NFUScotland

2019 Annual Report

Be Supported. Be Rewarded. Be United

NFU Scotland in 2019 - A Snapshot

12 Days spent in London, meeting Scottish MPs and **9 UK Government Ministers** – including the **Prime Minister**

2,500 **members** receive a daily e-news bulletin

6 **political party** conferences attended

8,197 PACKS OF **BEEF** COUNTED

61% of fresh beef packs labelled Scotch Beef PGI

3,027 PACKS OF **LAMB** COUNTED

700 **members** responded to NFU Scotland's Brexit and Business Confidence survey

37% increase in unique visitors to **NFU Scotland** website

25 days NFU Scotland officials spent in Scottish Parliament meeting over **30 MSPs**

NFU Scotland in 2019 - A Snapshot

4,200

members regularly texted news updates

165

supermarket visits for four **NFU Scotland Shelf Watches**

1st

complaint to **Advertising Standards Agency** (successful)

10 days

spent taking **politicians** out on farm

Met 7

Scottish Government Ministers

200 PRESS RELEASES

issued by Communications team

65

blogs posted (that's over 1 per week)

384

New family members (58% are female)

11,000

11, 000 **Twitter** followers

President's Report

Another year on and "Brexit means Brexit" is as elusive as it was in 2018. The politicians are as divided as the vote, within parties as well as between parties. We have had changes in Downing Street and been blessed with additions to our vocabulary like 'prorogation and indicative votes', all things we could just as easily have survived without needing to know. We still have no certainty or clarity to run our businesses.

In 2019, we entered a "Climate Emergency" and this declaration adds another layer of responsibility and challenges to our future planning. I would suggest that the 2030 target of 75% towards carbon neutral will be a massive step change and we must have robust science to help us get there. As an industry we are more than ready to play our part, but we need help and support from the policy makers.

The long running saga from 2013 on Convergence Monies has been concluded finally, and Scotland has had additional money awarded to the agricultural sector. Let's ensure as individuals we turn this windfall into building resilience into our farms and crofts when it comes, regardless of our views on how it is being distributed. There is opportunity also to develop pilots for a new agriculture policy with the additional money Lord Bew has advised going forward.

The marketplace has proven to be very difficult in 2019 for all sectors, some to a greater degree than others. I can reassure you, these issues are not being pushed aside because of the political upheaval and the Brexit work. Additional staff have been put in place to ensure this is the case. We have the Land Matching Service based in our office to help people into the industry and ease others out that want out. We have a fellowship in place with SEFARI sponsorship tackling the climate change challenge.

The list of policy priorities being tackled is massive and we still retain the capacity to respond effectively to any unforeseen events or issues, as successful work on fuel in December shows.

Looking forward is where we must concentrate our minds. Scotland needs an agriculture policy fit for purpose, one that recognises all the challenges the industry faces, and still deliver sustainable, profitable farming and crofting that respects climate change, biodiversity, food security including the 2030 Food and Drink Ambition, communities and quality of life.

NFU Scotland has a superb professional team in head office and the regions working on all our combined ambitions for the future in lobbying and policy, whilst providing an outstanding member service. They are supporting you, your elected representatives, committees, working groups and board. Alongside all these are our local group secretaries organising the branch and providing a valuable service as well as an additional conduit for members to and from the branches.

In short NFU Scotland is here for the members, and has everything in place to give this support, regardless of what the future holds.

Chief Executive's Report

Our members grow, rear and produce a fantastic range of safe and high-quality food and drink, enjoyed at home and around the world.

It is up to us to be positive and to tell our story with integrity and in a way that engages with the public regardless of their background or initial views.

To get people to understand the scale and success of our industry, we need to speak with pride and passion about what we do. Everyone needs to eat, so everyone should hear the great story we have to tell.

We are always looking at new ways to get our messages across. Never has this been more important than how we address the spotlight on farming about its greenhouse gas emissions.

This is a story that has been front and centre for the media. It is an issue that is now starting to influence government and will be the single biggest driver of future policy.

To help us meet this challenge we have formed a ground-breaking partnership with academia which has allowed NFU Scotland to appoint a Fellowship funded through the Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutes (SEFARI). The Fellowship will pull together the scientific evidence around greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration in agriculture that will help bring clarity to some of the more contentious issues and allow us to better address issues when challenged. We have also appointed a Climate Change Policy Manager who will lead and drive our work in this area.

