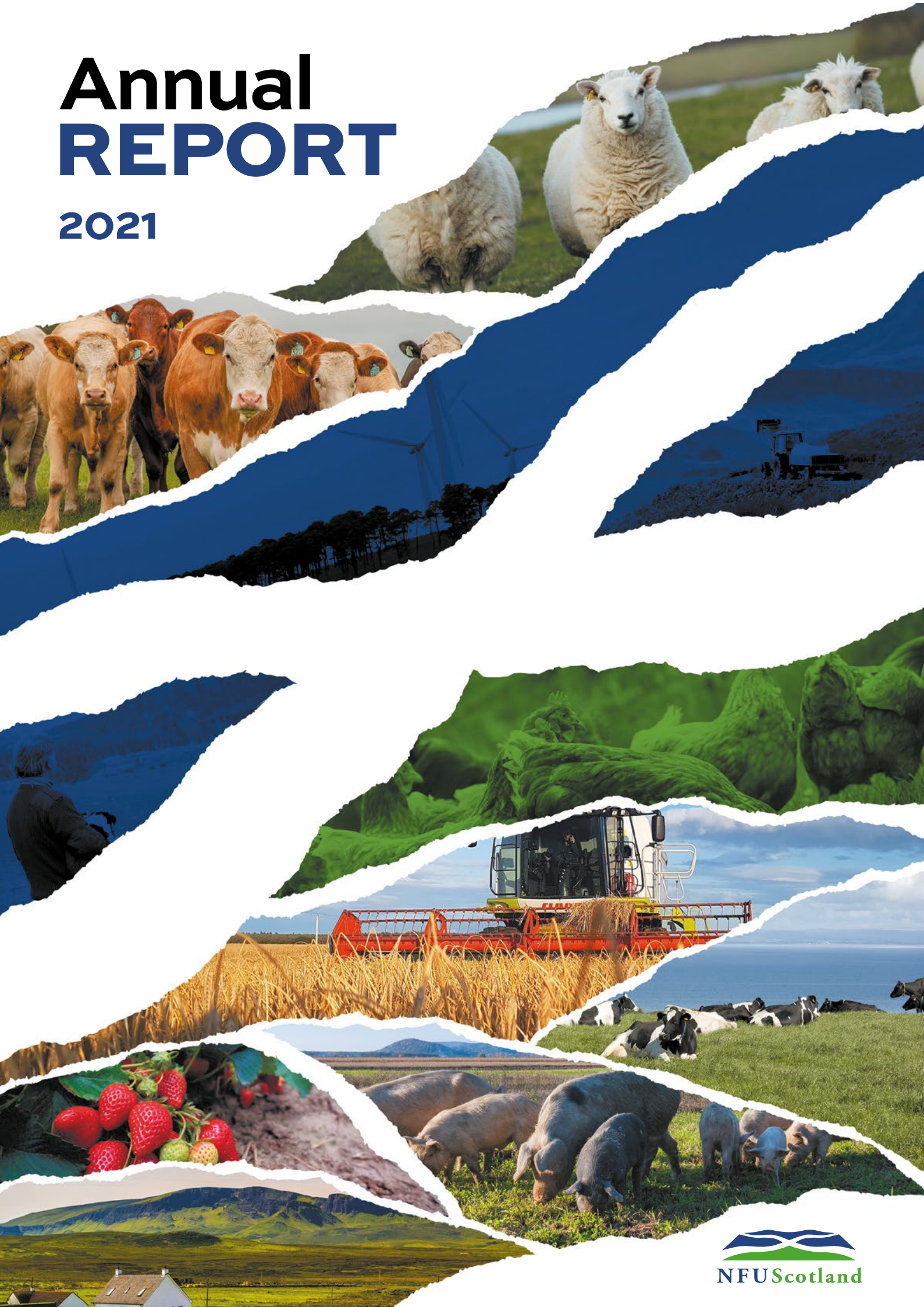
Annual REPORT

2021



NFUScotland

UNION FIRSTS

1ST VIRTUAL AGM HELD (FEB 2021)

1st NFU Scotland Presidential elections held online following series of virtual hustings

ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Our tweets have been viewed

1,127,100 t

Our Facebook following has increased by

17.33%

OVER 17,000 VISITS

(average visits to NFU Scotland website per month)

