

FAS Business Plan 2023/24

Prepared by:

SAC Consulting
Peter Wilson Building
West Mains Road
Edinburgh
EH9 3JG

Contact:

Chloe McCulloch
Tel: 01292 525316
Email: chloe.mcculloch@sac.co.uk

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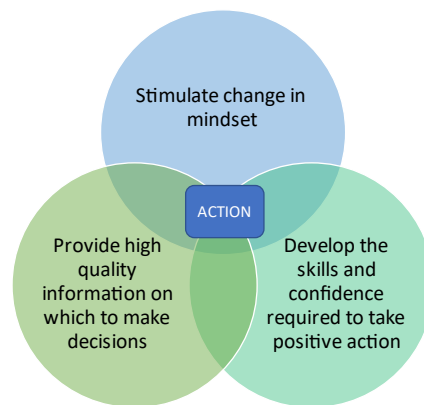
Introduction

In 2022, on commencement of a new contract, the Farm Advisory Service (FAS) was elevated through substantial re-framing to address the current climate and biodiversity crises and invigorated by the use of innovative approaches to maximise engagement and impact. Key to the programme is the continual and consistent reinforcement of the message that climate change and biodiversity are not in opposition to financial growth and sustainability, rather that one is a requisite to the other. This approach has been highly successful in 2022/23 and the programme will build on this success in 2023/24.

Objectives

To achieve substantial biodiversity gains in Scotland, this business plan recognises there is a need to:

- Drive awareness and mindset shift of what biodiversity is, how a range of minor adjustments can be valuable, and that biodiversity is a valuable member of the 'food production team.'
- Raise the level of awareness of national biodiversity priorities amongst farmers, crofters, and land managers through provision of integrated technical advice, information, interactions with NatureScot, and assessing the outcomes of this provision.
- Drive increased practical implementation of integrated land management by farmers, crofters and land managers which will increase positive management of priority habitats and species and contribute to sustainable agriculture.
- Improve understanding and drive adoption by farmers, crofters and land managers of specific practices that deliver public goods, supporting participants through the transition from the EU Common Agricultural Policy, using focus groups and the dissemination of information.



We will provide support and promote action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions per unit of product from farm businesses across Scotland. We will complement successful initiatives including Farming for a Better Climate and Farming & Water Scotland, and help farmers, crofters, and land managers to:

- recognise the contribution made by routine agricultural practices to greenhouse gas emissions and the scale and nature of global climate change.
- identify business benefits through improved resource efficiency, animal welfare and adopting suitable climate change mitigation, including adaptation measures.
- improve business resilience and contribute to thriving resilient rural communities.
- be compliant with related mandatory and good practice standards and recognise the importance of their actions in contributing towards the statutory targets set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.
- increase carbon sequestration on the farm or croft.

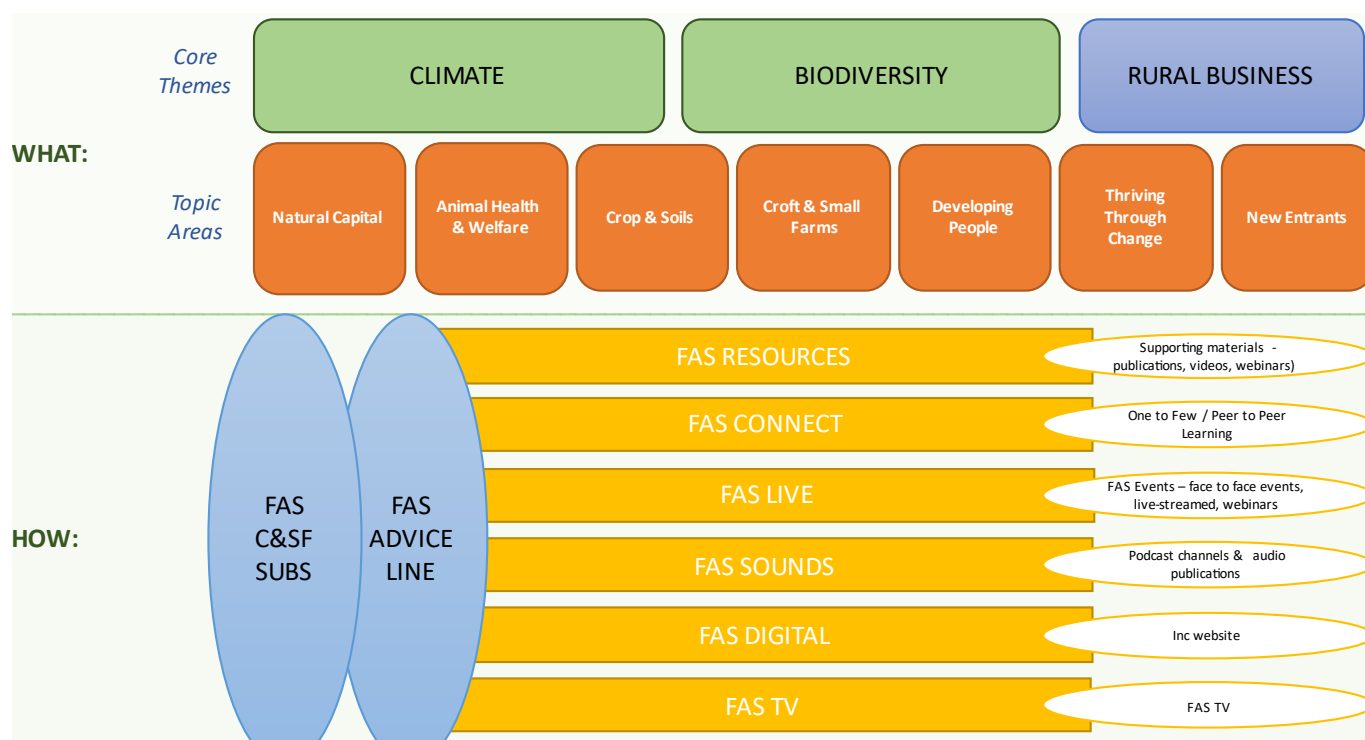
Further areas where we will support the delivery of Scottish Government objectives include:

- Pollution prevention and resource management: working in partnership with the industry and SEPA to deliver advice on cost effective approaches to improve resource efficiency and address pollution and related waste issues.
- Cross-compliance and Greening – support improved performance by increasing understanding of underlying legislation and standards which underpin high quality sustainable food production.

- Woodland planting – advising on integrated, holistically managed farms incorporating woodland, offering a diverse range of benefits including sustainable land use, biodiversity net gain, carbon capture, and building resilience.
- Crop health – fostering greater awareness and uptake of integrated and sustainable crop protection strategies.
- Renewable energy – supporting the adoption of sustainable low-carbon technologies.
- Diversification and agritourism – helping land-based businesses to become price makers, having a closer relationship with end consumers, being part of driving a dynamic diverse agricultural sector where there are broader opportunities for growth.
- Women in agriculture – helping women gain skills to further their roles, influence, and recognition in the agricultural and rural economy.
- Organic farming – supporting the growth, cohesiveness, and profile of organic production.