Last year, we launched our family membership. As part of an existing membership, at no cost, it gives any family member who is actively involved in the farm business the opportunity to be recognised as a member of NFU Scotland. This allows them to take advantage of all the member benefits and services we have to offer. If you have not already taken this up, I encourage you to do so.

This year, recognising the way that many people access information and the demand to be kept informed on key issues, we launch an NFU Scotland app – available to download to your mobile through the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. The new app will give you all the latest news from NFU Scotland, special offers from our affinities team and read the views and opinions of the experts through our blogs and award-winning Farming Leader magazine.

To give greater focus to our lobbying all our policy work has been grouped under six big priority themes. The 'big six' are the key issues to be addressed in order to achieve a sustainable and profitable future for Scottish agriculture. These are our lobbying priorities and involve us working to bring pressure to bear on policy makers and commercial organisations to gain favourable policy outcomes. Delivery of the 'big six' is the role of elected officials, committee members and staff.

Speaking with one voice gives us strength to influence and shape the future.

January

The year kicked off with the three candidates for the two Vice Presidential positions speaking to members at all of the regional hustings events throughout the country. Ian Sands, Charlie Adam and Martin Kennedy all attended each meeting and put their points across to the attendees who would then go onto inform their elected local delegates who they wanted to vote for come the AGM in February.

Breaking Down Another Year Of Brexit

On the perennial Brexit issue, we end the year much as we started it – uncertain about the future ahead. Brexit did not happen as planned at the end of March, and three extensions later, it remains to be seen if, when, and on what terms the UK will leave the EU.

In June, over 700 members responded to NFU Scotland's Brexit and Business Confidence survey – the largest response to a member survey in recent history. What your survey responses told us was that political uncertainty has bred business uncertainty – with three-quarters of our members not feeling able to undertake business planning, and 45 per cent having already experienced Brexit impacts due to increased cost of inputs, delaying investment and expansion, and difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff.

The results also confirmed to us that your primary concerns chime exactly with the three key issues that we have continued to push with politicians and policy-makers throughout 2019 – trade, labour, and support.

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The overwhelming response to the survey gave NFU Scotland a renewed mandate to lobby for progress on these issues at levels higher than ever before, in spite of political dithering and stasis.

Throughout 2019, NFU Scotland has met key negotiators from both the EU and the UK sides. In May, NFU Scotland met Phil Hogan – former EU Agriculture Commissioner, and new EU Trade Commissioner – to press for a favourable and frictionless future relationship between the UK and the EU.

In September, NFU Scotland met with the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, on-farm in Aberdeenshire where we secured a commitment for a significant funding injection for the sector.

February

NFU Scotland joined politicians and other stakeholders at the launch of Emma Harper's public consultation on dog attacks on livestock, at the Scottish Parliament. Political Affairs Manager Clare Slipper joined Mairi Gougeon MSP Minister for Rural Affairs & Natural Environment, Emma Harper MSP, Gail Ross MSP, and Kirsteen Campbell, CEO of Scottish SPCA, at the launch.

These high-profile meetings have been just part of an extensive programme of engagement with Scottish and UK Government ministers, MPs and MSPs throughout 2019 – including:

- Spending 12 days in Westminster, lobbying directly on Brexit
- Promoting its priorities for a new, post-Brexit agricultural policy within the Scottish Parliament on countless occasions
- Feeding into the UK and Scottish Agriculture Bills, and plans for the future immigration system.

NFU Scotland's unambiguous message to the new UK Government is to work with the agricultural industry to recover confidence levels and, regardless of the Brexit outcome, ensure positive outcomes for future arrangements on trade, immigration, and agricultural support.

Trade

Ever since March when the UK Government published its plans for no-deal import tariffs, NFU Scotland has been lobbying with trade partners on the unfair treatment of crops and crop products – given no import protection while being subject to swingeing tariffs to export into Europe.

NFU Scotland has also been working closely with the Scottish Government to overcome the complete block on potato exports to Europe in the case of no deal. Brussels has rejected two formal equivalence requests, saying they will not consider it until Brexit has taken place.