COMMUNICATIONS

Published and distributed

12 ISSUES

of the Union's flagship members' magazine *Scottish Farming Leader*

341,481 TE

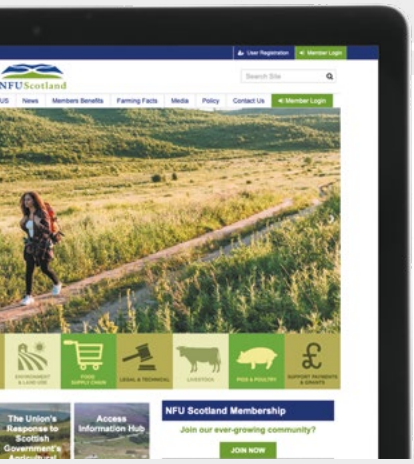
sent (Jan-Oct 2021), keeping members informed

times

Our widest-reaching Facebook post so far went to

175,000

accounts



POLITICS & WEBINARS

Held over **130 meetings** online or in person with MSPs and MPs

4 parliamentary oral evidence sessions in last quarter of 2021

14

webinars hosted to support members covering key issues, consultations, and campaigns

NFUS mentioned in

42

debates and committee meetings in the Scottish Parliament

37%

rise in members receiving *Scottish Farming Leader* by email

EXTS

MEMBERSHIP

£2million +

saved by members using discount services

300+ NEW MEMBERS

Announced

0% increase

in membership subscription rates for second year in row

President's REPORT

AS PRESIDENT of NFU Scotland, I must say it is indeed an honour to have been elected to this position, to represent and lobby on your behalf to ensure all of agriculture's interests are heard at the highest level. This first year has flown by and I find it hard to believe we are approaching our AGM.

As a membership organisation, it is extremely important that your views are heard. Over the past nearly two years, during this dreadful pandemic, it has been quite challenging to have the face-to-face dialogue with members as we have been used to in the past. However, with the use of technology, we have been able to communicate with most of our membership. In fact in some instances contact with members has been improved because attending meetings has been easier for many which is something we will be mindful of in the future.

Scottish agriculture is facing a time of change when future policy will be developed with no outside influence from the EU - something that hasn't happened for nearly 50 years. Although there is serious uncertainty for all farmers and crofters as to how this will work on the ground once we reach 2025, it is vital that our voice is heard. That is why it was so important to hear from the industry before we submitted our response to the Scottish Government's Agriculture transition consultation.

As you know, after some serious negotiation, I agreed to co-chair the Agriculture Reform Implementation Oversight Board (ARIOB) with the Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon. This, I know, is unprecedented and is also a risk for NFU Scotland and I to take. However, having seen first-hand how decisions are made in government over the past number of years, I felt it was vital that we maximised our influence as a Union and try to steer the direction of future policy with a hand on the tiller rather than be reactionary to the outcomes from the outside when it's too late to change anything. There is no doubt that achieving what we would see as a perfect policy for everyone will not be possible, but I can assure you that we will do everything in our power to achieve the best possible outcome.

We have many challenges in front of us, not least the immediate issues around input costs, labour and trade. Collectively, however, agriculture has a very strong voice and we consistently see positive outcomes and more common sense being applied to create logical and practical solutions, as a result of our united responses to, for example, consultations.

Your continued support as a member of NFU Scotland is very much appreciated and I am convinced that with the strength of our Union, we will see a positive future for agriculture in Scotland.

Martin Kennedy
President,
NFU Scotland

IT WAS all change at the top this year. Andrew McCornick stood down after four years as President, the maximum term allowed under the Union's constitution, and Martin Kennedy was elected as President.

The highly contested positions of Vice-President saw Andrew Connon and Robin Traquair elected. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, no physical hustings took place. Instead, virtual events were held. Attendance was great at these, but I missed the camaraderie built by those seeking election, travelling around the regions to explain to members why they wish to hold office and the discussions that happen with members away from public question and answer sessions. By the time we have our next elections, I hope we can offer hybrid events, giving members the option to attend in person or online while the candidates get a chance to travel round the country. This is the way forward and will maximise the number of people able to participate.

Our Autumn Conference followed this hybrid model and went a step further. Not only did members have the choice to attend in person or online but we also had speakers in person and online. Doing an event this way gives access to a wider range of speakers and the opportunity for many more members to participate.