Approach

The Farm Advisory Service comprises the following elements: National One-to-Many Farm Advisory Service; Crofters and Small Farms Advisory Service; and a National Helpdesk Facility. Our overall proposed approach is summarised below:



The programme is designed to reach and engage the full range of farmers, crofters, and land managers. Intentional variety in delivery method means whatever the location or situation there is a way for participants to interact with the FAS. We will continue to develop technological approaches to the provision of a strong learning journey for all involved, and direct users through the wealth of information available in a way that is accessible and inviting.

With the aim of improving our ability to tailor the promotion, marketing, and impact of different FAS resources, in 2022/23 we modified the way that outputs were categorised, and this continues in 2023/24.

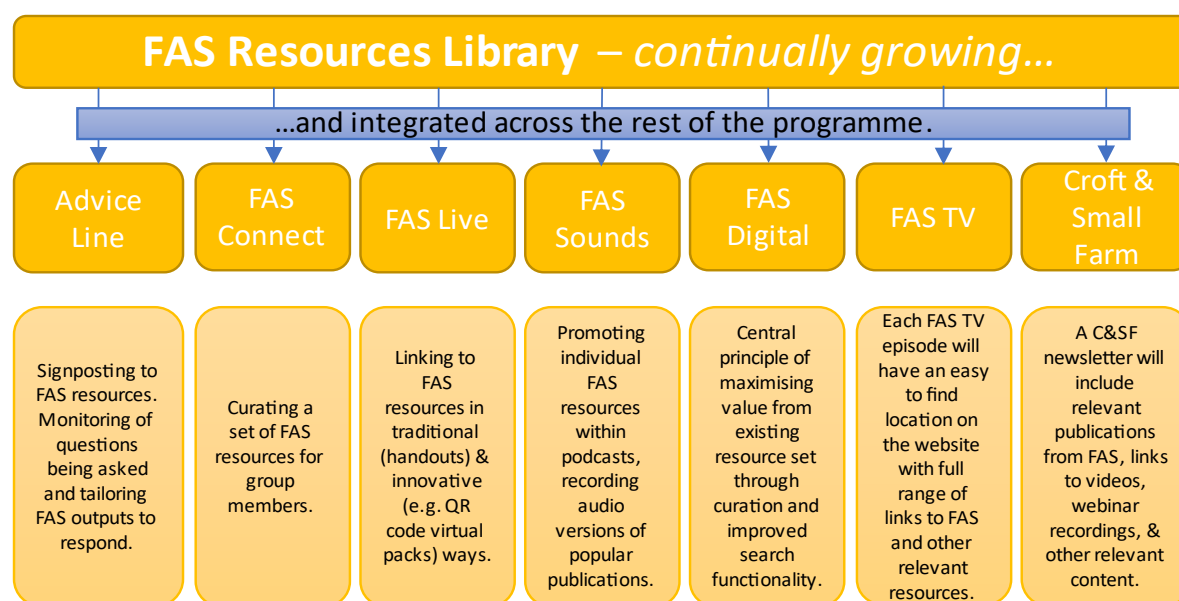
- **FAS Resources** – videos, publications, and webinar recordings
- **FAS Connect** – one-to-few group activities, expanded for 2022–24
- **FAS Live** – large face-to-face events and webinars
- **FAS Sounds** – podcasts and audio versions of popular publications
- **FAS TV** – a regular series of TV-quality programmes
‘for farmers, by farmers.’

These groupings incorporate the requirement to have events, publications, videos, podcasts, and tools, while recognising that there is significant diversity within each of these output types. The groupings support a systematic approach to each type of output, creating clear expectations about the purpose and context in which the audience will use the output.

This approach segments what, from a marketing perspective, is a massive entity into more focused and targetable segments to improve targeting of specific farming, crofting, and land management advice requirements. It will make it easy to direct the target audiences towards the resources they need, and to maximise the accessibility of the service with a clear, digestible structure.

FAS Resources

These comprise a comprehensive range of materials and outputs which provide high quality information on which to make decisions including **publications, videos, tools, and webinars**.



FAS Live

FAS Live is an exciting package of the most widely appealing and impactful face-to-face and webinar events.

FAS Live will include the FAS Roadshow, following the highly successful Farming & Water Scotland model, with attendance at local and national agricultural shows and events on a weekly basis throughout the summer, delivering a carefully curated selection of messages from the FAS programme to crofters, farmers and land managers across Scotland and signposting towards additional resources. A

dedicated events team, together with a local and/or specialist consultants, will provide a consistent, high quality and easily recognisable presence at events.

The programme will include attendance at successful established events including Royal Highland Show, Arable Scotland, Agriscot, Smallholders Festival, Northsheep, and other significant knowledge transfer events in the farming calendar.

FAS Live events will be supported by a dedicated FAS events team who will organise the presence at major shows and events ensuring that all event materials (pop-ups, tents, displays, fliers etc.) are professionally prepared and presented.

Accessibility

Many farmers and crofters can find it difficult to travel to access advice. We also know that dyslexia is disproportionately prevalent in agriculture. We have developed a range of methods to deliver services and engage with individuals based upon their different situations and requirements. We understand that it is vitally important that FAS reaches the whole of the farming community, not just those businesses who are already in the habit of engaging with it.

We will provide a range of access methods which are specifically designed to help participants to engage with the service, including those with dyslexia, those who prefer to access the service non-digitally for technical reasons, or for those with lower levels of digital and/or written literacy. These include reading topical advisory messages every week in the farming publications known to be particularly popular with a less digitally literate audience. This will take the form of specially curated and edited 'easy read' articles.

FAS Activity

Though the programme covers a range of topics, it should be recognised that climate and biodiversity is the primary overarching theme and crosses all topics.

Furthermore, some types of activity (including podcasts) are more successful in reaching and engaging the audience if they are designed as a single coherent and coordinated package. For this reason, FAS TV episodes sit as a distinct package, however they incorporate the normal variety of topic-specific episodes and segments which, formerly, would have been included by topic.

Natural Capital

The Natural Capital topic will help farmers and land managers understand and tackle the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity. The topic focuses on energy efficiency on farms, the integration of trees with farming operations, protection of water quality, biodiversity, peatland restoration, and climate change adaptation.

Objectives:

- Provide outputs to help farmers and land managers consider the integration of woodland and hedges on their holdings and the positive impact these actions could have on their business, ranging from biodiversity and carbon sequestration to biosecurity and pollution reduction.
- Help farmers and land managers protect and enhance water quality through case studies regarding grassland and 3D buffers and riparian planting.
- Raise awareness of peatland restoration for farmers, land managers and crofters and sustainable upland management through a range of on farm or estate meetings. Sustainable upland management encompasses deer management, predator control and options for heather management.
- Promote practical, nature positive solutions farmers and land managers can consider incorporating to boost biodiversity on their holding e.g., creating multi species swards or supporting pollinators.
- Provide resources on how to assess energy use on farms, improve the efficiency with which equipment operates on farm and also help farmers and land managers identify where renewable energy can fit within the overall solution.
- Raise awareness amongst farmers and land managers of the forthcoming biodiversity audits and what this means for their farms.

- A non-biased webpage hosting information and various FAS resources on re-wilding
- Co-operation with other topics such as Thriving Through Change timely articles to cover any updates to grants and audits for Natural Capital that occur throughout the FAS Year and working with the FAS TV and Sounds teams to integrate Natural Capital Messages into all streams of FAS.

