gove MP and Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell MP.

AGM, Dinner & Conference

NFU Scotland's AGM 2018 was once again a celebration of everything that has been achieved in the previous 12 months as well as a look forward to the future for the Union. It was also a celebration of the fine food and drink produced in Scotland with the delicious meal served up with thanks to members for their contributions.

Sutherland crofter Sandy Murray was awarded the John Miskelly Award, one of the Union's highest honours for outstanding dedication and commitment to NFU Scotland and Scottish agriculture.

NFU Scotland and NFU Mutual's prestigious Ambassador Award was presented to Marion McCormick for her outstanding role in promoting Scottish produce while the Dumfries team of Sally Heggie and Louise Graham won the Membership Flame (picture left), recognising outstanding efforts in recruitment and retention of members.

July

Show season was in full swing by July and so was the Union's engagement, both with members and with politicians. Amongst the many shows the Presidential team visited President Andrew McCornick was at the Border Union Show with Lothian and Borders Chairman Kelvin Pate, meeting members and politicians including Scottish Liberal Democrat Leader Willie Rennie MSP.

Autumn Conference

NFUS used its Autumn Conference to turn the conversation away from Brexit and towards a focus on improving farm practices, better mental health and wellbeing and future opportunities through diversification.

Many high profile speakers were welcomed to the stage throughout the day at Birnam Arts Centre, which included AgriScot's Scotch Beef Farmer of the Year Robert Fleming, National Rural Mental Health Forum Chairman Jim Hume and Director of Go Rural Caroline Millar, to name a few.

Roadshows

NFU Scotland's autumn roadshows sought to encourage dialogue and views from members as the Presidential team and staff travelled thousands of miles across the country. This year the roadshows focused on 'Future Agriculture Policy' and saw Director of Policy Jonnie Hall, President Andrew McCornick and Vice President Martin Kennedy travel to every region, with two events held in some areas.

With such a varied and unique landscape, it was important to get feedback from every region on what the Union has been doing and the direction it is currently moving in.

Campaigns

#NFUSHowDoYouPlan

This year saw prolonged and unprecedented weather – from the Beast from the East to the prolonged dry spell in the summer.

In anticipation for shortages of straw during this winter and an inspired effort to get farmers and crofters in Scotland thinking ahead, NFU Scotland organised a 12-week campaign. The #NFUSHowDoYouPlan feed and fodder campaign encouraged growers and buyers to plan ahead, collaborate with one another and look at alternatives to their normal supplies they buy in for the likes of bedding and feed.

Throughout the campaign NFU Scotland drove social media activity, which included:

- Reaching over 250,000 people on social media
- 19 case studies and top tip cards
- Six videos created with over 7,000 views
- Two Facebook Live sessions to provide you with the chance to put your questions to the team

On the back of the campaign, an industry summit, with key stakeholders, was organised by NFUS to discuss the situation. Action points from this meeting which were achieved included:

- EFA green cover may be established without sowing a mixture of crop species, provided that the crops sown are grasses or any herbaceous forage. The establishment window is extended to the end of December with no limitations on harvest or grazing within the calendar year.
- Beef Efficiency Scheme roadshows in September to discuss nutrition opened to all livestock farmers, not just scheme members.
- AHDB and SAC consulting produced factsheets highlighting the most efficient use of straw, whether it be for fodder or bedding
- Scottish Government should pay at least 90 per cent of the basic payment scheme in October as they did last year
- Scottish Government should bring forward the payment of all pillar 2 payments.
- Scottish Government must request that Europe relax the three-crop rule requirement to allow growers more time to bale straw rather than plant winter crops.

Top: Baling EFA margins helped address the forage shortages during the summer

Bottom: A feed and fodder summit took place with industry stakeholders on the back our of #NFUSHowDoYouPlan campaign during the summer.

August

Forth and Clyde Chairman Willie Harper welcomed the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy Fergus Ewing MSP onto his Gryffewraes Farm. The Cabinet Secretary was on Willie's farm to announce the National Basic Payment Support Scheme (NBPSS) would roll out 90 per cent loan payments from the start of October to farmers.

Making Farms and Crofts a Safer Place to Live, Work and Play

Throughout 2018 our efforts have continued to encourage farmers and crofters to make their safety, and that of those around them a priority.

This year we once again took part in Farm Safety Week using social media and the press to get the messages across. Tying in with our counterparts in other areas of the UK, and the Farm Safety Foundation, we issued messages each day throughout the week, with a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing.

This focus on mental health and wellbeing continued later into the year, when NFUS also supported a 15-date tour by Resilient Farmer Doug Avery, organised by RHASS and RSABI and others speaking to hundreds of people.

In addition to Farm Safety Week, as a Union we have also continued to drive the Scottish Farm Safety Partnership with renewed pleas in September to 'make safety a priority', putting into practice the Safe Stop procedure. Other messages included safety surrounding farm maintenance and falls from heights.

Above: The Presidents of UK farming unions united in their message on trade arrangements post-Brecit.