The default workplace for staff this year has remained home in line with Scottish Government guidelines. I am always impressed by the passion and commitment shown by the staff who work for NFU Scotland – they do a remarkable job. While some face-to-face meetings have returned, online still plays a big part in how we do things now and, in most cases, this is a good thing. We can do more than we did in the past without the travelling and can bring people together, members and those we need to influence, much easier.

Next year we will transition to hybrid working for NFU Scotland staff. This will give the option to work outside of the office for some of the time but together in the office part of the week. Covid has given the Union an opportunity to re-imagine how we work most effectively. The pandemic drove us away from normal working practice and forced us to change. We have navigated this change very successfully and continue to keep learning, improving and developing how we do things.

Growing membership, strong commercial activities and decreased expenditure (due to Covid) means subscription rates didn't change in 2021 and won't change in 2022. We have also been able to increase the size of our policy and regional teams with an extra person in each to ensure that we effectively lobby on national and local issues. The Union has never been stronger. It's our membership that makes us strong so please continue to be active, and have your say as it is the members that decide the direction and set the polices on which the Union lobbies.

Scott Walker
Chief Executive,
NFU Scotland

JANUARY

In the early stages of another lockdown and as we embarked on life outside the EU, NFU Scotland launched a new online 'Here For You' resource designed to signpost members to organisations offering wellbeing and mental health and support.

FEBRUARY

First virtual AGM and elections took place, heralding in a new look top team of Martin Kennedy appointed President and Andrew Connon and Robin Traquair as Vice-Presidents. We also welcomed new Board and regional committee members. The future of agriculture in the UK, trade deals and policy following our departure from the EU in January were the focus of the seminars held alongside the AGM.

Future Agricultural Support

The biggest issue on the domestic agenda this year has been the future for agricultural support in Scotland. Leaving the EU meant leaving the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). However, legislation passed in 2020 allowed for the continuity of the mainstream CAP schemes such as Basic Payment Scheme, Greening and coupled support, until 2024. This also includes the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme and a return to 2018 payment rates – a major victory for NFU Scotland lobbying. This period of stability is much needed in the context of fragile supply chains and rapidly rising input costs.

Already on a policy track to drive more climate and biodiversity outcomes from agricultural land use, the last Scottish Government enrolled five Farmer-Led Groups (FLGs). The sectoral reports from the FLGs, published between November 2020 and the end of March 2021, provided an informed industry perspective of the opportunities and challenges faced. The Union made it very clear that the main messages and recommendations of the FLGs provided the way for the design and implementation of future agricultural policy in Scotland. Moreover, the findings of the FLGs and our own 'Steps to Change' principles should pave the way to a replacement for the CAP in Scotland.

Following the Scottish Parliamentary elections, the new Scottish Government renewed its commitment to underpinning Scottish agriculture to enable it to deliver on food production, climate change and biodiversity – simultaneously. The centrepiece of new policy would be a shift towards

TRADE

The year has been dominated by trade-related issues in the wake of the UK's departure from the EU. At the start of the year, the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA), including the Northern Ireland Protocol, kicked in – marking a new era of tariff-free and quota-free trade between the UK and the EU. However, this trade is far from friction-free and, mostly because of ongoing extensions to so-called 'grace periods', the full extent of what friction-free actually means in practice is yet to be realised.

The start of the year also saw the publication of the final report and recommendations from the Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC), the membership of which included Andrew McCornick. However, it was not until October that the UK

'conditional' support from 2025, and to be delivered via a new Scottish agriculture bill.

We pressed Scottish Government to fulfil its commitment to an integrated implementation board to oversee the development and delivery of future support. In late August, the Agricultural Reform Implementation Oversight Board (ARIOB) was unveiled. Co-chaired by the Cabinet Secretary and President Martin Kennedy, and largely made up of key members from each of the FLGs, the ARIOB has an advisory role and will ensure the future delivery of support is capable of bringing about the changes needed.

Bringing together the findings of the FLGs, in the summer we published proposals for the structure of future support – highlighting the need for a single, non-sectoral approach and one that kick-started a transition to more conditional support payments. Pressing the need to act sooner rather than later, our lobbying was the key to Scottish Government committing an additional £51 million over the 2022 to 2024 period via a new National Test Programme designed to support farmers and crofters to start our journey towards more sustainable agriculture.

In a parallel development, the Scottish Government also published a major consultation that ran through to November. "Agricultural Transition in Scotland: Our First Steps Towards a National Policy". The Union submitted a detailed and comprehensive response to this following a significant level of engagement with members via webinars, online and face-to-face meetings across all regions and sectors.