Labour

An issue for all sectors, NFU Scotland has been pushing for an immigration system allowing access to workers who cannot enter under current rules that set minimum qualifications and salaries.

For harvest workers we have been pressing for the current pilot scheme to be changed – increasing the numbers of places and competition to bring the costs down. The scheme needs to be made permanent as even with free movement the availability of workers has dwindled.

A rejuvenated school lunch menu which included three different Scotch Lamb options was launched at Breadalbane Academy in Aberfeldy and was attended by NFU Scotland Vice President Martin Kennedy. The project came off the back of an NFU Scotland backed pilot in 2018 which demonstrated that the vast majority of primary and secondary school children enjoy a variety of lamb dishes.

March

NFU Scotland #BackScotchBeef Campaign

In a year with significantly low beef prices resulting in challenging farmgate returns, NFU Scotland carried out a #BackScotchBeef campaign to highlight the challenges in the sector and to ensure that there is widespread support for Scottish beef production. NFU Scotland highlighted the disparity in the beef price and the retail prices publicly, producing infographics which were widely shared on social media.

We organised an open panel event in the North East to discuss the challenges facing the Scottish livestock sector. NFU Scotland has also met with the Scottish Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, a number of times to emphasise the need to ensure that a Scottish first approach is taken in public procurement, highlighting the wider benefits of Scottish beef and lamb production.

We also unveiled a six-point plan for the beef sector, which included actions like increasing co-operation and introducing enhanced origin labelling on processed beef products. We will continue to pursue these actions to ensure that the Scottish beef sector is on a footing which allows it to be competitive and sustainable.

What's Happening on Scotland's Supermarket Shelves

Fresh Beef Shelf Watch

Early in 2019 NFU Scotland carried out a supermarket shelf watch for beef to identify which retailers were stocking Scotch Beef. Counting over 8,000 packs of fresh beef NFU Scotland found that 94% of beef available was from the UK, with 61% of the packs labelled as either Scottish or Scotch Beef PGI.

Lamb Shelf Watch

As Scotland approached peak lamb production, NFU Scotland carried out a shelf watch to identify which Scottish retailers were the strongest supporters of Scottish lamb. As part of the shelf watch NFU Scotland visited 58 stores and identified that 93% of lamb was produced in the UK, with 51% of packs clearly labelled as Scottish.

Pork Shelf Watch

This April, NFU Scotland carried out a pork shelf watch looking at how much Scottish and British pork was available in supermarkets across the country. Visiting over 40 stores, NFU Scotland identified that Scottish pork wasn't available across all chains but that both the Co-op and Aldi had significant Scottish pork available. The shelf watch revealed that unclear origin labelling on products like sausages could cause confusion for shoppers wanting to buy home-produced pork products.

Burger Shelf Watch

Recognising the poor beef price, and concern over imported beef in processed products NFU Scotland carried out a burger shelf watch in July. The survey, looking at own-labelled burgers, found that 96% of burgers contained British beef, with 40% containing Scottish or Scotch Beef PGI.

April

NFU Scotland attended a summit of all the UK farming unions, hosted by the Ulster Farmers Union (UFU) in County Fermanagh, to discuss Brexit and the impending extension to Article 50. NFU Scotland President Andrew McCornick met with the NFU, UFU and NFU Cymru. The Irish Farmers Association also joined for the discussions.

From Cow To Customer

In conjunction with Scottish Government, NFU Scotland now part funds the Scottish Dairy Hub. The Hub acts as a signposting service for farmers connecting the dairy sector throughout Scotland. It identifies the best sources of advice and training to improve farm competitiveness, technical efficiency and sustainability.

In what has been a very challenging year for dairy producers, the Hub has more than 800 enquiries from farmers and stakeholders. NFU Scotland has remained influential in the dairy sector by working with the other Unions in the UK to lobby at various levels on topics affecting the sector. This includes milk contracts, Brexit and Red Tractor standards. Working directly with the supply chain is also important and NFU Scotland is ensuring it is engaging with stakeholders from cow to consumer.

Fighting To Protect Health and Welfare

In a bid to prevent African Swine Fever (ASF), NFU Scotland has been raising awareness within the industry and the public, developing posters and communications on illegal swill feeding, bringing meat into the UK and the importance of biosecurity and vigilance.