Building a Future Agricultural Policy Fit for Scotland

Since the vote on European Union membership in 2016, your Union has been unequivocal that the entire Brexit process must be pursued to secure the best possible outcome for Scottish farmers and crofters, *writes Director of Policy Jonnie Hall.*

That has seen an unparalleled level of engagement with our members as we brief them on the protracted, highly-politicised and frustrating negotiations process around Brexit. Of equal importance has been NFU Scotland's commitment to shaping the future of agricultural support in Scotland.

Late spring saw the publication of our *Steps to Change: A New Agricultural Policy for Scotland*, giving policy-makers the clearest possible steer on what Scotland's farmers and crofters want policy look to like in the future. That was the cornerstone on which we built months of engagement with politicians and stakeholders and has driven the agenda at farming events and meetings the length and breadth of the country. No other document produced by governments or stakeholders has provided such a firm steer on future direction of policy.

Your Union firmly believes that any future agricultural policy must underpin the huge economic, social and environmental contribution made by farmers and crofters. If the Steps to Change approach were to be adopted, much of what is required by way of future support for Scottish agriculture could be delivered with greater efficiency – in terms of funding, process and outcomes. NFUS is already engaging with the Scottish Government on an agricultural policy that will support active farmers and crofters and help support profitable farming.

Many of your Union's objectives reflect similar goals of the other devolved administrations of the UK. However, there is also a clear recognition that Scotland must meet those objectives on its own terms, and at its own pace, in order to ensure the successful delivery of the desired outcomes. That is why it is critical that within a commonly agreed regulatory and standards framework across the UK, Scotland retains complete autonomy in the development and delivery of new agricultural and rural policy, through an effective transition period, that will enable managed change at business, sector and industry levels.

September

President Andrew McCornick, Vice President Martin Kennedy, Director of Policy Jonnie Hall and Political Affairs Manager Clare Slipper were invited to host a high-profile reception for MSPs at Holyrood. More than 30 MSPs from all parliamentary parties met with the Union representatives to discuss the main political issues facing Scottish farmers and crofters, in particular Brexit and the threat of a 'no deal' scenario.

Central to NFU Scotland's proposals is moving unequivocally away from blunt area-based support, which has often incentivised inertia, thwarted innovation and stifled restructuring. The basis of any future support system must be led by agricultural activity which brings about real gains in productivity and the delivery of tangible environmental benefits. However, financial stability will remain vital.

Rather than accessing payments through the simple occupation of land, the union is pursuing a new approach to financial stability payments built on the concept of 'actively farmed hectares'. That, in turn, would be complemented by non-competitive productivity and environmental measures to enable Scottish agriculture to be more competitive, resilient and profitable.

A suite of new and practical options would meet the needs of emerging and developing farm businesses, with an overarching objective running throughout the policy to make all farms and crofts across Scotland more resilient. These options would not be mutually exclusive, and they would be designed to suit the full range of farming systems that make up Scottish agriculture – including management and capital options. All agricultural businesses would be able to draw down support from a range of measures across all three components.

While support measures will continue largely unchanged through 2019 and 2020, with the right legal framework in place from 2021, there is a clear opportunity for Scottish agricultural policy to move out of the shadow of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The work and engagement that NFU Scotland is doing today is vital in securing the best possible outcomes for Scottish agriculture tomorrow – and your Union will be relentless in its efforts to secure those outcomes.

> "...your Union has been unequivocal that the entire Brexit process must be pursued to secure the best possible outcome for Scottish farmers and crofters."
>
> **Jonnie Hall**
> Director of Policy

Left: NFUS met with a range of political leaders at its Steps to Change launch earlier this year at Holyrood, including the Scottish Conservatives.

You can write to us at brexit@nfus.org.uk or find more information at www.nfus.org.uk at any time.

Director of Policy Jonnie Hall gets his hands on a copy of the draft Agricultural Bill whilst at Westminster.

October

President Andrew McCornick spoke at a fringe event on the rural economy at the SNP Conference, where he said the industry had an excellent track record in adopting new techniques and innovation to drive efficiency. The Conference was also an excellent opportunity to speak to politicians about the issues which Scotland's farmers and crofters are facing.

Working with Emma Harper MSP and the Scottish Farmer, NFUS is close to securing legislative changes to tackle the blight of livestock attacks.

Taking Action Against Irresponsible Dog Owners

Attacks on livestock have reached a record level, costing farmers and crofters across the UK £1.6million last year, according to NFU Mutual. As a Union we have stepped up our activity, calling for a Members' Bill to be taken forward to change current legislation, urging for harsher penalties for those allowing their dogs to worry livestock, calling for better use of Dog Control Notices and the updating of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code to be adopted.

NFU Scotland teamed up with *The Scottish Farmer* to support its Take A Lead campaign, backing our calls for legislative changes and proper enforcement to drive change in dog owner's attitudes.

The #TakeALead petition was signed by more than 4,000 people and was handed over to Emma Harper MSP at the Royal Highland Show in June.