"We pressed Scottish Government to fulfil its commitment to an integrated implementation board to oversee the development and delivery of future support"

Government formally replied – primarily focusing on the setting up of a statutory TAC to scrutinise the free trade agreements (FTAs) being negotiated by the UK Government.

Meanwhile, in June, the UK and Australia announced an 'agreement in principle' on a new FTA. This set alarm bells ringing for UK and Scottish agriculture – with little by way of safeguards to protect the UK from imports of red meat and grain, in addition to sugar, often produced via very different farming systems with very different cost structures. Unprecedented media coverage and political engagement allowed the Union to highlight its serious concerns.

That deal, however, was compounded in October when the UK Government announced a very similar deal with New Zealand – another agricultural powerhouse on the world stage with distinct advantages in producing lamb, beef, dairy and horticultural products.

We continue to monitor all aspects of trade policy and are pressing the UK Government to protect the interests of Scottish and UK producers from imports produced under distinctly different conditions and costs. Domestic agriculture must not be sold out in an era when food security is rapidly rising up the political agenda once more.

LABOUR

We have been lobbying the UK Government to accept, understand, and put in place policy to address the labour crisis many sectors are now experiencing following the double whammy of Covid and Brexit.

To better understand the problems, and gather the evidence needed to make politicians listen, we surveyed members, interviewed labour providers, and gathered information from reports and other literature on the subject. These results painted a bleak picture. The Union used the findings to respond to a call for evidence from the UK Government, strengthen our lobbying of politicians, give evidence to a committee in Westminster, and communicate the scale of the problem to the public. The results were also used to develop policy asks to address this issue and identify other changes that need to happen to tackle this crisis.

Through persistent lobbying using strong evidence, we have persuaded a wide range of MPs, including Conservative MPs, to put pressure on the Home Office to change their policies. This lobbying will continue. We supported lobbying with communications activities in the press and on TV, and issued a blog that highlighted the problem, its causes, and what our members are doing about it. The information in the blog was picked up by journalists and used to publicly challenge the government on its actions for a change of migration policy.

Contractual relationships in the UK dairy industry

We have been at the forefront of the work carried out to lobby Defra on the milk contract consultation and the value of our strong links with other UK Unions in the last twelve months cannot be underestimated. In February, the UK Government and devolved administrations published their response to the 2020 consultation, seeking views from dairy farmers and processors across the UK about how contracts and relationships could be improved. The 12-week consultation was launched in June 2020 by the UK Government, with input from Devolved Administrations, to explore whether regulations could be introduced to ensure fair treatment across the UK's dairy sector. Imbalances of power within the dairy supply chain were believed to be causing instability for dairy farmers, such as where milk buyers have the ability to set and modify the terms of a contract at

"For too long, dairy farmers have borne far too much of the risk in the dairy supply chain and inappropriate contract terms are often at the root of the problems"

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

NFU Scotland held over 130 meetings with politicians over the past 12 months. Our engagement covered all parties and included meetings both in person and online with Cabinet Secretaries, Secretaries of State, Ministers, MPs and MSPs.

In September, we visited Westminster for the first time since the pandemic began. A full day of meetings provided the opportunity to highlight labour shortage issues and we met with Secretary of

State for the Environment and Rural Affairs, George Eustice and Secretary of State for Scotland, Alister Jack, at the Conservative party conference in Manchester in October. We have regular discussions with the Scotland Office to ensure that our key issues

short notice. The responses to this consultation clearly demonstrated the need to introduce new regulations to require certain standards for contracts between those producing and buying milk for processing.

For too long, dairy farmers have borne far too much of the risk in the dairy supply chain and inappropriate contract terms are often at the root of the problems. Contracts have been weighted too heavily in favour of the milk buyer who can change terms and pricing mechanisms, and even introduce price cuts without negotiation, while locking farmers into changes without recourse. We continue to work with both Scottish Government and Defra on this issue to ensure this new legislation is delivered as soon as possible.

are well understood by the Secretary of State and his team, and we have provided written and oral evidence to several House of Commons and House of Lords Committees on a range of topics including labour shortages, trade deals and the internal market.

