NFU Scotland

Annual Report

2020

BE SUPPORTED.
BE REWARDED.
BE UNITED.

POLITICAL

110

In the last 12 months, NFU Scotland has held more than **110 meetings with government ministers, advisers, MPs and MSPs.**

30

In the last 12 months, we have met high-profile ministers from the UK and Scottish Governments on **30 occasions – 16 of these occasions have been since we started working virtually.**

60

Since we started working virtually in March, we've spent over **60 hours speaking with MPs and MSPs via video and teleconferences.**

27

In the last 12 months, we've provided detailed written and oral evidence to **27 Holyrood and Westminster Committee Inquiries** on a vast range of issues including Covid-19 impacts on the rural economy, climate change, Brexit and commodity issues.

Public backing for Scottish and British produce has never been higher and a petition supporting our food standards, led by NFU and backed by NFU Scotland, secured **more than one million signatures.**

ONE MILLION

MEMBERSHIP

700

In the past year, more than **700 pick-ups, vans and cars**

WORTH ALMOST £17 MILLION

have been bought by members with our exclusive affinity deals.

NFUS' wide range of discounts and affinity deals, including the sale of motor vehicles are saving members £1000s. This year, this has amounted to a collective saving of **£4.8 million.**

£170+ THOUSAND

NFU Scotland's rebate from members using our affinity deals **generated £170,277 revenue for the Union**, allowing us to keep membership subscriptions for 2021 at 2020 rates.

20

SAVING NFUS MEMBERS £4.8 MILLION

SOCIAL MEDIA

265%

increase in traffic to our website in 2020 (compared to same period Jan-Oct 19) driven primarily by visits to our coronavirus web pages.

116,430

Over **116,430 page visits** recorded to the employment opportunities pages alone.

13,440 FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

(an **increase of 53% from 2019**)

2.1million views

on Facebook post about the mailing of unsolicited seeds from overseas **breaking all NFUS Facebook records.**

LAND MATCHING

4 SUCCESSFUL MATCHES

In its first year, the Scottish Land Matching Service has enabled four matches and received over **150 enquiries (over 400% interest compared to available opportunities).**

COMMUNICATIONS

IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM HAS ISSUED APPROX

190	200	100	150
mailings	news releases	website blogs	press comments

139,041

353 notices by text (equates to 139,041 individual text messages) Issued to members.

President's Report

"**THE** list of policy priorities being tackled is massive and we still retain the capacity to respond effectively to any unforeseen events or issues."

That is a quote from what I said this time last year, and it has been truly tested in the "unforeseen events" department. Covid-19 has wreaked havoc and continues to do so; unfortunately, for some people, tragically. Different parts of our industry and different parts of the supply chain have seen a spectrum of impacts. Some businesses may never recover, and for the ornamental and garden centre suppliers it could not have been worse. For others ironically, it has been an opportunity to develop their business into direct supply or farm shops.

NFU Scotland very quickly moved to home-working and set up a web page keeping members informed as Government guidance evolved.

Looking forward is where we must, and will, concentrate our NFU Scotland efforts. Scotland needs an agriculture policy fit for purpose, one that recognises all the challenges the industry faces, in the new marketplace with whatever negotiated deals and their impact as they develop. That policy must deliver sustainable, profitable farming and crofting that respects climate change, biodiversity, food security, communities and quality of life.

Despite the uncertainties of future trade and dealing with a pandemic, the marketplace has proven to be robust with consumers realising the vulnerability of their current supply chain especially in March/April at the time of the initial lockdown. There was massive disruption when out of home, hospitality and catering sectors closed and the retail sector had to adjust to embrace increased and different demand. Farmers and crofters committed to do their part in keeping food on the shelves. The processors adapted in difficult circumstances adopting new rules to ensure they could protect their vulnerable labour and the impacts it could have on how they do business.

Labour highlighted real stress points around vegetable, horticulture, soft fruit and processing and packing from our perspective as producers. Ambitious plans were put in place through our website to find people that were furloughed or unemployed to fill the gap of seasonal workers. There was great interest shown, but unfortunately it dwindled quickly when the reality of what the migrant workers were capable of doing became evident. A competent labour supply for next and following years are an ongoing concern and battle for NFU Scotland and our members.

Our own indigenous labour faced a lot of additional stress as did farmers and crofters with this upheaval which highlights the need for us to be mindful of our own and others' mental health and wellbeing.

NFU Scotland has a superb professional team working on all our combined ambitions for the future in lobbying and policy, while providing an outstanding member service.

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

Andrew McCornick
President, NFU Scotland

Chief Executive's Report

WHILE the year looked likely to be dominated by Brexit, trade and climate change policy, we quickly saw all of these take second place to the Covid-19 pandemic. The restrictions imposed to contain the spread of the virus placed unprecedented stresses on food supply chains. Momentous shifts in demand, disruption in the processing of food & drink and difficulty in sourcing farm labour has meant the last year has been like no other.

Much of the Scottish economy was shut down at one stage or another, but farming continued. Food supply chains have demonstrated a remarkable resilience as have our members. Practices have had to change and the stress for some has been high. The Union has also needed to be resilient. All staff have been working from home since March and have been asked to adapt to a more fluid way of working. They have done a remarkable job. We had the systems in place that have allowed us to do everything we did before the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure our members' voices are heard where they need to be heard. Not once during this pandemic have we not been able to deliver on our purpose to bring pressure to bear on policy makers.