Highlights:

- **Peatland Restoration:** series of three in person events and supporting publications to raise awareness of peatland restoration, the benefits for the farm landscape and the funding streams available.
- **Sustainable Upland Management:** on-estate meetings that include input from a designated host and three presentations on deer management, predator control and options for heather management (muirburn and swiping).
- **Energy Efficiency and Renewables:** webinar, video and publications around identifying the greatest resources of energy use on farm and improving efficiency. This will dovetail with a renewables project as for some high energy using farms, renewables may be part of the solution. Creation of a FAQ tool for the FAS website that will cover the most commonly asked questions coming through the FAS Advice Line. Creation of a new practical guide on energy storage as well as a series of four meetings across Scotland that will aim to equip farmers with information to consider on farm renewables but also how to identify a good renewables opportunity if approached by an external company.
- **Forestry Integration and Farm Woodland News:** video and publications on the right tree in the right place showcasing farms who are excellent examples of the integration of trees within other farming enterprises. The Farm Woodland News publication will continue but in the format of a quarterly email newsletter rather than bi-annual print publication. This will allow more regular communication with farmers and small-woodland owners on topics such as managing and creating woodlands, grant schemes and the timber market and other topical content.
- **Rewilding:** non-biased webpage hosting information about rewilding. The webpage will host features on different habitats and species and opportunities, threats, and advice to farmers as concepts around rewilding

are gaining more prominence. The first feature is to be on beavers with publications, case studies, and podcasts with stakeholders.

- **National Priority Species:** continuation of the National Priority Species highlighted on the FAS website covering Brown Hare, Chough, Saltmarsh and Machair.
- **Biodiversity Audit Training:** on farm training, a video and publications raising awareness with farmers of the forthcoming Biodiversity Audit, importance of baselining biodiversity and recognising and mapping habitats on farm.
- **Farm Wildlife Walks and Grazing for Profit and Biodiversity Farm Events:** on farm events looking at the incorporation of nature positive solutions to existing farming practices with emphasis on how these can boost productivity and biodiversity. The grazing meetings will specifically look at herbal leys; high clover leys and mob, deferred and rotational grazing.
- **Hedges and Hedgerow Carbon Code:** content on the options for hedgerow creation and management, accompanied by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, who will discuss the proposed new hedgerow carbon code.
- **Bees for Biodiversity:** in person events to discuss the role of beekeeping within the wider biodiversity story and assist farmers, crofters, and smallholders with responsible beekeeping.
- **Goose Management:** delivery of broad information on goose management particularly the challenges of feeding/scaring/killing greylags and pink feet on farmland.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain and Emerging Markets:** recent years have seen the development of environmental markets but it is a topic area that farmers are finding it difficult to understand. The project will provide videos and publications to break this topic down into segments that are digestible by farmers, covering routes into these markets and key information about their regulation and monitoring.
- **Converting the Farm to Organic:** five case studies following one farmer in Stranraer as he converts his farm to organic.
- **FAS Sounds Outputs:** continuing the successful podcast series *Thrill of the Hill* and *Natural Capital*, a further twelve episodes of each will be produced.

Animal Health & Welfare

The Animal Health & Welfare topic will promote best practice that supports higher farmed animal health and welfare standards, thereby enhancing the productivity and integrity of Scottish livestock production and its brands and improving awareness and uptake of measures to support Scottish climate and biodiversity goals.

Highlights:

- **Disease Campaign VLOGS:** these use farmers and vets to disseminate information on various diseases that crop up at key times in the year or are being seen in new areas. This will include cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry.
- **Health Planning Workshops:** this project pilots a series of one-to-few workshops with farmers and vets, to help businesses understand the benefits of health planning, and how to create effective health plans.
- **Mineral Supplementation Webinars:** series of webinars with supporting technical publications providing advice about the mineral requirements for beef cattle and sheep throughout the four seasons.
- **Minimising Dry Matter Losses in Silage:** resources for farmers, geared particularly towards dairy producers, support high quality silage production.
- **Calving Heifers VLOG Series:** as more suckler herds undertake carbon audits as part of the drive to reduce emissions from beef production, a common recommendation is to calve heifers at 24 months of age. This package is a follow up of the 2022/23 series where we go back to the three focus-farmers to take a look at the first weaning and return-in-calf rates from their heifers which calved at 2, 2.5 or 3 years of age.
- **Livestock Farming Resilience VLOGS:** package of VLOGS and technical videos following three farmers who are building resilience in their livestock system, particularly to cope with climate change and/or drought.
- **Simplifying Systems:** on-farm event (with accompanying video and publication) examining the potential to reduce labour requirement and improve animal welfare through better and more efficient livestock handling systems.
- **Sustainable Sheep Systems:** continuation of the successful 2021 and 2022 project which will be further developed to incorporate the recent survey feedback from over five hundred previous participants. This

includes opportunity for participants to meet up in-person, and technical subjects which will support businesses becoming more efficient and sustainable whilst reducing the enterprise carbon footprint.

- **Sustainable Beef Systems:** modelled on the highly sustainable system package 'Sustainable Sheep Systems' this project will provide advice on a range of subjects to help beef enterprises becoming more efficient and sustainable, including grass utilisation, outwinter, health & parasites, fertility, and rearing.
- **Technical Note – Livestock Building Lighting:** a gap in the existing Technical Note provision, this publication will provide readers with current best practice in livestock building lighting for improved welfare and productivity.
- **Animal Health & Welfare Technical Toolkits:** set of practical 'how-to' guides providing the technical information necessary to implement those practices where gaps in knowledge exist, either through developments in the advice, or supporting new practices where a bank of information does not already exist.
- **Vet Update Videos:** regular video updates featuring SAC/SRUC vets provide timely, targeted advice to farmers and crofters based on what disease surveillance centres are seeing.
- **FAS Sounds Outputs:** continuation of the successful podcast series *StockTalk* a further twelve episodes will be produced.

Topic Lead: Hazel Laughton

hazel.laughton@sac.co.uk

Crop & Soils

The Crop & Soils topic will advise conventional and organic farmers and crofters across Scotland on all aspects of crop and soil health and productivity. Each event, podcast, FAS connect group, video and publication will weave the crop and soils objectives throughout the programme content, challenging farmers, and crofters to adapt their farming systems to changing climates, market volatility and consumer needs.

Across the Farm Advisory Service farmers and crofters will have access to a network of like-minded individuals, researchers, consultants, and professionals to support them in running profitable and resilient businesses which put soils and our natural resources at the centre of what they do whilst providing high quality food.

The crops and soils programme for 2023 will see a continuation of popular events such as Arable Scotland, the winter arable roadshows and crop trials nights. It will expand on the successes of the grassland productivity series, nutrient management workshops, FAS sounds Cropcast and case studies on reducing tillage and lowering emissions delivered in 2022 to different areas of Scotland, whilst new projects will concentrate on our management and protection of natural resources, provide best practice on incorporating species such as legumes and herbs into our farming systems.

It will create a monthly crop and soils bulletin as a go-to publication encompassing topical advice, research and technical articles, and best practice guidance across crops and soils.

Soils, crop productivity and our environment have an interdependent relationship and we will promote this connection as the core theme across the crops and soils programme.

Objectives:

- Promote best practice for management of our soils, environment, natural resources, diversity, and crops in Scotland.
- Share and encourage the practical application of research and innovations within industry.
- Provide farmers with the knowledge and confidence to make strategic business decisions.
- Support farmers and crofters on their journey to Net-Zero.
- Encourage technical efficiency to improve sustainability and profitability and reduce emissions.