In Scotland, the election in May delivered new MSPs and a new cooperation agreement between the Scottish Green Party and the SNP. We spent time over the summer developing our relationships with new and returning MSPs and arranged a number of farm visits across Scotland. We have engaged regularly with the new Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, Mairi Gougeon MSP and her team. We also met with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy, Kate Forbes MSP in advance of the Scottish Budget in December and the new Green Minister for Green Skills, Biodiversity and Circular Economy, Lorna Slater MSP. We have plans for 2022 to build our engagement and continue to highlight our members' issues to deliver a thriving farming sector for the country.

2021 Policy UPDATES

MARCH

The landmark Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Bill was passed in Scottish Parliament, increasing the powers of investigation and penalties to tackle the ongoing blight of dog attacks on livestock and dog fouling caused through irresponsible access by dog owners. The Bill provides for penalties to extend to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months; to a fine not exceeding £40,000; or both.

APRIL

NFU Scotland's Next Generation Group announced Patrick Barbour as winner of their competition to find Scotland's Climate Friendly Farming Champion. Patrick's short video detailing the steps he and his family have introduced on their farm to help tackle climate change and enhance biodiversity was excellent. This project supported NFU Scotland's wider initiative, 'Champions for Change'.

A snapshot of our regional teams

NFU Scotland represents farmers, crofters and producers from all corners of Scotland. Our ten regional teams continue to work hard to deliver support to members, understand and resolve local issues, and provide a critical channel to ensure input into national policy, lobbying, consultations, meetings and events. Throughout 2021 during lockdown restrictions, and as we emerge out of them, the regional teams have been busier than ever addressing what matters to members. Here is a snapshot of some successes/highlights from the year.

HIGHLAND

After months of successful online meetings, getting back to face-to-face discussions, to chew the fat and have general catch-ups boosted morale among members.

ARGYLL & THE ISLANDS

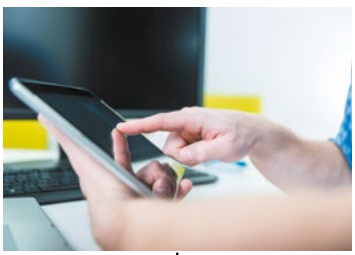
Following the introduction of a new school meal menu, NFU Scotland successfully lobbied Argyll & Bute Council to review the menu and increase the red meat content.

AYRSHIRE

76.66t of waste farm plastics have been recycled in 2021 via our collection scheme with Solway Recycling at Ayr market! It will run again in 2022.

FORTH & CLYDE

The formation of joint commodity meetings with East Central, resulting in a wider audience base and a greater diversity of views has been a positive experience.



DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Increase in stakeholder engagement strengthening climate change discussions and school meal changes. Greater use of technology has allowed more members to engage and share their views.

SHETLAND

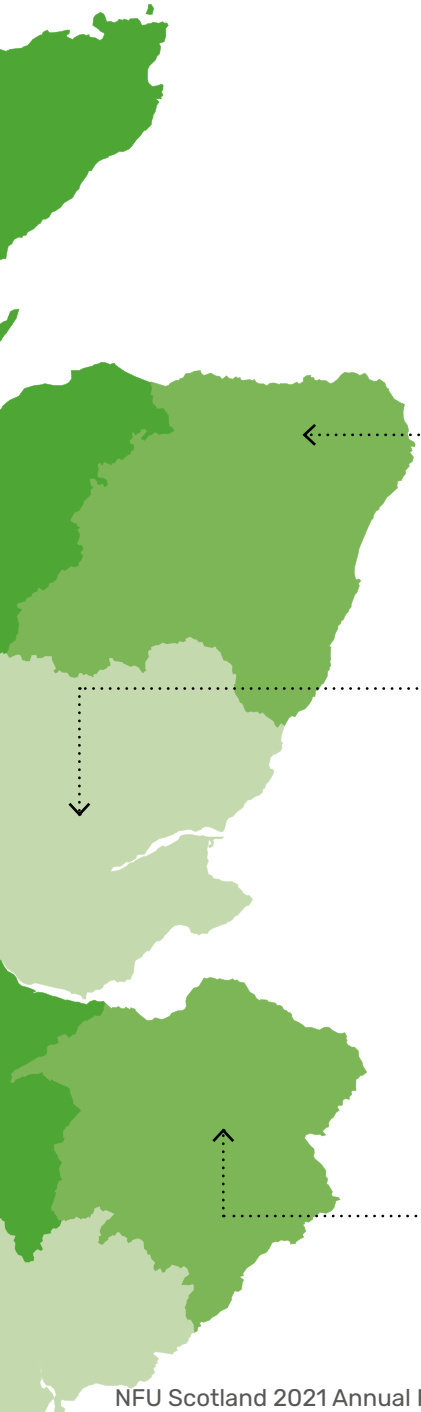
Welcomed Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, on farm and highlighted our high quality, low impact produce.