It is with great disappointment we have not been able to hold face-to-face events since March. In the absence of such gatherings, we moved online. Branch meetings have been held online and we have held webinars on specific issues. These virtual events have been very successful. Our Autumn Conference, where Regional Land Use Partnerships were the subject for debate, saw many more people attend and able to ask questions than is the case with the face-to-face event held in a single venue. Of course, while there is a place for these online events, and we will continue to hold some once Covid-19 restrictions are eased, we want to get back to face-to-face events as soon as we can. Whether it be having a presence at agricultural shows or branch meetings, when it becomes possible to hold these again and bring people together in person rather than on screen we shall.

While history will remember this year for Covid-19, the work on the policy issues of Brexit, trade and climate change has continued as has the work on the hundreds of other policy subjects we deal with each year. Our committees have met online, and our Board of Directors have been meeting at least fortnightly. Online meetings offer a chance to better use people's time and will open up the possibility of different people coming forward to take up elected committee places. A blended approach of online and face-to-face committee meetings will be the future approach we adopt.

NFU Scotland members know that Scottish farming has a much stronger voice when we act together. I encourage you to be an active member of the Union. Take part in your branch activities, join regional discussions and take the many opportunities that exist to give your views. Time means not everyone can do this regularly but be assured there are always people working on your behalf.

Scott Walker
Chief Executive,
NFU Scotland

UK Agriculture Bill

THE UK Agriculture Bill was tabled in January, kick-starting 11 months of intense political engagement.

The Bill largely concerned future agricultural policy in England, however, following pressure from NFU Scotland it also incorporated important measures such as the long-awaited resolution to the issue of red meat levy repatriation, as well as a new requirement for the UK Government to work with the devolved administrations to regularly report on the UK's food security.

The main controversy surrounding the Bill was what it didn't include. From the outset, NFU Scotland has worked with the UK farming Unions to strongly advocate for the legislation to include safeguards for domestic food producers from inequivalent or uncompetitive imported produce, and for better scrutiny and oversight arrangements of trade agreements.

We argued this case well – with NFU Scotland members writing thousands of emails to their MPs, and winning support from celebrity backers including Jamie Oliver and Joe Wicks.

Following immense pressure during the final stages of the UK Agriculture Bill in the Autumn, the UK Government took a landmark decision to instil further governance and scrutiny into new trade arrangements, via a series of amendments in the Agriculture and Trade Bills.

The new measures will significantly improve on previous arrangements for scrutiny of trade deals, by providing for consideration of the impact of all future trade deals on UK legal standards of human, animal or plant life or health, animal welfare, and the environment are considered prior to ratification.

This is a huge step forward in ensuring the right levels of trade expertise and scrutiny are in place as the UK forges its way as an independent trading nation outside of the EU.

TRADE AND AGRICULTURE COMMISSION

NFU Scotland was instrumental in calling for the establishment of a Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC), independent from the UK Government, to oversee trade negotiations in the interests of maintaining and protecting the standards to which domestic production rightly adheres.

With the main controversy surrounding the UK Agriculture Bill being the absence of measures or safeguards for domestic food producers from inequivalent or uncompetitive imported produce, an extended role for the TAC is critical.

That was secured by amendments which will ensure better scrutiny and oversight of trade agreements – following immense pressure on these issues, the UK Government took a landmark decision to instil further governance and scrutiny into new trade arrangements, via a series of amendments in the Agriculture and Trade Bills.

Donnie and Kate McKerral received the Stalwart Award at the NFU Scotland's Argyll & the Islands AGM from new Regional Chairman Duncan Macalister of Glenbarr Farms, Tarbert. The husband and wife team have been at the helm of the haulage firm, Peter McKerral & Co, that has been servicing Argyll & the Islands since it was set up as part of the family farming business in the mid-70s.

Argyll and the Islands Stalwart Award winners Donnie and Kate McKerral receiving the award from incoming Regional Chairman Duncan Macalister (right) and outgoing chair John Dickson (left)

Internal markets

THE UK Internal Market is critical to the interests of Scottish agriculture and the vitally important food and drinks sector it underpins. It is of the utmost concern to NFU Scotland that the UK Internal Market is enabled to operate as it does now.

NFU Scotland continues to be unequivocal in stressing the need for agricultural support policies to diverge where necessary to reflect different needs and objectives, while regulatory requirements converge to protect the integrity of the UK Internal Market.

We support the intention to ensure that the UK Internal Market continues to operate as it does now – with free movement of goods and services produced to the same basic regulatory standards. However, our clear view is the proposals set out in the UK Internal Market Bill pose a significant threat to the development of Common Frameworks and to devolution.

The Union is clear that Common Frameworks could provide a more effective alternative to manage divergence, while respecting devolution, and so enable the UK Internal Market to operate without friction or distortion.

Since 2017, the Common Frameworks process has intended to specifically manage policy differences on the basis of agreement and is founded on respect for devolution. Common Frameworks can manage the practical regulatory and market implications of the UK leaving the EU and is the specific tool that was jointly designed by the UK Government and devolved administrations.

However, the UK Internal Market Bill appears to limit the devolved administrations' ability to act if any standards were lowered and give the UK Government a final say in areas of devolved policy, such as agriculture, the environment or animal health and welfare.

The UK Internal Market Bill could undermine the Common Frameworks process both in principle, as they move from agreement to imposition, and in practice by removing the incentive for the UK Government and the devolved administrations to agree ways of aligning and managing differences when mutual recognition rules require acceptance of standards from other parts of the UK.

The successful delivery of Common Frameworks, as intended, could ensure that the UK Internal Market effectively continues to operate as it does now – providing a level playing field of minimum regulatory standards to enable the free movement of goods and services without unfair distortion.

By law, the UK Government will have to draw on TAC – independent trade experts, including representation from NFU Scotland – to lay a report in the UK Parliament on each and every new trade agreement that is negotiated. The reports will explain how the deal ensures the maintenance of UK legal standards of human, animal or plant life or health, animal welfare, and the environment.