Highlights:

- **Crop and Soils Bulletin:** monthly magazine released through the growing season (Feb–Oct inc.) covering a range of topical and timely issues across the industry relating to soils, combinable crops, organic farming, grassland and forage, crop nutrition, legislative developments, environment, and research. Timely, relevant extracts from the bulletin will also be released individually through social media and farming press.
- **Crop Trials Technical Night:** two events held at the SRUC crop trials sites in Lanarkshire and Lothians. These evenings provide farmers with direct access to the research which underpins industry and their decision

making. A webinar will be held later in the year which summarises the trial results and provides recommendations for the following year.

- **Nutrient Management Workshops:** series of practical workshops, building on the events run in 2022 which will assist farmers with understanding the principles of a nutrient management plan and how this process can help them make better decisions around their timing and use of fertiliser and manures which will help ensure sustainable crop production and business profitability. These workshops will help farmers and growers to adapt their use of manures and fertilisers to make them less vulnerable to the extreme market volatility, driving profitability and sustainability without compromising production.
- **Arable Scotland:** in partnership with AHDB and the James Hutton Institute the Arable Scotland event will show case the research and commercial innovations that will help the arable industry transition to net-zero and combine productivity with more-regenerative farming systems that benefit biodiversity and other environmental impacts. A series of videos will provide insight into the trials and innovations which form part of the Arable Scotland event and to spotlight the key messages from the Arable conversations section of the day. This helps share research and innovations further than to just those attending the event.
- **FAS Arable Roadshow:** in partnership with AHDB, two events providing technical updates on integrated pest management, soil health, markets, plant variety choices and research. These popular, long running events are key dates in the arable diary providing valuable information and networking opportunities to farmers and industry in Scotland.
- **Technical Notes:** technical notes are reviewed annually with those requiring updates due to new research data or changing legislation updated or a new note prepared where there is an identified need. Technical notes provide the basis for nutrient recommendations in Scotland and are tailored to our soils, climate, and market outlets.
- **Legumes in Rotations:** the benefits of legumes and multi species crops to soil health, nitrogen fixation and animal performance are well proven, but establishment and management can be tricky. A series of videos and guides will help provide guidelines on successfully establishing crops and the subsequent management for grazing and harvesting.
- **Profiting from Reducing Tillage and Lowering Emissions: North:** building on the successful series of videos, case studies and event run in the Borders in 2022 this event will be replicated in the north of Scotland. The

videos and case studies will examine the systems of local farmers reducing reduced tillage and alternative methods of sowing for the benefit to soil health, carbon storage and reduced emissions, linking with findings from the Farming for a Better Climate Soil Regenerative Agriculture group. The videos and case studies will be followed by a farmer event with a panel of farmers and experts on hand to discuss where these practices can be applied to crop rotations in the north of Scotland.

- **Grassland Series – Managing Rushes:** rushes are a challenge to almost all grassland farmers, reducing the productivity of grasslands and harbouring parasites such as ticks and fluke. A series of videos will chart the success of various methods of controlling rushes over the course of the year providing best practice advice on timing, application rates, and control methods for these prolific spreaders.
- **Managing Natural Resources:** 2022 has seen significant challenges with climatic weather, volatile markets and regulatory changes affecting how we manage our natural resources. Working in conjunction with relevant industry bodies a series of local meetings, videos and publications will pivot to deliver the guidance relevant to that area, including water scarcity, slurry storage or soil erosion.
- **Crop Update Videos:** these regular videos provide timely, targeted advice from specialists including SRUC's Professor Fiona Burnett, on arable and crop matters including spraying and agronomy advice, irrigation, and disease control.
- **FAS Sounds Outputs:** continuation of the highly successful podcast series *CropCast* a further 12 episodes will be produced.

Topic Lead: Lorna Galloway

lorna.galloway@sac.co.uk

Croft & Small Farms

The Croft & Small Farm topic aims to support crofters' and smallholders' ability to increase biodiversity, protect natural resources and the crofting landscape, meet crofting regulatory requirements, and enhance crofting businesses.

Building on previous FAS activities, the output for 2022 concentrates on Common Grazings, biodiversity, and croft succession. Working in conjunction with the Crofting Commission, face to face events will increase knowledge of governance of Common Grazings, helping committees to stay in office, and encouraging new CG into office. Succession planning and encouraging use of

abandoned croftland will be encouraged by meetings, publications, and videos. Crofting discussion groups, with face to face meetings aim to help crofters to reconnect and see business improvements first hand. Meetings to encourage cattle keeping, with biodiversity, net zero, agroforestry, business and health messages will be run in three locations across the crofting counties.

Complementary events delivered under other FAS topics will provide a broader suite of subjects, including bee keeping for smallholders, the Smallholder Festival, help for CG clerks, peatland restoration and stock-care workshops.

Objectives:

- Encouragement of correct financial governance of Common Grazings.
- Halting biodiversity decline by encouraging small scale cattle keeping.
- Inspire and support crofters from a common grazing to form a committee and appoint a clerk.
- Increasing understanding and use of CC processes.
- Encouraging succession planning and the transfer of crofts.
- A mix of media to ensure information is accessible to all.

Highlights:

- **Common Grazing Finance Management:** series of in-person meetings, in conjunction with the Crofting Commission, to encourage Common Grazings by explaining financial regulations to operate within the law.
- **Crofting Discussion Group:** recruitment for FAS Connect highlighted there was demand for a lighter 'discussion group' style of peer-to-peer learning in the crofting areas, provided by this project.
- **Common Grazings Development Opportunities:** these cover peatland, forestry, renewables, and crofting grants and support available.
- **Succession Planning:** succession is a sensitive subject for any family to tackle, however it is made more complex in crofting areas because of the legislative requirements and traditional advice normally does not take this into account. This campaign will provide an informative 'crofter slant' on succession.
- **Small-scale Poultry Keeping:** poultry on crofts and small farms have grown dramatically but opportunities to learn how to manage birds, health

issues (such as bird flu), housing and feed is too-often limited to 'google searches'. This series will cover all aspects of poultry keeping in a croft or smallholding environment.

- **Crofter Woodland Toolkit:** historically, FAS has created a wide range of materials and resources which, although not created with crofters in mind, are nevertheless highly relevant to crofters seeking advice about creating woodland. This toolkit will bring together these, and other relevant materials (including those of the Integrated Trees Network) into an easily accessible resource for promotion to the crofting community.
- **FAS Sounds Outputs:** continuation of the successful podcast series *Crofting Matters* a further six full-length episodes will be produced.

Topic Lead: Siobhan Macdonald

siobhan.macdonald@sac.co.uk

Developing People

The Developing People topic will continue to run Women in Agriculture (WIA) groups across Scotland, and events focussing on farmer resilience and personal development. The topic aims to develop personal skills that empower farmers and crofters to make confident decisions, communicate effectively, and understand their skills and business to drive it forward.

The WIA topic continues the work done since 2017 through FAS, by providing women only workshops and networking events across Scotland. This year the Borders group will trial a "suitable for women" approach, rather than having a group exclusively for women, to trial whether the WIA groups have increased the confidence of women in this region to attend mixed events. There will be an online only group this year, available to all women regardless of location.