ORKNEY

We've continued to work closely with local and national stakeholders and politicians to ensure the voices and needs of Orkney's members are heard and met.

NORTH EAST

We've hosted face-to-face mental health, tenancy and land matching events, politician meetings, a Regional Board biodiversity study and an Unsung Hero Award, along with many excellent regional, commodity and branch Zoom events.



EAST CENTRAL

Successfully supported NatureScot to win the Judicial Review and maintain the need for licences to control beavers where there's risk of damage to agricultural land.

LOTHIANS & BORDERS

New Regional Chair, Debbie Playfair, has positively shaken things up. Fantastic MSP engagement. Online meetings have made Zoom pros of those who said they couldn't Zoom.

MAY

Scottish elections took place and saw new faces appointed including Mairi Gougeon, pictured, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, and Màiri McAllan, Minister for the Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform. The Union quickly engaged with them and other newly appointed MSPs across the country.

JUNE

It was nearly a full house for the first face-to-face meeting of NFU Scotland's Board of Directors in 18 months. Despite having met 'virtually' throughout restrictions, it was great to see many new faces at the table - even the sun came out to mark the occasion.

Cattle Movements

The introduction of electronic cattle tags has been a long anticipated development. In October, the first stage of the transition saw a move from the BCMS registration system to ScotEID. Now all cattle movements, births and deaths are recorded onto the new system and there are new Scottish passports being used for all that are newly issued.

A lot of work went into changing the registration system behind the scenes and working with the industry to ensure that abattoirs, marts and on-farm software systems were linked in and working.

Electronic tags themselves have not been introduced but there has been significant progress on development of these and testing on farm. A primary Ultra High Frequency (UHF) tag is anticipated through testing by the end of the year and there are dual frequency tags anticipated through testing in early 2022.

"A lot of work went into changing the registration system behind the scenes and working with the industry to ensure that abattoirs, marts and on-farm software systems were linked in and working"

BEAVERS

The Union supported its members in defending a Judicial Review against NatureScot's approach to beaver licensing. The petitioner, 'Trees for Life' put forward five complaints claiming NatureScot was failing to pay due diligence and proper consideration of licence applications for lethal control of beavers.

Given the importance of the licensing system to our members, not just for beavers but also other species, we engaged

Red Tractor Standards

Following the biggest ever consultation of Red Tractor's standards, the latest versions of the assurance scheme came into force on 1 November.

NFU Scotland representatives worked extremely hard with Red Tractor to ensure that the development of these standards considered the views of the members that were gathered at the start of 2021 as part of the formal consultation process. We recognise that robust farm assurance schemes are vital to the sector's future. The expectations for UK farming standards on food safety, animal welfare, environment and the provenance of foods are rising amongst consumers,

and it is important that all sectors protect their investment. However, it was important that we voiced our concerns that many of the new proposed standards created a requirement for records and bureaucracy rather than looking at outcomes or delivery of the principles and we challenged these robustly when we submitted our consultation response. We also voiced concern that the scheme does not always distinguish between sector standards and legal requirements.

The duplication of legal minimums is unnecessary and has the potential to cause confusion or accidental non-compliance with regulation. There needs to be an emphasis on this going forward to ensure the integrity of the scheme and strengthen the relationship between Red Tractor and the primary producer. Red Tractor is the UK's largest food standards scheme, covering animal welfare, food safety, traceability and environmental protection and its role in supply chains is key from a primary producer point of view.

legal representation to help defend the judicial review. We thank the many members who chose to support the case financially, recognising its importance for all licensing schemes in Scotland.

In October, following the outcome of the review, NFU Scotland welcomed the recognition that, for the most part, the beaver management framework and licensing system is appropriate and proportionate. The framework remains a platform to review, balance and resolve conflicts between the growing population of beavers and land management in a pragmatic and sensible way. The ruling offers confidence for NatureScot in the approach they take in consideration of not just beaver licences but all other licence applications.