This will fill a democratic scrutiny vacuum by specifically addressing agricultural interests and by giving parliamentarians a clear, coherent role in the ratification process that is far better informed than the previous arrangements allowed.

NFU Scotland considers this to be a major improvement to the existing arrangements. The Union holds a seat on the influential TAC and will play a full part in ensuring any trade deals coming forward are in the best interests of Scottish farmers and crofters.

Industry group Women in Agriculture Scotland (WiAS) was formalised following the publication of Scottish Government's *Women in Agriculture Taskforce* report. WiAS aims to support, inspire and develop women in Scottish agriculture to achieve their aspirations and create a more progressive, successful and inclusive industry.

Women in Agriculture Scotland group, from left to right standing: Katrina Barclay, RHASS; Gemma Cooper, NFUS; Catherine Sloan, Turcan Connell; Aylett Roan, Roan's Dairy. L-r seated: Emma Patterson Taylor, SAOS; June Geyer, Chair; Mairi White, RBS.

Work to secure labour

IN February, the Home Office announced the features of its new Points Based System of immigration which will begin on 1 January 2021, following the end of free movement.

The new system will require any businesses employing workers from outside the UK to become registered sponsors, and will only enable non-UK staff to enter the country who earn a salary over £25,600 and who meet the defined skills criteria (RQF3 – school leavers or above).

NFU Scotland is concerned the new system will not provide adequate access for the wide range of non-UK workers who are employed in roles across agriculture and the wider food, drink and haulage sector from 2021 onwards. Throughout the year we have reiterated this message at countless meetings with the Home Office, Scotland Office, Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, UK Migration Advisory Committee, Scottish Government and all political parties.

The UK Government has cautiously noted these concerns, promising to work with industry to ensure the system is as fit-for-purpose for the realities of the agriculture labour-market as possible.

In the summer, we took evidence from more than 150 members who responded to our Employment and Wages Survey to the UK Government's Migration Advisory Committee where we strongly argued for agricultural occupations to be added to the Shortage Occupation List from 2021. While the UK Government has decided not to expand the list at this time, it remains a key lobbying priority for NFU Scotland into 2021.

At the end of the year, we held a webinar attended by the Home Office and a panel of immigration experts for our members to learn more about the new system and how to operate within it.

Seasonal agricultural workers are considered separately from the Points Based System due to the seasonal nature of the work and NFU Scotland has worked closely across government to lobby for a Seasonal Agricultural Worker Scheme to be permanently instated to provide upwards of 70,000 visas to non-UK workers, that is affordable for both employers and applicants and which can be utilised by a range of labour providers.

The Home Office's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Pilot is concluding its second year of operation, allowing access for non-EU nationals to undertake seasonal work to 'top up' the number of workers from the EU or domestic workforce. In 2020, the number of visas was increased from 2,500 to 10,000 visas following intense pressure from NFU Scotland and industry throughout 2020 – with the Conservatives committing to the measure in their 2019 General Election manifesto.

In anticipation of the Covid-19 pandemic creating major issues for seasonal workers entering the country in 2020, NFU Scotland moved quickly in the first week of the national lockdown to create an online hub to 'match-make' prospective workers from the domestic labour market with Scottish growers in need of workers. The initiative garnered a huge amount of interest, and was subsequently subsumed within the UK Government's wider Pick for Britain campaign.

However, despite the initial interest from prospective UK workers in the campaign, the experience of growers confirmed a long-known fact – seasonal vacancies cannot be filled by the domestic population. NFU Scotland continues to push strongly for a resolution to this vital issue.

CONVERGENCE MONIES

NFU Scotland successfully campaigned over a number of years to secure the £160 million of CAP convergence funding owed to Scotland's farmers and crofters. The Bew Review also concluded that Scotland will receive an additional £51.4 million over the 2020-22 period to reallocate and equalise convergence funding in the UK.

Our *Stability – The Platform for Change* policy document is launched. Gaining cross-party support, it clearly outlines what steps the Union believes must be taken to enable Scottish agriculture to move to even lower carbon and more efficient systems.

Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism and NFUS President, Andrew McCornick

Stability – The Platform for Change

IN March, NFU Scotland launched its latest and highly significant policy document, outlining that change to the current system of support was a necessity for the industry to adapt to the many challenges it faces. The document received cross-party support.

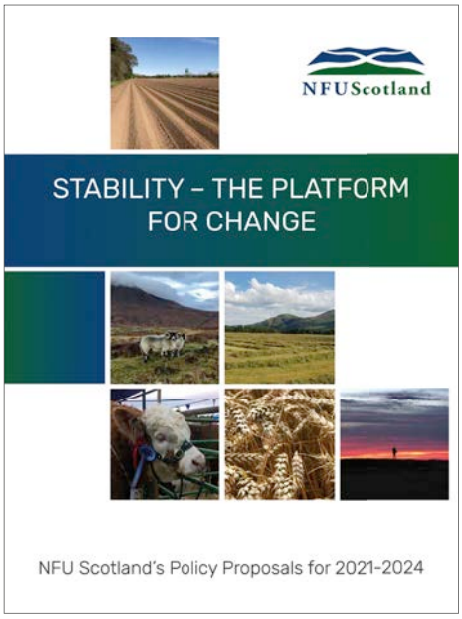
In *Stability – The Platform for Change*, the Union proposed forward-looking measures that it believes must be taken from 2021 onwards to enable Scottish agriculture to move to even lower carbon and more efficient systems – driving productivity and delivering on environmental and climate change ambitions.

That includes actions to simplify and improve existing schemes from 2021 to provide both certainty for Scotland's farmers and crofters and be a launch pad for more significant change from 2024.