Mary-Jane Lawrie is collaborating increasingly closely with the Women in Agriculture Scotland committee (<https://womeninagriculturescotland.com/>) to share and promote activities to benefit women across Scotland. There will also be a larger WIA conference in a central location with the themes of confidence building, diversity and inclusion, and to focus on the importance of networking.

Objectives:

- Build the confidence of women in agriculture and create opportunities to develop and learn new skills in a women only environment.

- Continue to facilitate the Women in Agriculture Facebook group which has been a successful online forum for open discussion, networking, and education.
- Help farmers and crofters prepare for the future, build resilience, and overcome challenges.
- Help farmer and crofters more effectively manage employees.
- Provide young farmers and crofters with some of the skills they need to improve their employability.
- Aid farmers understanding of digital programmes that will improve record keeping and aid confident decision making.

Highlights:

- **Women in Agriculture 'Traditional' Groups:** in 2023/24 there will be a continuation of the successful WIA groups Lothian, Orkney, Ayrshire, Caithness, Wester Ross, Invernesshire, Perthshire, Balivanich, Argyll, Wigtownshire, and Morayshire.
- **Women in Agriculture 'Digital' Group:** online WIA group which will provide support to those women in areas which do not host an in-person WIA group, or for those whose preferred route to accessing WIA is through webinars rather than in-person.
- **Women in Agriculture Conference:** one-day conference, with key-note speakers and selection of break-out sessions on self-development and other widely relevant topics.
- **Employing People Toolkit:** this was a previously successful project and activity in 2023/24 will fill gaps in the toolkit identified from the most common employing people queries that the FAS Advice Line have received.
- **FAS Sounds Outputs:** continuation of the highly successful podcast series *Agri Culture* a further 12 episodes will be produced.

Topic Lead: Mary-Jane Lawrie

mary-jane.lawrie@sac.co.uk

Thriving Through Change

This topic encompasses content which supports farmers, crofters and land managers in business resilience, organic farming practices and techniques, technology, farm business management, and diversification.

Objectives:

- Organic farming, current technical challenges in conversion and maintenance and introduction to agroecological farming systems for wider use across farm businesses.
- Farm business resilience (including financial).
- Use of technology and data gathering to support business resilience.
- Introduction and support for new diversification opportunities and how they can help build business resilience.

Highlights:

- **NE Organic Discussion Group:** continuation of the successful NE Organic Discussion Group with a range of on-farm/in-person visits and another of the very popular 'organic farm tours'.
- **Organic Conversion:** package providing a series of guides to converting to organic, hearing from a variety of certification bodies, farmers, and other experts. It will also see a refresh of the organic section of the website to provide enhanced signposting to wide range of relevant materials produced by FAS, and applicable external resources.
- **Agribusiness News:** essential independent monthly e-publication and online datasets on outlook and business issues for key commodities and enterprises, tailored to the needs of Scottish agriculture.
- **Deer Farming:** a spin-off from the FAS Connect deer farming group in 2022/23 since it became apparent that the demand was for a wider package of deer farming events suitable for a larger audience and with a good range of specialist speakers (rather than the much smaller, peer-to-peer learning style of FAS Connect).
- **Milk Manager News:** bi-monthly dairy industry technical and business newsletter. This provides dairy information tailored to match Scottish conditions and convey relevant wider FAS messages to the dairy sector. The Scottish dairy sector has strong ambitions for the future to increase production by 50% to 1.6Bn litres by 2025 based on the Scottish Dairy Review Ambition 2025 plan. Achieving this stretching target while also protecting the environment and enhancing animal health and welfare will require an increased pace of technical and management improvement on farm. This will help the Scottish dairy industry meet its ambitious growth targets while meeting wider public good requirements. Practical technical

and business solutions and examples will be highlighted building on the focus of the wider FAS topics.

- **Farm Management Handbook 2023/24:** the Farm Management Handbook is one of the main business reference texts for Scottish agriculture and provides the information necessary for farmers to build budgets for enterprises on farm. The project involves input from a wide range of specialist contributors.
- **FAS Whole Farm Benchmarks:** data from the Scottish Farm Business Survey latest crop year results is collated into group averages for the common farming types in Scotland. The figures allow farming businesses to compare their management accounts data with farms of a similar size and type to their own.
- **Timely Responses to Topical Challenges:** farming is currently facing a distinct period of change and opportunity – changing Government priorities, changing markets and trade and the climate crisis are just a few of the ever evolving challenges that farmers currently face. This project is the means by which we can inform and support farmers facing these challenges and maintain up to date resources and help.
- **Performance Recording Livestock:** performance recording can deliver valuable data to the farm business and even a very simple system can give farm businesses insights about where to intervene and focus efforts on driving herd or flock efficiency.
- **Holistic Management of Resources:** embracing the complexity of managing a business for the three pillars of sustainability. This projects explains what it is, how it applies to farming businesses, a guide and methodology, and support in how to apply it.
- **Diversification:** project exploring the opportunities for farm business to add revenue and community benefit through diversification, with a particular focus on those which require minimal capital investment.
- **Virtual Fencing Implementation:** in 2022/23 FAS activities about virtual fencing focussed on the benefits and in 2023/24 we move into demonstrating how to implement the technology successfully by following a farm beginning the journey.
- **Rural Roundup Videos:** these regular videos provide timely guidance and advice to farmers and crofters relating to current affairs, including grant schemes, regulations, rural payments, local support, and other topical matters from across industry.

- **FAS Sounds Outputs:** continuation of the highly successful podcast series *Rural Roundup* a further 24 episodes will be produced, in addition to 12 episodes of Agribusiness News Audio.

Topic Lead: Sascha Grierson

sascha.grierson@sac.co.uk

New Entrants

FAS can develop a new generation of talented, skilled, dynamic individuals to take Scottish agriculture forward into a new chapter with a fresh outlook on some of the many challenges the industry faces currently and in the future.

FAS has provided a platform to unite new entrants from across the country to share their experiences, learn from others that have walked the same path, inspired some to change paths, and provided them with the knowledge and skills to build a solid and successful agricultural business.

New Entrants want to hear from others that have been in similar circumstances to themselves, to give them an insight into some of the challenges they may face and to visualise success. They also want to expand their knowledge and skills in a range of topics that will help them build strong and resilient agricultural businesses.

Since 2016 the suite of materials available for new entrants has been expanded and enhanced and this work will continue.

Objectives:

- Develop and enhance the one-to-many New Entrant support.
- Facilitate social cohesion between new entrants/next generation and prospective new entrants and encourage peer-to-peer knowledge transfer.
- Share first-hand examples of the many different routes prospective new entrants may take to enter the industry from those who are existing new entrants/next generation.
- Engage with other stakeholders e.g., NFU Next Generation, SAYFC, SLMS, Lantra, and FONE who are also collaborating with new entrants/next generation

Highlights:

- **New Entrants News:** biannual newsletter for new entrants highlighting the suite of resources available, opportunities, and success stories from fellow new entrants.
- **Regional New Entrants Groups:** three regional new entrants groups will be set up with one in the North West (previously the Caithness local group), another in the North East (a merger of the Morayshire and Aberdeenshire local groups) and finally in the South West (previously the Ayrshire local group).