SCHOOL MEALS

With Scottish Government changing the Nutritional Guidance for Food and Drink in Schools in April, an increased focus was put on what was being consumed and where it came from. This move limited the consumption of red and processed meat in primary and secondary schools but encouraged local sourcing. Next year we should see the completion of the Universal Free School Meals for primary children, with the extension to higher age groups and the passing of the Good Food Nation Bill. Both will focus attention on eating well and using local produce.

Scottish Local Authorities have shown a strong preference for local sourcing and production and the serving of red meat roughly twice a week, and meals containing meat almost every day (with only some providing a meat free day). We continue to lobby authorities and politicians on the importance of sourcing locally and dispel mistruths about the health benefits of red meat with some notable successes that delivered change in school canteens. We have supported the Lamb Bank, QMS educational team, and RHET initiatives to deliver consistent messaging.

Education and Skills

The NFU Scotland Education and Skills working group outputs this year have focused on the serious need to raise uptake and quality of education and skills content delivery and to emphasise the urgent need for the farming sector to be more proactive in this important policy area. There is a lack of industry input into the education and skills sector, which requires farmers to be more proactively engaged, and develop genuine collaboration between all relevant stakeholders. However, we are making strong inroads, increasing genuine collaboration, government attention and will play an important role in the Land Based Learning Commission.

This year we held Focus Group meetings with members to discuss their views on education and skills, to define qualitative opinion, followed up by a survey of members

to add quantitative information. The report published has been widely read by many relevant stakeholders, and to ensure it is not another report which sits on the shelf, actions based on feedback are ongoing.

"We are making strong inroads, increasing genuine collaboration, government attention and will play an important role in the Land Based Learning Commission"

A major achievement for the Union was the instigation of the National Skills for Farming Group. Chaired by NFU Scotland, it includes all relevant education and skills stakeholders.

Animal Transport

2021 saw consultations on livestock transport, one for England and Wales and one for Scotland. Both proposed a ban on the live export of animals for further finishing or slaughter and it was clear this point was not up for consultation; a decision had been made.

The consultations also looked at 'improving' existing domestic animal transport legislation based on the recommendations made in 2020 by the Farm Animal Welfare Committee. We consulted widely and responded robustly to the proposals, most of which had no base in science, or even common sense, and would have devastating impacts for the industry. Of particular concern were proposals to set external temperature limits for transport, prescribe head heights in vehicles, wind speed restrictions on ferries and changes to journey times, including calves aged below nine months and broiler chickens.

We will continue to work hard with both Defra and Scottish Government in 2022 to drive science-based evidential thinking and common sense in livestock transport to deliver changes that can truly deliver improved animal welfare without destroying the industry.

2021 Policy UPDATES

JULY

Members welcomed Cabinet Ministers, party leaders and local MSPs onto farms to discuss the industry's green credentials and our role in producing fresh, local, tasty and sustainable food and drink, putting farming and crofting at the heart of the rural economy.
In the Southwest, Colin Ferguson welcomed new Labour Leader Anas Sarwar and local MSP Colin Smyth to his family dairy farm.

AUGUST

Scottish broccoli and cauliflower grower Andrew Faichney used a blog post to highlight the costly headline problems growers were facing due to labour, haulage and packaging shortages – along with the usual yearly battle with the weather. Hard hitting reality that resonated across the agricultural sector.

2021 Policy UPDATES

SEPTEMBER

The first of a series of nine on-farm meetings held in the run up to COP26 took place, showcasing the positive steps Scottish farmers and crofters are taking to tackle climate change. In total the events saw us engage with more than 150 local MSPs, MPs and Councillors.

OCTOBER

Members took part in the Autumn conference, our first national event in 20 months. Attendees gathered either online or in person and were indulged with informative presentations and debate covering policy, politics and positive messaging. The success of this blended approach to events is to be rolled out at the Conference and AGM in February 2022.

Land Use and Forestry Expansion

The year has seen the debate around land use intensify, particularly in light of the loss of productive agricultural land to commercial tree planting interests. It is clear there are multiple pressures on agricultural land use, and these are not limited to the often-assumed binary choice between farming and forestry. Nevertheless, and given the complexity of land use choices, if climate change goals and food and drink ambitions are to be met simultaneously, there needs to be a clearly defined approach to woodland expansion and forestry on agricultural land. The role that forestry and farm woodlands play in the fight against climate change needs to be better understood and the complexities acknowledged.