In 2019, NFU Scotland has also been pushing for the next phase (Phase 5) of the BVD eradication scheme. New rules were introduced in December to protect negative herds and increase restrictions on positive herds.

Influencing Positive Change

NFU Scotland worked to ensure Scottish Government had industry views represented in the development of the new Welfare Laying Hens Code of Practice.

The Union has also been lobbying retailers on their commitments to go 'cage free', urging them to keep alternative systems of production to supply their 'value ranges' rather than devaluing Free-range.

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May

NFU Scotland attended all the major spring political party conferences and rounded it off by hosting a high profile fringe event at the Scottish Conservative Conference in Aberdeen in May. The event included a discussion session with Secretary of State Michael Gove MP and Convenor of the Rural Economy Committee Edward Mountain MSP (both pictured).

Busy Year For Next Generation

NFU Scotland's Next Generation have had a busy year engaging with politicians both regionally and in the Scottish Parliament. The group have highlighted issues such as the lack of available opportunities for new entrants, the lack of confidence in the tenancy sector, and future agricultural support. The Next Generation further advocated NFU Scotland's 'Steps to Change' and a move from area based payments to payments supporting the delivery of productivity and environmental measures.

NFU Scotland's Next Generation's Key Successes

- Partnered with Royal Bank of Scotland, Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs and the Rural Youth Project on the Entrepreneur Accelerator Programme
- UK Next Generation Conference focusing on climate change and skills and training
- Meeting with Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy Fergus Ewing MSP regarding support for new entrants and young farmers.
- Series of 'Planning for the Future' events
- Meeting with ALDI regarding supply chain issues

Being Part Of The Future

"It was never a specific commodity group which drew me to the Next Generation meetings – but my urge to highlight the credibility that rural young people are due; in helping to deliver our industry's purpose, in representing, in adapting and innovating - and in influencing!

The most fascinating learning for me in my first year involved hasn't been the tours or talks – but the understanding that although the group members face varying matters of concerns, there's often a sense of togetherness in their discussions for action. A uniquely steady and supportive platform!"

Jenny Baillie – Forth and Clyde Next Generation Representative

June

SPARC (Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime) brought their Police Scotland tractor to George Square to bring the fight against rural crime to the general public's doorstep. NFU Scotland's Forth and Clyde Regional Manager Lisa Robert and Regional Chairman Willie Harper joined SPARC's city initiative to promote the Union's important role in SPARC and rural crime prevention.

Campaign Finally Secures Deal On £160 Million For Scottish Farmers And Crofters

For the past six years, NFU Scotland has argued long and hard for the convergence funding injustice to be addressed and the announcement this year from the UK government that the £160million convergence repatriation would be received in Scotland was welcomed by all.

The £160 million represents the biggest single uplift in agricultural funding in memory and is a genuine victory for NFU Scotland lobbying, supported by many other allies. Following pressure from NFU Scotland, the Scottish Government has confirmed that this uplift will remain ringfenced to agricultural priorities.

NFU Scotland is also clear that the allocation of the £160 million should take into account existing policy decisions, fairness and delivery - and be targeted solely to currently active farmers and crofters.

Bew Review

It has also been announced that the UK Government will accept the recommendations of a parallel review that has been conducted this year by Lord Bew into the intra-UK allocation of agricultural funding for the years 2020 and 2021. The 'Bew Review', as it is known, concluded that there is a fairer criteria for distribution of funding and as such, Scotland will be given an uplift of more than £51 million over the years 2020 and 2021. This is another significant win for NFU Scotland who submitted robust evidence to the review.

Working To Make Things Simpler For Farmers And Crofters

NFU Scotland continued to lobby the Scottish Government on issues faced my members due to CAP scheme regulations. Issues such as inspections and appeals, paperwork, mapping and disproportionate penalties continue to affect many farmers and crofters. NFU Scotland supports all members caught up in issues with scheme regulations. In one case the members, on a cross border holding, had been struggling to make progress as to why they had not received their 2018 BPS payment worth over £60,000. NFU Scotland was able to resolve this with SGRPID and the member received prompt payment and an offer on a 2019 BPS loan.