Moving to regional delivery will facilitate more peer-to-peer knowledge transfer and social cohesion with new entrants and prospective new entrants who are all facing similar barriers to success. This method of delivery will enable greater level of innovation too.

Facilitation of these groups is by local consultants in the delivery region, who will use their knowledge of local agriculture, and awareness of local and national issues to create a programme of workshops throughout the year through their excellent portfolio of contacts and enthusiasm for new blood into agriculture.

Each group will run two face-to-face meetings on business and technical topics that are pertinent to the local area and needs of the group members. However, these could include business planning, climate change, farm natural capital, obtaining finance, diversification and benchmarking business and technical performance.

- **Updating Funding Sources for New Entrants Resources:** responding to the most common enquiry from new entrants i.e. what funding and support is available to them? A variety of resources already exist about finance for New Entrants and this project will ensure these are up-to-date and ready for re-release.
- **Getting Off the Mark with Your Tenancy Application:** competition for tenancies is fierce and often the application window is quite narrow. This project will provide new entrants/next generation with the skills and tools required for a successful tenancy application, so they are prepared when the opportunity to apply arises. A panel of new entrants/next generation with tenancies from private and public landlords will share their personal experience alongside a range of industry experts on business planning, finance, and diversification. Feedback from industry on similar past projects has been that having new entrants host such events is hugely

beneficial as they are inspirational and the audience can learn a lot from them.

Inspirational Case Studies: the case studies in paper and latterly video form have been a huge success by showcasing real life experiences of new entrants on how they gained a foothold in the industry across a range of backgrounds and business types. The case studies have represented differing routes into farming such as FCS/FLS starter farms, succession, gaining a tenancy, renting seasonal land, sub-letting crofts and joint ventures including share or contract farming. Others have focused on the diversification projects that many next generation new entrants have developed to allow them to work on the family farm. On average these case studies have been viewed 562 times on the FAS YouTube channel, with some having been viewed over 1,800 times to date. Feedback from new entrants and industry on these case studies has been excellent. The 2023/24 case studies will be guided by the FONE group suggestions but will cover a range of owners, tenants, joint ventures, and crofters across Scotland and covering a good mix of enterprises.

- **Farm Apprenticeship Videos:** series of videos which showcase the Ringlink pre-apprenticeship scheme as a route into industry for New Entrants, including inspiring stories of how graduates of the scheme have progressed their careers.
- **Upskilling Young Farmers:** these stock care workshops were inspired by a vet practice who ran a limited number of highly popular and valuable on-farm workshops for a young-farmers club focusing on how to use wormers/pour-ons, calibrating dosing equipment, milking routine/mastitis, lambing/calving technique, lameness/mobility scoring/foot trimming sheep, using handling equipment etc. This project will take this concept and trial the application of this type of advisory method and will upskill young or new entrant farmers.

Topic Lead: Laura Henderson

laura.henderson@sac.co.uk

FAS Connect

This is the already incredibly popular and successful peer-to-peer (one-to-few) learning vehicle for the FAS, launched in 2022/23. It provides safe spaces to explore new ideas and facilitated peer to peer learning through visits, events and meetings, and – crucially – the ongoing facilitated discussion in between times. It

allows for regional challenges to be addressed in an agile manner and has proved to be a powerful device. This type of activity, coupled with a strong resource set and the steady drip of 'mindset change' activities, will result in an increased rate of uptake of actions by individuals.

To maximise engagement and uptake there must be 'something for everyone' and FAS provides a variety of group types. The likelihood of group participation leading to tangible actions is greatly increased if participants are in the *right* group – one which will motivate and interest them, challenge them, and which comprises their peers. Therefore, FAS Connect launched with an open 'recruitment' process where the concept was promoted and individuals were asked to sign up with details of their area of interest and location, from which groups naturally emerged.

FAS Connect groups are farmer/crofter-led, meet multiple times and with flexibility to tailor content to their individual issues, within the wider context of the group. Participants are encouraged to trial new measures or techniques and share their findings with the group, supporting learning by doing and peer to peer knowledge exchange based on practical on farm actions and experiences. All group participants are encouraged to undertake a carbon audit as standard.

2022/23 saw the inception of forty groups covering the whole of Scotland and covering a variety of topics. The uptake and enthusiasm for these groups has been exceptional, with the majority of groups and participants seeking to continue into 2023/24. Continuation in Year 2 allows for the consolidation of the first year and it is anticipated it will see groups narrow down their focus and give scope to revisit changes or trials undertaken by group members in Year 1. Additional new groups will be added to the programme, all driven by participant demand in a particular area (including in some instances where farmers have approached FAS with a list of names who wish to form a group).

Groups will continue to be able to participate in facilitated learning journeys or 'study trips' to other areas of the UK to investigate best practice in a variety of topics. Excursions such as this allow participants to fully immerse themselves in the learning experience as well as increasing the rate at which networks and trusted relationships are developed, which in turn improve the effectiveness of the group.

The groups can be described in terms of the following broad topics, however their farmer led nature results in cross-over between subject matter. This allows groups to develop and evolve, taking a holistic approach.

- **Sustainable Livestock:** these cover beef, dairy and sheep. These groups bring together forward thinking and progressive livestock farmers who are actively open to change and adaptation to improve the sustainability of their businesses in an increasingly challenging environment. Efficiency measures, which go hand-in-hand with reducing emissions, have and are likely to continue to be front and centre of these groups. Those who have not already completed a carbon audit will be encouraged to do so.
- **Natural Capital & Net Zero:** these are broadly based around the successful Net Zero Arran group, a forerunner of FAS Connect. They use areas highlighted in their carbon audit as opportunities for improvement as the main focus of discussion, but biodiversity and habitat improvement is also a common theme.
- **Crop & Soils:** these continue the activities of those groups formed under the Soil & Nutrient Network, but with an increasingly holistic approach to crop production. They focus on a range of arable and grassland situations in order to make the best use of inputs and maintain and improve soil condition. Specific topics range from group to group – in some areas these are highly arable focussed, whilst on others there is a significant grassland-emphasis.
- **Crofting & Islands** – this includes a range of relevant group types including one for common grazing clerks from across the crofting counties who come together for support on unique challenges that they face. There are also several distinct island groups which includes an Islay group with a common challenge of growing barley for distilleries, and Tiree & Coll where biodiversity and habitat management for corncrakes is a focus.

All group members (approximately 550) will be invited to a **FAS Connect Conference** in early 2024. There will be a range of subject matter on the day, with the option to choose from a variety of stations. These topics will be a deep dive into specialist areas such as regenerative farming, carbon, and personal development with several types of speaker – researchers, consultants, specialists, and farmers and crofters. This will be an opportunity for the various groups to mix and learn about the other activities/subjects being discussed across the programme, and materials generated from the groups (including excerpts from end of year summary reports) will be on display to inform and spark ideas. Even though not all group members are likely to attend, those who do will be able to feedback useful information and ideas to their local group.

Videographers will be on hand to capture footage of the day which will be used to promote FAS Connect to the wider community, increasing the impact of the programme as well as promoting the benefits for prospective future members.

FAS Connect Lead: Jennifer Struthers

Jennifer.struthers@sac.co.uk

FAS Sounds

FAS Sounds took the original FAS podcast offer, created during the FAS 2016 – 2021 programme and split it into several targeted feeds and a distinctive range of shows. This dividing of the feed allows us to better categorise and target our audio content making it easier for users to find through search, and more amenable to search engine optimisation (SEO).