The Union believes that necessary improvements to existing CAP schemes must go together with the extensive piloting of new schemes that will be the backbone of Scotland's new agricultural policy and support package beyond 2024.

The Union also called for the Scottish Government to bolster the on-farm activities to be promoted through the Agricultural Transformation Programme by substantially increasing the £40 million funds committed to it in February.

Our proposals would future-proof Scottish agriculture by making meaningful changes to existing CAP rules. Both short and longer-term proposals recognise Scottish agriculture's fundamental role in emissions reductions and carbon sequestration, while retaining the primacy of profitable food production to the highest of standards.



Farmers and crofters must be incentivised to take up fundamental measures focusing on soils, input costs and emission reductions. It is essential that such actions are taken up by a much wider swathe of Scottish agriculture and that all doing so are appropriately supported, including those many Scottish farmers and crofters already committed to these.

In leading the way on future agricultural support, the Union made it clear that the development and delivery of a new agricultural policy that supports farmers and crofters as food producers, improves productivity and resilience, and properly rewards the delivery of public goods is key.

THREE CROP RULE

NFU Scotland has consistently argued that the EU's blunt Greening rules were poorly targeted on Scottish environmental issues, and any required measures must work with the grain of agricultural businesses, as well as deliver meaningful environmental outcomes. In that vein, the Union has long argued that the Crop Diversification requirement (three crop rule) makes little or no sense in a Scottish context where monocultures do not exist – and nor does it bring any other environmental gain. In its policy document *Stability – The Platform for Change*, again NFU Scotland called for the scrapping of the three crop rule. As a result of this lobbying effort, in September, the Scottish Government announced the removal of the crop diversification element from Greening, as a step towards simplification by removing a complexity that was not necessary in Scotland's arable landscape.

NEXT GENERATION

HAVING OUR VOICES HEARD

The Next Generation Group has led on several initiatives such as NFU Scotland Family Membership and signing the AgRespect pledge to promote and support an open and inclusive industry. The group continues to highlight the challenges such as opportunities for new entrants, loss of direct support for new entrants and young farmers, and the need 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.

Twenty-three farmers, crofters, their families and workforce, from across Scotland, came together to produce a video to reassure the public they will do all they can to keep food and drink on everyone's table. Colin Ferguson, NFU Scotland Dumfries and Galloway Chair, said: "In these worrying times it is important the Scottish public know that farmers and crofters are still doing all they can to keep healthy, high welfare food and drink on their tables." Between Twitter and Facebook, the video reached an audience of more than 250,000.

REGIONAL LAND USE PARTNERSHIPS

Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) have been an important issue for NFU Scotland this year. The Partnerships, which will cover all of Scotland, are viewed by Government as an important mechanism by which to deliver a step change in how land use decisions are made. The Government is looking to these to deliver outcomes related to meeting climate change and environmental targets, economic recovery and providing a more cohesive approach to land use planning.

We have invested significant time and resource in working with the Scottish Land Commission and Scottish Government in discussions around the partnerships and to help shape relevant recommendations made to Government. We recognise that while they offer undoubted opportunities, assurances are required in terms of how Partnerships will be funded, governed, and structured as well as the role they will have in delivery of future rural funding. Members were able to hear directly from the Scottish Land Commission and Scottish Government at the Autumn Conference. The Union will continue to work on behalf of members to ensure that farming and crofting is strongly represented in all discussions in relation to this key policy area.

Fly-tipping

A **LONGSTANDING** issue, but one which has been ramped up this year due to Covid-19 restrictions, fly-tipping has been a priority for the 2020 legal and technical remit.

Progress on this issue has been focused on working collaboratively with key stakeholders (Police Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates, Zero Waste Scotland, the Woodland Trust and Keep Scotland Beautiful, to name a few) highlighting the victims of this crime are not isolated to farmers and crofters. This work has been progressed through the SPARC network and collectively we launched a public facing campaign, raising awareness and calling all members of society to 'take care of our countryside'. In addition, we have progressed the issue politically by penning high profile joint letters to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform.

Unfortunately, there have been several very emotive instances of fly-tipping cases on members' farms. NFU Scotland has used these appalling instances to raise awareness within the public, parliament, and regulatory bodies to call for urgent action and resource to tackle this crime.

In addition, we have devised a six-point action plan to call for an immediate and long-term resolution.
These include:

- Urgent delivery of national strategy on fly-tipping
- Financial grants for victims to remove and prevent fly-tipping
- A national fly-tipping database
- A uniform and collaborative approach across all local authorities to remove postcode lottery
- Greater resources for investigative bodies to pursue and convict fly-tippers
- Greater sanctions for fly-tippers, including extension of householder responsibilities and convictions of users of illegal waste carriers.

MAY

Online auctions went ahead observing social distancing restrictions, which enabled farmers and crofters to keep livestock and businesses moving thanks to the co-operation of hauliers, buyers and sellers. It meant many embracing technology for the first time and adapting logistics. Inevitability the social element of marts was missed by most.

Vice President, Charlie Adam's first experience of an online mart

Climate change

NFU Scotland is committed to being an industry leader on climate change, working to ensure that the sector continues to respond to the climate emergency and support a green recovery from Covid-19. We believe that Scottish agriculture must also be recognised for the work it has done in reducing emissions and enabling sequestration of carbon.

This year, NFU Scotland's partnership work with the Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutes led to the publication of science-based factsheets on climate change and Scottish agriculture. The Union has also continued to support the Farming for 1.5°C Inquiry, which aims to find consensus on the best way for Scottish agriculture to meet the challenge of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. The Inquiry published its Interim Report in November, with NFU Scotland hosting the virtual launch event for this.