Following months of pressure, Ms Harper announced that she would put forward a Members' Bill to the Scottish Parliament. NFUS welcomed this and wrote to the Scottish Government calling for its backing. Within that letter NFUS detailed five key areas which should be within any legislation covering livestock worrying. These included that:

- Livestock worrying becomes a recordable crime to allow for accurate measurement and monitoring of the issue and provide easy identification of repeat offenders.
- An update of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) is needed to provide clearer guidance on accessing the countryside with dogs. NFUS believes that guidance should state that all dogs (except for working dogs) must be on a lead around sheep.
- Police Scotland should be provided with powers to issue Dog Control Notices. Currently, only local authority dog wardens have the power to issue Dog Control Notices, and as a result this mechanism is often unused.
- Police Scotland should have powers to obtain evidence, seize dogs and have dogs destroyed. These powers will assist in investigations and will prevent dogs from remaining in the custody of irresponsible owners.
- Fines levied on offenders must be proportionate and full compensation should be provided for. NFUS considers that sanctions should include powers to disqualify offenders from dog ownership.

In the coming months, NFU Scotland will be launching a campaign to tackle irresponsible behaviour on farmland, which will include livestock worrying and dog fouling in an effort to influence change.

CASE STUDY

NFUS called on harsher penalties to be imposed on those who let their dogs attack livestock, after an Argyll man was sentenced to just 80 hours community service for allowing his dog to kill 17 sheep which cost Inveraray farmer Brian Walker £4,100. The injuries inflicted on the sheep during this attack were so severe that photographs taken afterwards were deemed unsuitable for publication. The Sheriff hearing the case expressed frustration that under the current legislation he was unable to impose a prison sentence, nor could he disqualify the accused from keeping dogs.

November

NFU Scotland facilitated a meeting to consider how the beef sector can fully utilise the potential of the dairy sector. It involved contributions from Scottish Government officials, AHDB, QMS, SAOS, SAMW, ScotBeef, ABP, the Scottish Dairy Hub and SRUC. The key message was that all are committed to working together to increase the quality and quantity of cattle from both the dairy and beef herds that are being presented for processing in Scotland.

Next Generation Continues to Grow

This year has seen our Next Generation Group continuing to grow and prosper.

The group has engaged with Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing MSP on many occasions to highlight issues such as opportunities for new entrants and successors, the loss of direct support for new entrants and young farmers and how to stimulate a dynamic and fluid land sector. With a representative in every region there are many opportunities for young people to get involved and have their voices heard within the union.

NFU Scotland's Next Generation roadshow launched earlier this year and saw seven events across the country including in Orkney, Argyll and Dumfries and Galloway. The aim of these events was to discuss entering agriculture, establishing a resilient business and challenging the status quo. Members were able to share their experiences and find out about opportunities that may be suitable for their businesses.

NFU Scotland works on behalf of our members 365 days of the year. We are continuing our push to represent as many demographics as possible, farmers and crofters of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

This year has seen exciting new projects launching which has enabled us to engage with more people than ever before.

New Joint Venture Hub Launches

NFU Scotland launched a Joint Venture Hub this year which is a platform allowing farmers interested in share farming, contract farming and tenancies to collaborate and open up opportunities for their businesses.

The Hub has since gained wide political and farming support and provides guidance about share farming and other joint ventures with a matching service available for all. Members can also access exclusive discounts to legal and accountancy services.

The Joint Venture Hub is available via www.nfus.org.uk which details current opportunities, a guide to share farming, case studies and a comparison document with other joint venture models.

At the launch President Andrew McCornick commented: "This Hub is recognition of the need for a service to aid options for use of land, not only for the next generation but also for those looking to step back from day to day duties on the farm.

"NFU Scotland believes the options available within the Joint Venture Hub allows individuals to identify what will work for them and with the specialist help of consultants, accountants and lawyers, this process is made easier and will allow them to explore different opportunities to see farming businesses thrive."

The Joint Venture Hub was launched at AgriScot in November. The Union partnered with a number of firms to make it happen and offer exclusive discounts to members seeking help through these firms. This includes Johnston Carmichael, Gillespie Macandrew, Shepherd and Wedderburn, SAC Consulting, Savills and Brodies LLP.

December

The end of 2018 saw the start of the branch AGMs for NFU Scotland, which saw officeholders and staff make their way across country once again to meet with members. Regional AGMs are scheduled for January 2019 and its national AGM, Dinner and Conference, including Presidential elections, to take place on 7 and 8 February 2019.

As the Union strives to better communicate with members, stakeholders and other interested parties in the most effective ways, it is always developing its methods.

Whether it's text messaging, our website, www.nfus.org.uk, through the *Scottish Farming Leader*, or on social media, there are more ways than ever before to get in touch with us. More than 16,000 people are already keeping up to date through our Facebook and Twitter sites - come and join us!

This year alone the Union has featured in more than 2,000 articles in national and local press, in addition to radio and TV interviews and that continues to grow as we lobby on your behalf on a growing number of issues and problems.

NFU Scotland - **Shaping the Future of Scottish Agriculture**

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