NFU Scotland staff are on hand to offer support with inspections and appeals and would like to reassure all members that they can be supported through what can be an incredibly stressful period. One member came to NFU Scotland for support after a sheep inspection where there were anomalies with the record keeping due to the member being unwell and having spent a length of time in hospital. NFU Scotland supported this member and worked with the local area office to resolve these issues, ensuring that the member was not unfairly penalised.

Looking ahead, the Scottish Government has introduced The Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Bill to provide for the continued operation of the CAP legislation in domestic law in Scotland post-2020, with power to change how it operates and its financial provisions. The Scottish Government has proposed a five-year period of "stability and simplicity" followed by a new scheme, replacing the current CAP, from 2024.

NFU Scotland's Director of Policy Jonnie Hall, joined Scottish Government's Simplification Taskforce which is focused on identifying priorities and the simplification of topics such as; interpretation of guidance, mapping, inspections and penalties.

NFU Scotland will continue to lobby for a fair and proportionate system which demonstrates compliance rather than finding fault and that supports and rewards farmers and crofters for the activity they take on the land that they manage.

July

The Milk Committee held a series of successful events discussing the issue of milk contracts throughout Scotland. Four meetings were held over two days to inform and to listen to Scotland's dairy farmers on the subject of a future government consultation on milk contacts. Attendees at the meetings heard from invited speakers; Michael Oakes (NFU), Nina Winter (NFU) and Patty Clayton (AHDB).

Focusing On Climate Change

Climate change remains at the forefront of the public and political agenda, and continues to be a critically important issue for Scottish farming.

Earlier this year, the Scottish and UK Governments declared a 'climate emergency', and the Scottish Government has now set out its plans for Scotland to become a net-zero society within a generation. The Climate Change Bill set stretching targets for emissions reduction, and Scotland must now reach net-zero emissions by 2045. At the international level, reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated that the planet is already under strain and that urgent changes are needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

It is important that Scottish farming is recognised as part of the solution to climate change. NFU Scotland has continued to play a critical role in dispelling the myths and countering the misleading claims levelled at Scottish agriculture. We have been clear that livestock production in Scotland is based on a sustainable, grass-based system. We have continually highlighted that 80 per cent of Scottish farmland is grass and rough grazing, which is ideal for producing high quality milk, beef and lamb. This in turn reduces our reliance on imported feedstuffs and could increase our importance as a food-producing nation.

It is vital that we continue to engage meaningfully with the climate change agenda. We have commissioned research in collaboration with the Scottish Environment, Food and Agricultural Research Institute that will outline the factual position relating to carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions from Scottish agriculture. This will ensure that the work being done by Scottish farmers is fairly represented and recognised. We also support and participate in the Farming for 1.5 Degrees inquiry, which will explore securing a bright future for farming and land use within the context of a changing climate.

We must always ensure that any measures introduced to mitigate climate change are supported by robust scientific evidence and consider the impacts on the long-term sustainability of farming and food production in Scotland.

August

Some of the team at NFU Scotland head office took a day off from lobbying to raise money for RSABI at the Great Glen Challenge event at Fort William and Fort August. The Union entered two teams into the walking, running, cycling and kayaking event with staff and officeholders coming together to raise funds for the worthy cause.

Agricultural Tenancies &The Amnesty

NFU Scotland continued to support the tenanted sector on consultative groups such as the Scottish Land Commission's Tenant Farming Advisory Forum. NFU Scotland has continued to actively refer issues to the Tenant Farming Commissioner as well as continuing to feed into his work on producing codes of practice relating to agricultural tenancies.

With the deadline of the three year improvements amnesty looming in June 2020, in partnership with Davidson Robertson, NFU Scotland launched a new waygo helpline (0131 449 6212) to assist members with any queries relating to tenants improvements and the associated amnesty. This arrangement has also seen a series of highly successful roadshows attended by many tenant members around the country. The new helpline has also taken a healthy number of calls, meaning that tenants have been able to get professional advice as part of their membership subscription.

Scottish Land Matching Service

The NFU Scotland Joint Venture Hub which launched at AgriScot in 2018 was a great success. Building on this, NFU Scotland agreed to host the new Scottish Land Matching Service. Funded by Scottish Government and the Scottish Land Commission, this new service will see Ian Davidson, formally Head of Agricultural Policy at Scottish Government, as a trusted advisor for those seeking and offering opportunities in relation to land in Scotland. Ian has already attended a large number of NFU Scotland events and will building on this in 2020.