In 2020, we also established a Climate Change Advisory Panel. The Panel, made up of a mixture of active farmers and land use and climate change experts, will support us in our work to ensure that Scottish agriculture can remain vibrant and productive while delivering benefits for the climate and wider environment.

ACCESS

Public access to farmland has been a key area of concern for members during the Coronavirus pandemic. NFU Scotland's Next Generation Group produced dedicated posters for members to use on land and provided detailed guidance to ensure that farmers were clear about their rights relating to access taking. The Union continues to be a key stakeholder at the National Access Forum, where practical issues can be raised directly. This involvement has seen considerable focus on the issue of livestock worrying and has resulted in the production of detailed guidance in relation to access with dogs. We continue to highlight the practical issue caused by non-compliant and concentrated access and the issue of lack of funding for access provision in Scotland. This will remain a key policy area for us over the coming year.

Winners of the Kids' Lockdown Art competition were announced. Our young members were asked to draw or paint a scene from their farm that was making them happy during lockdown. As some light relief from home-schooling, children from across the country submitted a wonderful range of inspired and colourful pieces.

Art Competition winners Carmen Barbour and Orlah Fernie

JUN

LESS FAVOURED AREAS

The NFU Scotland Less Favoured Areas Committee published a policy document presenting a clear case for continued funding for farms and crofts in Scotland's less favoured areas (LFA). The document *Less Favoured Areas – Delivering for Scotland* outlines the economic and environmental case for continued support to LFA agriculture and calls for the continuation of key support schemes such as the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme (LFASS), the Scottish Upland Sheep Support Scheme and the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme, with modifications. The publication was well received by politicians, with positive references in the Scottish Parliament. Toward the end of 2020 the Scottish Government also confirmed that it planned to continue LFASS with 2018 payment rates beyond 2020 following the publication of the document.

Fuel issues

BETWEEN October – December 2019, NFU Scotland received more than 400 reports from members regarding fuel filter blocking issues. This year, the Union remains focused on lobbying the UK fuel industry and government to find a solution to problematic diesel and premature fuel filter blocking in agricultural vehicles.

Based on member evidence, we have lobbied for the creation of a taskforce charged with changing the standards and specifications of gasoil to prevent future problems. The taskforce includes representatives of the UK fuel supply chain and UK Government. NFU Scotland and NFU have collaborated on this group to represent the needs of the agricultural consumer. Successful gains through the taskforce include a change to the standards which has lowered the hard particle content specifications of fuel, meaning fewer particles can be permitted in gas, oil and diesel. In addition, the taskforce has agreed a testing protocol for problematic fuel and discussions are ongoing to ensure on-farm conditions are reflected in fuel husbandry guidance.

We created an exclusive members' fuel hub for information about filter blocking in agricultural vehicles, exclusive blogs, guidance about the fuel policy landscape, and practical steps farmers and crofters can take if they encounter filter blocking issues.

In addition, we continue to engage with representatives from Department of Transport and Trading Standards Scotland on this issue to represent the needs of farmers and crofters in having reliable fuel which does not incur additional costs and damage to users.

BOVINE EID GROUP

Upgrading Scottish cattle traceability has been a priority of the NFU Scotland Livestock Committee for some time. President, Andrew McCornick has chaired the Scottish Bovine EID Stakeholder Group for a number of years, which has progressed an industry-led pilot looking at emerging EID technology.

Early in 2020, the group agreed to delay the transition from BCMS CTS Online to ScotEID for all cattle births and movements due to concern that more time would be needed for third party farm software providers. The group continues to work closely with the Scottish Government and industry stakeholders to progress the introduction of physical electronic tags.

NFU Scotland worked alongside the Farm Safety Foundation, and other stakeholders, to promote the importance of proper health and safety practices during Farm Safety Week. This year the focus also profiled the value of both physical and mental wellbeing.

Positively, the Health and Safety Executive released their report on fatal injuries in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Great Britain 2019/20 which recorded a significant improvement on previous years in Scotland. But there is still room for improvement.

Physical and mental wellbeing is a top priority

DAIRY CONTRACTS

In September, NFU Scotland urged all dairy farmers to engage with the long-awaited government consultation on dairy contracts and speak up for a more effective dairy supply chain, with fairer terms for farmers. For at least two years, NFU Scotland has actively been talking to all stages in the dairy supply chain on this topic. We believe the introduction of well-considered appropriate legislation regarding dairy contracts between dairy farmers and milk buyers is essential and this was stressed in our response to Defra. This will create the foundations of a modern, thriving industry based on contracts that are agreed, not imposed, through free and equal negotiation and in good faith for the benefit of all in the supply chain.

The consultation period was a busy time for NFU Scotland, but the real hard work will begin when we hear the outcome from Defra and then we can start to plan the building blocks for the future in early 2021. This is the best opportunity since deregulation in 1994 for the dairy sector to evolve the current supply chain.

The experience of Covid-19 merely underlines that risk management, efficient reactive and pro-active volume management, logistics and long-term investment cannot be effectively addressed without industry coordination and co-operation.

ESTABLISHING PROTOCOLS ON RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Scottish Government is of the view that matters relating to ownership, use and management of land is a key part of land reform. The Scottish Government has also been clear in its view that land reform is an ongoing process. The Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (LRRS) underpins the Scottish Government aspirations for a stronger relationship between the people of Scotland and the land. The LRRS has an increasing importance going forward, as it will underpin the development of Regional Land Use Partnerships. Working with the Scottish Land Commission and other stakeholders, NFU Scotland has worked to produce a series of protocols which underpin the LRRS. These protocols provide practical guidance for landowners and managers and the public on issues such as community engagement, transparency of ownership and use and good stewardship. Working via its committee structures, NFU Scotland has focused involvement on ensuring that the protocols mean that landowners and managers are able to carry on their commercial activities and that rights as owners and occupiers are balanced with the rights of others.