The targeted feeds are structured around a three-tier delivery structure, with content being released:

1. Periodical round-up style.
2. Periodical in-depth.
3. Standalone series' form.

FAS Sounds podcasts will continue to deliver high quality advice to meet future challenges on a very regular basis. Standalone series will put greater focus on themes and topics that can elevate new ideas and inspire innovation, and new ways of working.

The ability to access not only one-off advisory episodes, and best practice case studies from their peers in industry, FAS Sounds also presents us with the opportunity to provide regular written publication in audio format. Whether Agribusiness News, or other periodicals, this allows more people to access these resources, audio formats remove barriers caused by any literacy issues, dyslexia, and supports those with accessibility issues, such as a visual or learning impairment.

FAS Sounds Producer: Kerry Hammond

Kerry.hammond@sac.co.uk

FAS TV

FAS TV is now an establish, industry leading peer-to-peer knowledge exchange platform which is unique in the rural sector. It showcases farming and crofting businesses, technological innovations, best practice, animal health & welfare, environmental stewardship, climate change, biodiversity, and more in a format which recreates the farm visit and has allowed viewers to visit a large and diverse range of farms and crofts from the comfort of their own home or office. It has

been a hugely successful and popular output since its inception and this regular programme attracts extremely large numbers of viewers.

Moving forward with FAS TV, we will continue to have a strong geographical spread of segments across Scotland and in the next series, we will continue to have regular farmers and crofters who we follow throughout the year to highlight all aspects of the farming calendar.

Future episodes of FAS TV will link even more closely with other parts of the FAS programme to strengthen links with key topic areas, ensuring that we are covering topics that are relevant to our viewership.

FAS TV:

- Provides peer to peer learning through digital media.
- Reduces social isolation and geographical challenges of participating in farm visits.
- Encourages farmers and crofters to engage in new ideas and innovations for their businesses.
- Promotes best practice in Scottish Agriculture and Crofting.
- Encourages farmers and crofters to promote themselves and their businesses.
- Transfers strategic developments to industry in a farmer-friendly way.

FAS TV Producers: Cara Campbell & Calum Johnston

Cara.campbell@sac.co.uk

Calum.johnston@sac.co.uk

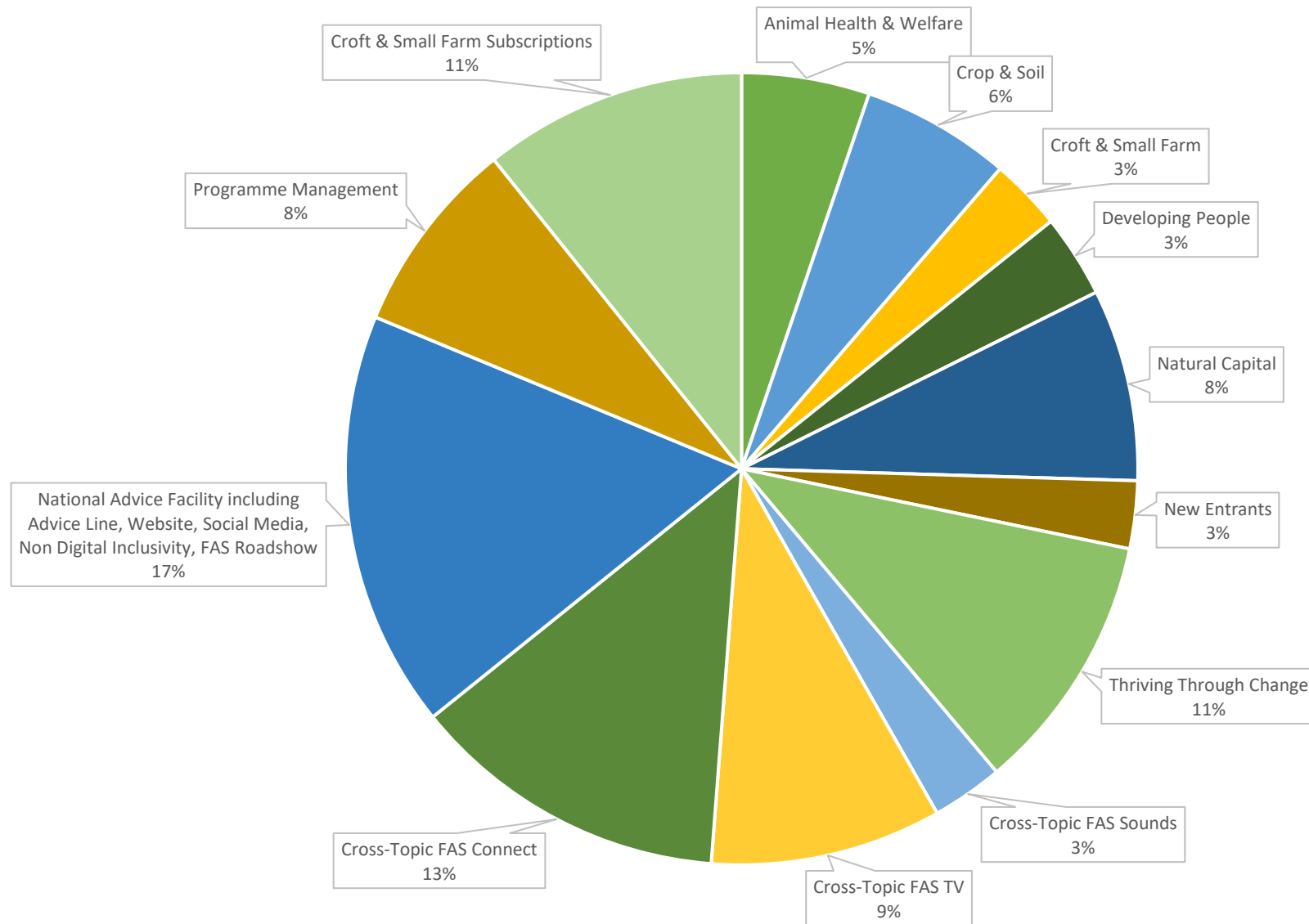
Table 1 – Outputs by Programme Area

| | FAS Connect Group Events | In person events | Webinars | Publications | Videos | Podcasts & Audio | Tools | Total Outputs |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------------|------------|------------------|----------|---------------|
| Natural Capital | 0 | 24 | 4 | 40 | 16 | 24 | 1 | 109 |
| Animal Health & Welfare | 0 | 4 | 12 | 16 | 35 | 12 | 0 | 79 |
| Crop & Soils | 0 | 20 | 1 | 20 | 25 | 12 | 0 | 78 |
| Croft & Small Farm | 0 | 24 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 37 |
| Developing People | 0 | 26 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 46 |
| Thriving Through Change | 0 | 11 | 5 | 61 | 16 | 36 | 1 | 130 |
| New Entrants | 0 | 11 | 0 | 5 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 29 |
| FAS TV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 30 |
| FAS Connect | 155 | 1 | 0 | 45 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 201 |
| Advice Facility | 0 | 15 ¹ | 0 | 70 ² | 0 | 0 | 0 | 85 |
| | 155 | 136 | 30 | 262 | 138 | 100 | 3 | 824 |