Land Reform

NFU Scotland continues to work with the Scottish Land Commission and Scottish Government on all issues relating to land reform. This has included conversation over the community rights to buy for abandoned, neglected and detrimental land and the community right to buy for sustainable development. NFU Scotland also participates in the Commission's new best practice guidance group which is tasked with looking at protocols produced by the Commission in relation to underpinning the 2016 Act. This includes subjects such as transparency of land ownership, community engagement and wider issues in relation to land rights and responsibilities. The ongoing involvement of NFU Scotland continues to ensure that there is a strong practical voice involved in all discussions on behalf of farmers.

September

Newly appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Theresa Villiers was welcomed onto Pitgaveny Farms in Moray for her first meeting with NFU Scotland. Highlands Regional Chairman Martin Birse, farm manager at Pitgaveny, hosted the meeting and tour of the farm. NFUS attendees included Vice President Charlie Adam, Chairs of the Combinable Crops and Horticultural committees and members of the local NFU Scotland branch.

Wildlife Management

NFU Scotland is a key player in a new SNH group seeking to draw together the different interests involved in contentious wildlife management issues and formally agreed to a shared approach that recognises that wildlife management is required. NFU Scotland will be working closely with SNH to find solutions that balance the needs of agriculture, land use and biodiversity.

Beavers

Beavers received protected status in Scotland in 2019. As a result, NFU Scotland ensured that the agreed management framework operates effectively for those members that need licenses and mitigation measures provided practical options. Work continues to ensure licenses to directly control beavers are issued so that effective management can be undertaken to prevent serious agricultural damage and mitigation measures work where they are needed. NFU Scotland continues to ensure that the most pragmatic approach is taken.

White Tailed Eagles

2019 saw a lot of activity around the future of White Tailed Eagles management, with NFU Scotland driving the operation of the White Tailed Eagles Management Scheme and the exploration of intervention options on monitor farms to take more direct action in very specific circumstances of significant agricultural damage. Changes to the Management Scheme were proposed so that funds could be focused on areas of greatest impact and, with the Scheme being effectively oversubscribed, NFU Scotland will be making the case for more funding to provide realistic options of mitigating against agricultural impacts. In July, NFU Scotland facilitated a site visit to the Argyll Monitor Farm by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment to see the issues first hand and hear directly from members most affected.

Geese

In 2019, after pressure from NFU Scotland, the National Goose Management Review Group was refashioned as the National Goose Forum to create a proper stakeholder forum involving farming and crofting interests from the various local goose management schemes. With financial pressures on local goose management schemes to offset the costs for supporting over-wintering goose populations, NFU Scotland helped to secure new schemes on the Uists, Luing and Tiree. On Islay, the budget falls short so part of the goose management strategy now includes SNH culling geese to reduce numbers – demonstrating successful NFU Scotland action that where financial means fail then other significant intervention must be made to reduce serious agricultural damage. Numbers of quarry species continue to grow and NFU Scotland was instrumental in several Adaptive Management Pilots to provide help with shooting and to enable the sale of goose meat.

Species Re-introductions

NFU Scotland remains engaged on any potential re-introductions, such as lynx, via the National Species Reintroduction Forum with a position based on facts rather than emotions to safeguard agricultural and biodiversity interests. NFU Scotland remains fully opposed to any further species re-introductions.

Fox Control

NFU Scotland made the strongest case for the retention of effective and practical fox control in response to a Members' Bill introduced to the Scottish Parliament to amend the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002. Political engagement on this issue continues – both in the Scottish Parliament and on the ground in the practical context.

October

As part of NFU Scotland's continued involvement in the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC), Forth and Clyde Regional Chairman Willie Harper hosted a farm safety day on his Gryffe Wraes Farm. Representatives from the different SPARC partners were in attendants to discuss how to keep farms safe but also secure throughout the year.

A Big Year For Communications

It has been a record-breaking year for the communications team at NFU Scotland. The bread and butter work around the media, building on our excellent reputation with all newspapers, magazines and broadcasters, saw **200 news releases**, **200 press comments** and more than **65 website blogs** to keep NFU Scotland's name on front pages, news bulletins and websites.