SKILLS & TRAINING

DEVELOPING THE TOOLS: SKILLS FOR FARMING

NFU Scotland continues to Chair the national Skills for Farming group it initiated. This group, includes all the main stakeholders in the education and skills sector which directly affect agriculture, including Skills Development Scotland, Lantra, colleges, machinery rings, etc.

The group is unique in its objective to discuss education and skills which are specific to farming and crofting, determining the development of course options, effectiveness of delivery, funding, promotion, and effective collaboration to understand the needs of the farming sector and the challenges of delivery.

The Union's education and skills working group and the national Skills for Farming group increases our understanding of the education and skills policy frameworks, how well they deliver for farming and how we can influence positively. We are directly involved in initiatives to initiate and develop new school courses, apprenticeship models and reviews, further and higher education regionally and nationally.

Long-serving Livestock Committee member Ian Pirie, pictured with his family, was the unsuspecting recipient of the North East's 'Unsung Hero' award. The significant contributions to Scottish agriculture and the Union of several long-serving members have been marked this year. But like Ian, their awards have been presented differently than normal due to pandemic restrictions. They are all valued and appreciated. Thank you.

Ian and his family

Connecting with our audience

TO keep the growing membership at NFU Scotland fully informed and up to date, we strive to ensure that all communication routes are open.

In modern times, this has seen us expanding the number of tools we use.

However, as our recent Broadband and Connectivity survey confirmed, we have many members whose access to fast, reliable internet connection or a good mobile phone signal is unacceptably poor. That is why guaranteeing that every member of NFU Scotland gets a copy of our award-winning magazine *Scottish Farming Leader* through the post every month remains so important.

But as access to services and technology continue to improve, our range of communications options expands.

Throughout the pandemic, we regularly reached out to thousands of members directly through email and text messages.

The thousands of members that we have an email address for also received a weekly coronavirus update from NFU Scotland and we continue to update them every Friday on all the news and activity from NFU Scotland.

Our website became a central hub for information and news, drawing in tens of thousands of visitors. Followers on our three social media sites – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – grew exponentially.

Hundreds of members now find the easiest way to keep up with all the news from NFU Scotland is through our phone app, available for download from the Apple store and Google Play.

We also continue to have an excellent relationship with all sections of the media – TV, radio, print and digital. While we may not always agree with what they broadcast or print, they present an excellent platform to ensure the 200 news releases; 100 website blogs and 150 press comments we write each year reach as wide an audience as possible.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown had a massive impact on the way we communicated and used our social media channels to maximum effect.

In order to reach an even greater audience than ever before, the Union increased the number of videos it produced, encouraging the Board, staff and members themselves to participate by sending in footage.

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were used to communicate directly to Scottish consumers, relaying to them the importance, especially in a time of global crisis, of supporting our local producers.

Along with the videos produced, we also launched our campaign 'Serving Scotland', which highlighted the stories of farmers and crofters throughout Scotland who are producing food and drink to the highest of industry standards.

The Back British Farming campaign gained cross-party support, public backing, celebrity endorsement and relentless lobbying, eventually securing changes to both the Agriculture Bill and the Trade Bill. The Prime Minister and leader of the Opposition were both seen wearing their campaign wheat sheaf in the Commons and many Scottish MPs also joined them on a Back British Farming Day.

#BackBritishFarming

Supporting the future of crofting

CROFTING members continue to be represented at the highest channels in government, parliament, and within the regulatory bodies. The Crofting, Highlands and Islands Committee (CHIC) working group has held four meetings and two ad hoc meetings this year to progress key issues.

Two key successes this year include helping the Scottish Government reform the Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme (CAGS) and engagement with the Crofting Bull Hire Scheme. Our engagement with the CAGS focus group has enabled us to feedback key member asks about the reforms which will make the most impactful change for crofters. This includes improvements to the payment cycles, reduced bureaucracy through the introduction of fixed costings, and a review of the scope of eligible items. Secondly, the CHIC working group welcomed the stud manager and attending vet of the Bull Hire Scheme. Committee members were able to discuss concerns and the importance of routine fertility testing for all bulls was stressed. Subsequently, the Committee received assurances that the adoption of routine testing would be explored.

On longer term issues, such as crofting law reform, the CHIC working group provided feedback to the Law Society of Scotland which has subsequently made constructive recommendations to change legislation in the absence of the Bill Group. In addition, we have engaged at the highest levels within the Scottish Government to represent crofting members' interests in the creation of the new National Development Plan for Crofting.

SPECIES MANAGEMENT

UNDERSTANDING THE BALANCE OF NATURE

Species Management is an issue that although sometimes very contentious, is, nevertheless, a subject that must be talked about more openly to fully understand the balance between what is in the best interest of both the species in question, and those who suffer the greatest impacts. This applies to both land managers and other species.

Beavers, badgers, geese and white-tailed eagles remain of serious concern to our membership. Surveys conducted throughout 2020 have, with the support of our members, provided us with invaluable evidence that has strengthened our cases when working with policy and decision makers at government, local and national levels. This has been vital in securing the ongoing funding of Scotland's Goose schemes and increased funding availability and options under the Sea Eagle Management Schemes. We also continue to have strong representation on working groups such as the Scottish Beaver Forum putting us at the forefront of discussions and action.

In Autumn, NFU Scotland welcomed the launch of NatureScot's 'Shared Approach'. This gives us an opportunity to not only highlight the benefits of enhancing the environment for many of our species to thrive but also to help people understand why sometimes difficult decisions need to be made to protect our ability to maintain a sustainable food production system that's the envy of many across the globe.