In March, we presented NFU Scotland's clear policy on woodland expansion and forestry and we continue to press for greater safeguards to protect Scotland's limited productive agricultural land from excessive tree planting that threatens the socio-economic fabric of much of rural Scotland.

LAND RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT (LRRS)

In partnership with the Scottish Land Commission, we carried out a farmer review of the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (LRRS). The statement is designed to deliver Scottish Government's vision of a Scotland that has a strong and dynamic relationship between its land and the people, where all land contributes to a modern and successful country, and where rights and responsibilities in relation to land are fully recognised and fulfilled.

After undertaking initial survey work, focus groups were held to allow farmers to feedback their thoughts on the underpinning principles and the self-assessment process. Members were also invited to showcase work they were doing that demonstrated

the underlying principles. A final report was compiled reflecting all feedback which, along with additional work done with the Legal and Technical Committee and wider membership, will be used to inform a response to the Scottish Government consultation response in January 2022.

Climate Change and COP26

The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) took place in Glasgow from 31 October–12 November where delegates gathered to assess the Paris Agreement, a legally binding treaty which pledges to limit global warming.

At the conference, we joined the three other UK farming Unions (NFU, UFU and NFU Cymru) calling for the UK Government and the devolved administrations to make farming part of the solution and to support a sustainable and productive future for agriculture.

We had a stand in the public Green Zone on 'Farming Day' and participated in Blue Zone COP26 events, making several panel appearances as well as hosting a joint event with the French Livestock Association.

One of the most important announcements at COP26 was the Global Methane Pledge when more than 100 countries signed up to an agreement to cut emissions by 30% by the end of the decade.

We responded to this pledge, highlighting that Scottish agriculture is already making positive strides towards meeting its targets, but called for a change to the way methane is measured to ensure full understanding of the impact of ruminants and identification of the steps needed to be taken to reduce the impact of methane in Scotland.

NOVEMBER

Building on the unprecedented feedback from members and following a thorough programme of engagement, the Union submitted its response to the Scottish Government's 'Agricultural Transition' consultation that will inform Scotland's future policy.

DECEMBER

With Scotland's pig producers under pressure – staffing shortages across the whole chain, rising feed costs, faltering prices and loss of the Chinese market – NFU Scotland launched its pork shelf watch campaign in early December to establish which UK retailers were supporting the industry and which were bringing in significant volumes of pigmeat from Europe at a time when British pigs were backing up on farm.

Keeping ahead in the news

NFU Scotland's reputation as the media's 'go to' organisation for comment on Scottish food and farming has grown in the post-Brexit era.

An annual output of 200 news releases and 60 website blogs is bolstered by dozens of weekly requests for interviews and comments.

Such is the demand for our views that we offer media training to all officeholders, board members and staff. That has proved invaluable, giving our representatives the skills and confidence to explain our position when in front of a camera, behind a radio mic or on the end of a phone.

While the lead organisation for farming in Scotland, this year saw NFU Scotland become the focus of attention on a worldwide scale.

NFU Scotland's robust response to the ill-judged Australian trade deal announced in June, bringing unfettered access to UK markets for Australian goods, saw an unprecedented level of demand for interview – not just from the UK, but also Europe, America and Australia.

President Martin Kennedy appeared twice on Australia's leading radio station, while our whole media-trained team fielded requests that included the New York Times, Sky News, BBC News, STV, ITV Borders, Radio Scotland, Reporting Scotland, Radio Four, BBC Politics Live, GMB, Global Radio and UK TV news.

SOCIAL MEDIA BOOSTS KEY MESSAGES

This year has seen social media continue to play an important role in how we communicate directly with our members and Scottish consumers, with engagement across our platforms increasing for a second year in a row. Our Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts have been used to share important industry updates and news from the Union in real time, as well as to run campaigns to raise awareness of key issues such as access (#WalkiesWithoutWorries), and Scottish farming's commitment

to fighting climate change (#FarmingForTheFuture).

The #FarmingForTheFuture campaign ran in the lead-up to COP26 in Glasgow and aimed to highlight what our industry is already doing to meet our emissions targets and that we are ready to face the challenges ahead. The campaign tied together work by the Presidential, Policy and Communications teams, and included a 'Factual Tour of Scottish Agriculture' video that was conceptualised and filmed by President Martin Kennedy. #FarmingForTheFuture received incredible support upon launch from cross-party politicians, other organisations across Scotland's agriculture and food and drink industries, and of course NFU Scotland's membership.