¹ FAS Roadshow

² Non digital inclusivity activities

Chart 1 – Proportion Spend by Topic/Programme Area



Event KPIs & Evaluation

Evaluation forms will be used to collect information from event participants, and this will include qualitative and quantitative information including on a range of protected characteristics. In addition, the KPIs in Table 5 are recognised:

Table 4 – Performance Targets

| Description | |
|-------------|--|
| 1 | At least 4,086 attendees at 160 events. |
| 2 | Attendance exceeds 75% of the predicted number |
| 3 | More than 95% of those completing a post event evaluation feedback form rate the overall quality of the event as 'excellent' or 'very satisfactory' (feedback form structure to be discussed on award of contract with Scottish Government). |
| 4 | More than 80% of those completing a post event feedback form say they will implement changes to their farm management because of information gained at the event. |
| 5 | The bounce rate (the % of people visiting the homepage and then leaving without going to another page on the site) is below 50%. |
| 6 | Minimum 70% inclusion of biodiversity and climate change actions. |

Advice Facility KPIs

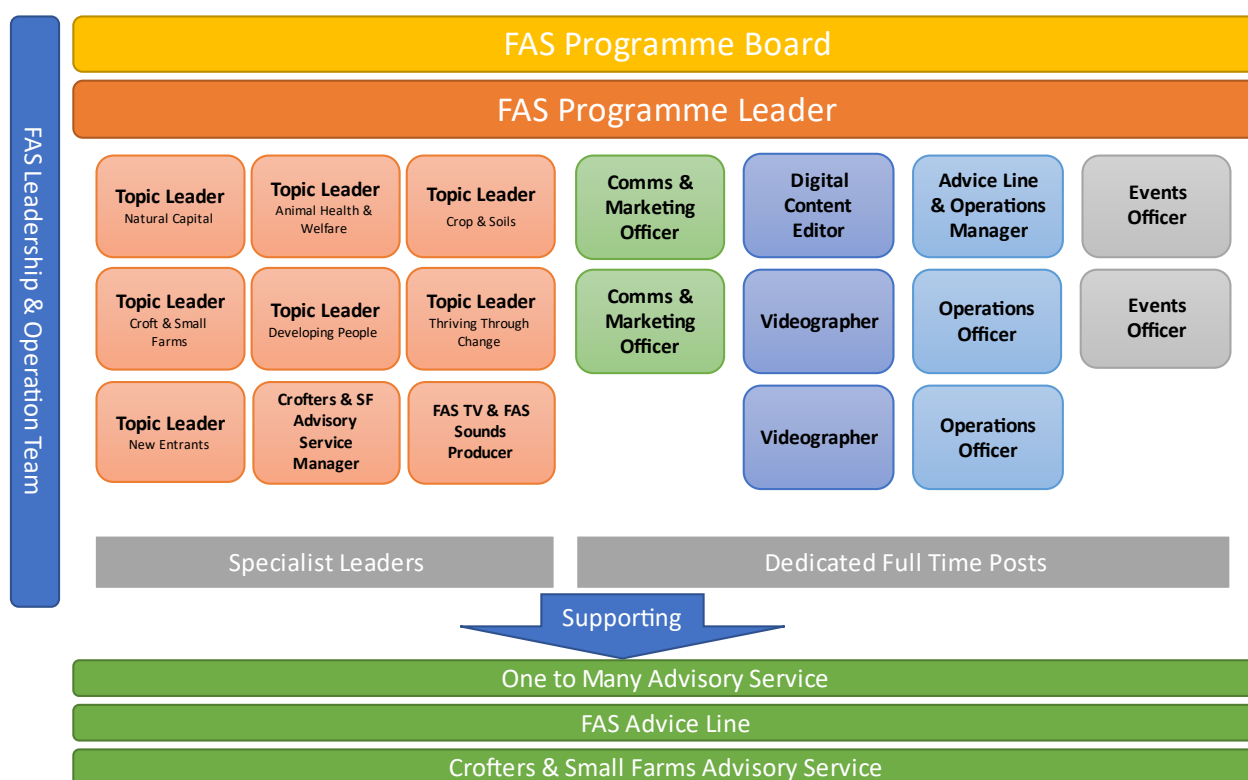
Table 5 sets out the KPIs which will be included in the advice facility evaluation.

Table 5 – Advice Facility KPIs

| Key Performance Indicator (KPI) | Key Performance Indicator (KPI) |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 | The website is available for at least 99% of the time. |
| 2 | 95% of call backs are done within six working hours (in relation to the helpdesk). |
| 3 | 95% of routine queries are responded to within one working day (in relation to the helpdesk). |
| 4 | 95% of detailed queries are responded to within two working days (in relation to the helpdesk). |
| 5 | 95% of complex queries are responded to within five working days (in relation to the helpdesk). |

| | |
|---|---|
| 6 | 95% of email enquiries are responded to within one working day (in relation to the helpdesk). |
| 7 | Record and feedback referrals from the FAS one-to-many contract to the FAS one-to-one contract. |

Delivery Model & Key Personnel



Delivery will be led by Programme Manager Chloe McCulloch, supported by the Programme Leadership Team (see table 6) and Delivery Operations Team (see table 7), and overseen by the Programme Board (see table 8).

Table 6, 7 and 8 in the following pages provide details of the individuals within each role.

Table 6

| FAS Programme Leadership Team | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------|
| Name | Role | Location |
| Chloe McCulloch | Programme Leader | Ayr |
| Mhairi Dalgliesh | Topic Leader Natural Capital | Edinburgh |
| Sascha Grierson | Topic Leader Thriving Through Change | Perth |
| Lorna Galloway | Topic Leader Crop & Soils | Stranraer |
| Laura Henderson | Topic Leader New Entrants | Elgin |
| Hazel Laughton | Topic Leader Animal Health & Welfare | Lanark |
| Mary-Jane Lawrie | Topic Leader Developing People | Edinburgh |
| Siobhan Macdonald | Crofter & Small Farm Advisory Service Manager | Inverness |
| Jacalyn Laird | Communications Officer | Edinburgh |
| Alex Blott | Communications Officer | Glasgow |
| Cara Campbell | FAS TV Producer | Campbeltown |
| Calum Johnston | FAS TV Producer | Perth |
| Kerry Hammond | FAS Sounds Producer | Aberdeen |
| Rebecca Audsley | Strategic Advisor – Climate Change | |

Table 7

| FAS Delivery Operations & Digital Team | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------|
| Name | Role | Location |
| Lily Reade | Operations Manager | Edinburgh |
| Lindsay Officer | Operations Administrator | Edinburgh |
| Fiona Jolly | Operations Administrator | Ayr |
| Amy Piggott | Events Officer | Glasgow |
| Cameron Waugh | Events Officer | Edinburgh |
| Robbie Campbell | Digital Content Editor | Edinburgh |
| Robbie Paton | Videographer | Glasgow |
| Kieron Sim | Videographer | Edinburgh |

Table 8

| FAS Programme Board Summary | | |
|-----------------------------|--|-----------|
| Name | Job Title | Location |
| Andrew Lacey | SRUC Vice Principal Commercialisation and Head of SAC Consulting | Edinburgh |
| Andrew Bauer | Head of Food & Footprint | Stirling |
| Gavin Hill | Head of Knowledge Exchange | Edinburgh |
| Victoria McDowell | Head of Advisory Services | Stirling |