NFU Scotland held its first ever online Autumn Conference. More than 130 participants tuned in to debate and discuss the proposed future Regional Land Use Partnerships. Hosted by President Andrew McCornick, speakers Scottish Land Commission and Scottish Government outlined some of the plans ahead of the RLUPs report being published later in the month.

Virtual meeting at the NFU Scotland Autumn Conference

OCT

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

SAFETY COMES FIRST

This year is one we shall remember but want to forget. Who would have guessed that we would have a year without shows, a year when we regularly wear masks and a year we keep socially distanced from our friends and even family?

The impact of Covid-19 has been experienced by people feeling more isolated than normal, whether due to shielding, regulation or just not wanting to risk spreading the coronavirus. Pressures on businesses have been immense, especially those who have diversified and been unable to operate, plus there is an uncertainty regarding our economy going forward, not just in Scotland, but across the world. It has had an effect on everyone's wellbeing.

This Autumn, NFU Scotland formed a Wellbeing Working group which is looking at ways, particularly through social media as well as conventional lines of communication, in which the Union can disseminate information and guidance to members, their families, colleagues and friends regarding sources of help and resources available to anyone suffering poor mental health.

It is vital that everyone in the agricultural and rural community recognises the signs and symptoms in anyone suffering mental health problems and that not only the sufferer, but we all, know where to turn for support and anyone experiencing difficulties feels no shame in doing so.

AGRITOURISM

Growing the agritourism sector

'SCOTTISH Agritourism' formally launched this year, formalising an existing strong and growing network of farm and crofting businesses which sell food directly or have a tourism or leisure offering. Scottish Agritourism sits within the umbrella of the Scottish Tourism Alliance.

In the toughest of circumstances, Scotland's close-knit network of agritourism farmers reached out to thousands of families stuck at home during lockdown by bringing a live daily virtual tour into living rooms via the Go Rural Facebook page, which NFU Scotland was delighted to help publicise.

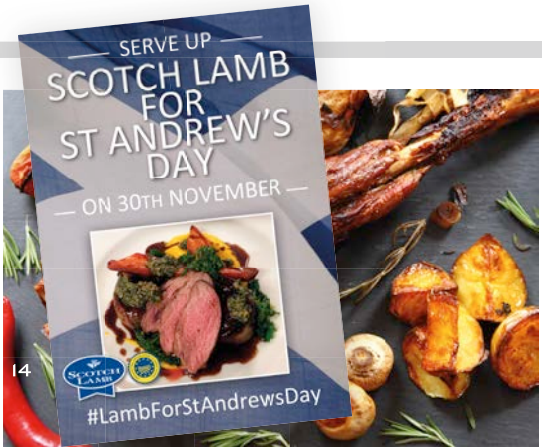
Initially started by a few farming friends conducting a daily virtual tour of fourteen different lambing sheds, two weeks of "Lambathon" had become such a hit with audiences at home, that "Welcome to my Farm" followed on. Almost 100 farmers, normally busy welcoming tourists and visitors in their agritourism side of their business, took part, attracting ten thousand families watching live (many from overseas) and generating a reach of almost two and a half million on Facebook. Seven hundred and fifty thousand minutes of videos of Scottish farm life were watched, with many people watching the videos on 'catch-up' in the evenings.

When restrictions ease slightly and businesses reopened for a period, many benefited as the nation 'staycation-ed' and extended their 'season'.

Speaking online at the Scottish Agritourism conference in November, President Andrew McCornick said: "Agritourism will have an important role to play in the green recovery, opening opportunities for farmers and crofters to raise awareness with the public about the part we play in reducing the impact of climate change and our importance in the food chain and rural economy."

SCOTTISH LAND MATCHING SERVICE

The Scottish Land Matching Service (SLMS), supported by NFU Scotland, marked its first anniversary. Over the year, the service has received 152 enquiries with four times as many people looking for opportunities compared to those in a position to offer. Enquiries have included all scales and types of enterprise from market garden up to extensive sheep, cattle and arable operations. Four successful matches have been made, including a joint venture and partnership agreement, and this provides an excellent platform for more successful matches in the future.

