

Champions for Change

As stakeholders representing biodiversity and agriculture, the Scottish Wildlife Trust and NFU Scotland agree that a sustainable agricultural sector and a thriving natural environment can be mutually supportive of one another.

We also agree that policies for agriculture, the rural economy, and climate change and the environment have in the past combined to give conflicting direction. Champions for Change is a collaborative project that demonstrates that there are real champions within the industry who want to see a powerful change of direction from our current system of land management policies.

With the right combination of knowledge-exchange within the agricultural industry, input from environmental experts, and policy direction from the Scottish Government, these changes can start to bring about better outcomes in the face of the urgent action required to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises.

NFU Scotland and the Scottish Wildlife Trust believe that there should be a move to help embed agroecological principles within policy at Scottish Government level. The measures suggested below represent options that could be rolled out by the new Scottish Government and implemented by farmers on the ground. These measures, while not providing the whole solution, are important first steps that the new Scottish Government can take to support farmers and crofters in responding to the climate and biodiversity crises. This is especially important given that the eyes of the world will be on Scotland for COP26 this year.

There is clear demand for many of the measures outlined below. The list of interventions has been compiled on the basis of what is workable on the ground and where case studies exist. Many tie into suggestions made by the Scottish Government's **Farmer-led Groups**.

Supportive environment

To deliver the maximum number of benefits overall and provide the largest benefit to biodiversity, the measures outlined below should link to national priorities and be informed by opportunity mapping.

To provide a just transition, **it will be critical that these measures are supported by appropriately resourced funding and underpinned by a strengthened regulatory baseline.** We believe that these measures will need to be supported by appropriate advice, either through the traditional 'one to many' model or supported by peer-to-peer learning. Regional Land Use Partnerships have the potential to support this delivery when they are developed and rolled out by Scottish Government.

Long-term vision

In the longer term, we believe that there is a need for a full farm review process backed up by a well-resourced advisory service and supported through Regional Land Use Partnerships. The full farm review process would help identify economic, environmental, and social outputs of the unit and the best options to improve outputs across these three areas.

Key opportunities:

- Inclusion of a High Nature Value option covering proposals put forward by the Hill, Upland and Crofting Group options.
- Delivery of co-operative action at scale. This could include linking Ecological Focus Areas to help form ecological networks.



We would like to see the Scottish Government support the following options:

Nitrogen

Activities to improve baseline:

- Measures to improve nitrogen use efficiency
- Measures to reduce emissions
- Measures to increase sequestration (e.g. with nitrogen fixing cover crops)
- Greenhouse gas audits to reduce footprint and inform decision making - this should be linked to full farm review

Nitrogen specific measures:

- Requirement to publish a nitrogen balance sheet
- Introduction of nutrient management plans
- Introduction of compulsory soil testing
- New funding mechanisms to help farmers transition to lower nitrogen input and output

Soil

Soil health

- Soil analysis to help inform full farm review
- New funding mechanisms to help farmers better manage soil health and reduce erosion
- Measures to encourage use of machinery rings to promote reduced or minimum tillage
- Support for spring cropping measures

Peatland

- Support for restoration
- Measures to decrease pressure on a site by site basis, including control of deer

Organic

Support for conversion and maintenance

Invasive Non-Native Species

Support for control and eradication measures

- Technology and machinery
- Group action coordination through Regional Land Use Partnerships

Duty to help stop spread

Natural Flood Management & water quality measures

Coordinated action through Regional Land Use Partnerships

Riparian woodland support

River re-naturalisation support

Support for buffer strips

Fencing grant

Agroforestry & farm woodlands

Ancient woodland preservation and restoration options

Grant funding for agroforestry

Support for shelter/intercropping support

Options for:

- Removing grazing pressure / maintaining woodland scrub/structure
- Hedgerow management or establishment
- Native woodland creation
- Silvopasture