When it comes to press coverage, particularly successful issues or campaigns in 2019 – aside from the Brexit saga - were the three-crop rule, rural crime, livestock worrying, fuel and the beef price crisis.

Our website remains a vital source of news and information for our members with more than **6300 members** visiting www.nfus.org.uk per month in 2019.

And our social media presence goes from strength to strength. We are approaching **11,000 followers on Twitter**, **9000 followers on Facebook** and our new Instagram account has established a loyal following since launch this year.

Keeping members up to date with news and events means that we now **email 2500 members** with a daily news bulletin while, for news and events, we now can send text messages to almost **4200 members**.

If you feel you are missing out, then please call **0131 472 4000** and we will ensure your membership record is updated to ensure you get all the information when you need it.

Cracking On With Campaigns

The Union was involved in more campaigns in 2019 than any other year, branching from small social media campaigns to nationwide, multi-organisation, long term campaigns.

As a key stakeholder in the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC), NFU Scotland has been instrumental in the work being done to combat rural crime at both a national and local level. This was demonstrated through SPARC's attendance at shows up and down the country (including the Royal Highland Show) and specific SPARC events throughout the year.

On the subject of rural crime, NFU Scotland launched the 'Control Your Dog on Farmland' at the AGM in February. Set up as a year long campaign, 'Control Your Dog on Farmland' began life at a national level but quickly branched out and was able to successfully be implanted at local and regional level throughout the year.

The Union also looked to use its social media channels more effectively for smaller campaigns. This included a successful campaign to encourage consumers to buy more medium and mixed boxes of eggs. This campaign ran for six weeks and looked to provide positive messaging around egg production and the benefits of the smaller boxes.

November

It was standing room only for both NFU Scotland and the Scottish Dairy Hub at this year's AgriScot as both organisation's presentations proved to be big draws on the day. As has been done in previous years, NFU Scotland used the event to host their annual debate with Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy Fergus Ewing MSP.

Success As Inaccurate Posters Withdrawn

Driven by members, NFU Scotland lodged a formal complaint with the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) in June about a poster campaign in Scotland that erroneously claimed that 'eating animals' contributes more to climate change than transport.

As both official UK and Scottish Government figures indicated otherwise, the Union contacted the organisation asking them to withdraw the posters but received no response. So, for the first time, NFU Scotland wrote to ASA to lodge an official complaint.

Our complaint was successful, and following the ASA ruling in November we have been informed that the posters are no longer appearing and the organisation behind them has given assurances to the ASA that it will only use substantiated claims in the future and that it will ensure that future adverts will comply with the advertising code.

The ruling was welcomed by NFU Scotland President Andrew McCornick who said at the time; "Farming's frustration over misinformation being spread about the industry has never been higher. When we see inaccuracies, we must challenge them. Not least because mainstream media often take erroneous claims like this as being the truth.

"We challenged the claims on this poster about the livestock sector's contribution to greenhouse gas emission because they were clearly inaccurate, and we provided both UK and Scottish Government statistics to the ASA to prove our point.

"We urge our members to continue to bring false claims to our attention and we will act, where we can, on their behalf."

Cause For Complaint

Across BBC Scotland, there continues to be some excellent programming – Landward, Out of Doors, This Farming Life – which regularly highlight the fantastic food and farming sectors in Scotland.

But, in the past year, NFU Scotland has circulated details on the complaints procedure for the BBC to its members more times than it has in the past decade.

The Union's relationship with the British Broadcasting Corporation has been sorely tested on numerous occasions by programmes that have lacked balance when looking at the role of meat or dairy production, failing to recognise the stark differences between sustainable Scottish systems and those seen in many other parts of the world.

Those complaints lodged against several BBC TV and radio programmes followed an 18-month complaints procedure where the Union took its complaint against 'Dark Side of Dairy' all the way to Ofcom in support of our members, who were appalled at the programme's lack of balance.

Ofcom
making communications work for everyone

Regrettably, the decision did not go our way and no breach was Ofcom's conclusion. It did, however, write to the BBC about its standards and accepted that elements of the programme were misleading and inaccurate.

Complaints against the BBC moved to a new level with the broadcast of 'Meat: A Threat to the Planet?' in November.