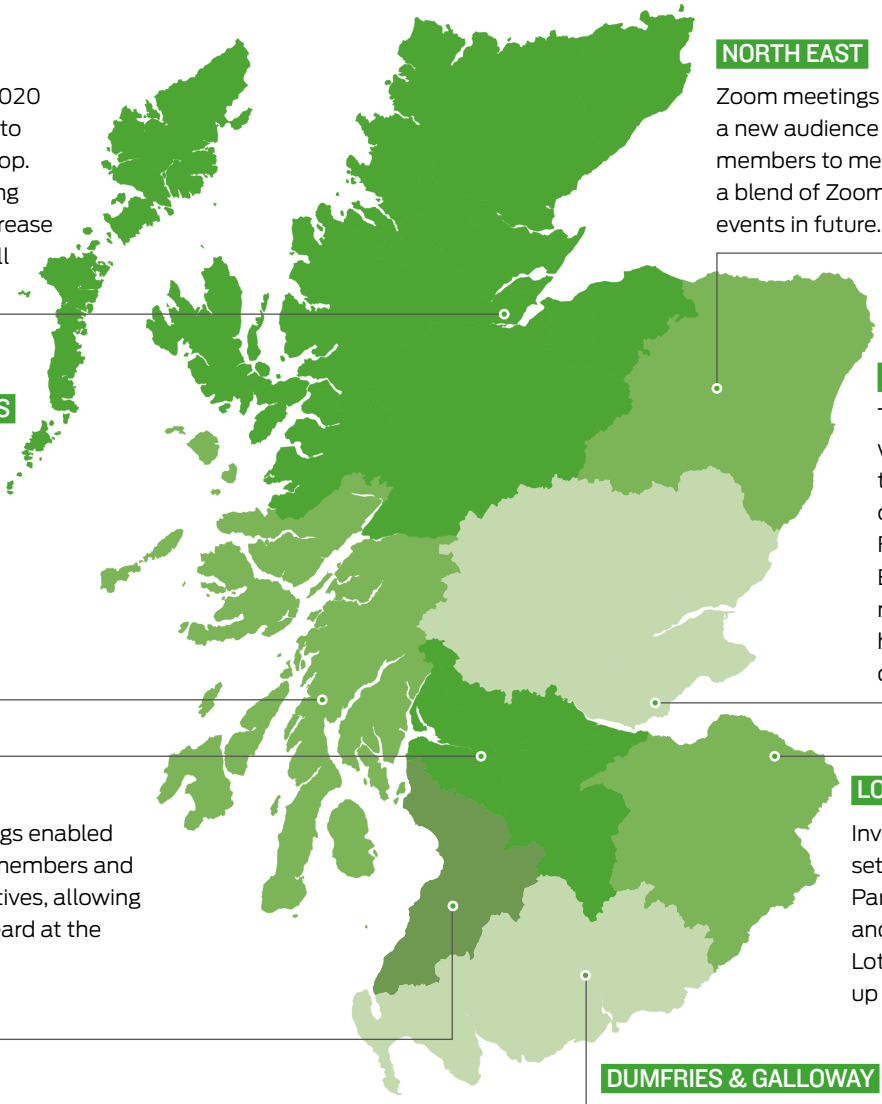


NOV

United Auctions was joined by NFU Scotland, the Institute of Auctioneers and Appraisers in Scotland (IAAS), QMS and NSA Scotland to promote the use of Scotch Lamb PGI to celebrate St Andrew's Day (30 November). The campaign encouraged local organisations, schools and businesses to include special lamb options on their menus for Scotland's National Day, and families to enjoy a lamb dinner with those already in their household. More than 11,500 Scottish schoolchildren took part in the most successful #LambForStAndrewsDay yet.

A snapshot of our regional teams

NFU Scotland represents farmers, crofters and producers from all corners of Scotland. Regional teams continue to work hard to ensure they deliver support to members, understand and resolve local issues, and provide a critical channel to ensure input into national policy and vice-versa. Throughout 2020 and despite the lack of face-to-face meetings, they have worked tirelessly to deliver on your behalf. Here are a few successes/highlights from the year which has challenged us all.



SHETLAND

Set up a coronavirus support group for farmers and crofters in the run-up to lambing and clipping, to help members in need of a hand.

ORKNEY

Your Union worked closely with ferry providers to keep the sector moving despite challenges and restrictions faced. Enabling livestock movement to market and providing vital supplies.

HIGHLAND

Regional board started 2020 with an educational visit to Black Isle Dairy's farm shop. Very fortuitous considering Covid-19 triggered an increase in farm shops and footfall through them.

NORTH EAST

Zoom meetings successfully attracted a new audience of younger, busy family members to meetings. We aim to offer a blend of Zoom and face-to-face events in future.

ARGYLL & THE ISLANDS

Regional Board visited the Scottish Parliament and met with MSPs, Donald Cameron, Fergus Ewing, Edward Mountain and Michael Russell. We discussed a number of regional issues.

EAST CENTRAL

The region engaged with NatureScot on the implementation of the Management Framework for Beavers, what this means in practice and highlighted where damage is occurring.

FORTH & CLYDE

The use of virtual meetings enabled greater interaction with members and their political representatives, allowing members voices to be heard at the highest level.

LOTHIANS & BORDERS

Involved in successfully setting up the Rural Crime Partnerships in East and Mid Lothian – West Lothian and Borders to be up and running very soon.

AYRSHIRE

'Zooms' to New Zealand! We had a great time with expats, the Ramsay Family, in June hearing all about their dairy herd and life down under!

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Set up of regional WhatsApp groups – covering all the main sectors – to allow platforms for members to discuss and share issues and views.

The Presidential team prepares for a new look from February 2021. With Andrew McCornick's four years as President coming to an end, and Charlie Adam and Martin Kennedy stepping down from their supporting roles, nominations for each of the three roles were announced at the Union's Christmas press briefing. These along with the end of Brexit transition herald just some of the changes lying ahead in 2021.

Andrew McCornick, Charlie Adam and Martin Kennedy

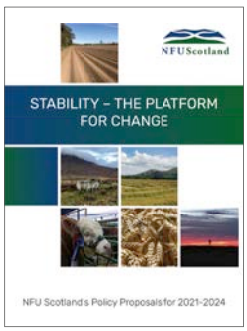
DEC

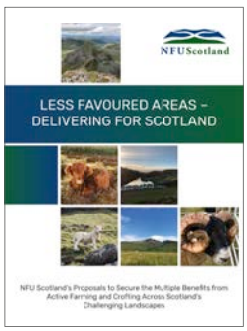
PUBLICATIONS

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Keeping our members, stakeholders and other interested parties informed of key issues, policies, news, opportunities, and activities in the most effective ways is essential. NFU Scotland uses a variety of methods to achieve this; from text and Twitter, website to Zoom, we strive to keep you up to speed.

The *Scottish Farming Leader*, however, remains a firm favourite and, over the past 12 months, has once again been dropping on doorsteps across the country on a monthly basis covering a wide variety of topics important and of interest to members from all corners of rural Scotland. The magazine also presents advertising opportunities for partners and businesses with products and services that can benefit Union members.





PUBLICATIONS

OUR POLICY VISION

NFU Scotland continues to work hard for all its members. This year the Union has published two key policy publications, *Stability – The Platform for Change* and *Less Favoured Areas – Delivering for Scotland*.

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