While NFU Scotland has complained, we continue to support members who wish to do likewise. Only by putting down a marker with the corporation will we influence future programming standards.

December

NFU Scotland were on tour at the end of the year as President Andrew McCornick, Vice Presidents Martin Kennedy and Charlie Adam, and Director of Policy Jonnie Hall travelled to town halls and local hotels across the country for the winter roadshows. The roadshows provided an excellent platform for members to discuss current and future Union policy with those who implement it.

Shows & Events

Our annual conference, dinner and AGM held in Glasgow in February, was very well attended with a range of excellent speakers and key topics discussed over the two days. We welcomed new officials into regional posts and enjoyed some of Scotland's finest produce at the dinner. Thank you to all our sponsors. This event continues to grow in popularity with tickets for the 2020 event selling quickly.

There was something for everyone at the busiest-ever Autumn conference in late October, which opened with heated debate over Brexit issues with representatives from the UK and Scottish Governments and our Brussels' Director providing us with an update from Europe. Attendees then got of wider industry perspective on current threats and future opportunities, before being treated to an inspiring and positive final session in which three young farmers shared how they are growing and future proofing their businesses.

Throughout the show season, NFU Scotland representatives attended local, regional and national shows, with many of our members celebrating fantastic successes when showing their livestock or produce. These shows continue to be a great platform for the NFU Scotland to help reinforce key issues that are impacting Scottish agriculture. In November and December we held a series of Winter roadshows which were held from Shetland to Stranraer and attracted large numbers in each of the 15 locations.

Feedback from the events our teams help to set up and run remains positive and we make improvements after each. This year we shared more events via Facebook live than ever before and ran hugely popular mental health awareness meetings.

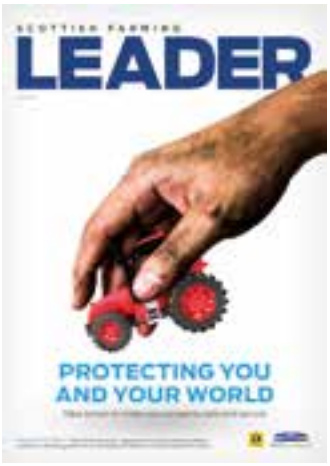
Women in Agriculture

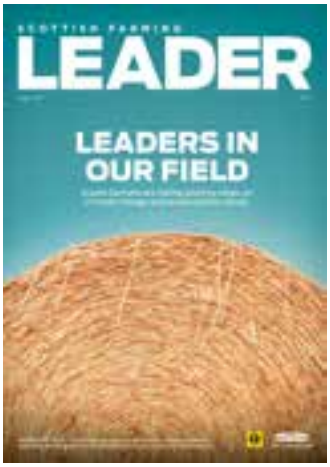
NFU Scotland has continued to invest time in increasing the engagement of women amongst our membership. The Dumfries and Galloway Dairy Women Network, which is facilitated by NFU Scotland Regional Manager, Teresa Dougall, has continued to go from strength to strength and has had a wide variety of meetings throughout the year as well as some social meet ups. NFU Scotland is happy to replicate this sort of group in other regions if willing members get in touch.

Nationally, NFU Scotland President, Andrew McCornick has been an active participant in the Women in Agriculture Taskforce. In November, the Taskforce reported back with a set of recommendations designed to reduce unconscious bias against women in agriculture and to facilitate and enhance skills and training for them. These recommendations will be key for stakeholders such as NFU Scotland as compliance, with a shortly to be piloted Equality Charter, will be important in the context of ongoing engagement with Scottish Government.

In addition to the national Taskforce, NFU Scotland Head of Policy Team, Gemma Cooper has been actively involved in the committee for Women in Agriculture Scotland which has had two highly successful events this year at Broomhall House and RBS Gogarburn. Going forward, this group will be formalised to continue the work of the Taskforce and NFUS will continue to play an active role in this.

May brought a new look to our flagship Scottish Farming Leader membership magazine as we moved to Scottish-based publishers Connect Communications. That redesign was rewarded by being shortlisted for the Best Publication in the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' PRide Awards 2019. The magazine remains a key platform for NFU Scotland communications and opportunity to spotlight some important issues facing farmers and crofters today.





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