

The Scottish Government's New Entrants to Farming Programme



William Boyd

William grew up on the Lanarkshire family dairy farm. He always had a keen interest in farming but firstly wanted to broaden his experience by going to Strathclyde University, graduating with a degree in Construction Engineering.

He subsequently travelled to New Zealand and Australia working on and looking at different farming systems. William returned home to work for eight years before gaining employment as stockman on a reputed beef and sheep farm.

Throughout this period he steadily built-up his own sheep numbers. When a contract farming agreement became available in the local area that also required the contractor to provide livestock it was too good an opportunity to pass.

He compiled his business plan and was ultimately successful, taking on a 420 acre beef and sheep unit in November 2013.

William continues to build stock numbers and 'bed-in' a system that fits the farm and land type - currently running 30 cows and 650 ewes.



What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

"Probably the biggest factor is generating a cash return quickly.

"It hasn't helped that I'm trying to expand numbers at the same time as commodity prices slumped. I've currently fewer lambs to sell at lower value per head" said William.

What is your main motivation to farm?

I am a keen stockman and enjoy farming. I want the challenge to build something and stand on my own feet.

Case Studies

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What hurdles have you had to overcome?

Another big hurdle was learning how a contract farming agreement works. Building a strong relationship with the farmer, and bank manager(!), is essential.

A sensible, easy to follow, business plan is important, I'd only be fooling myself. I needed to get to know what fields and livestock could achieve quickly too. I don't own the land and the contract agreement is on a rolling basis so my priority is 'doing best' by the farm and farmer to generate a return. We cannot afford to be complacent or sink lots of money into high capital infrastructure.

What financial & advisory assistance have you received?

I have a good relationship with my bank manager and accountant. This is invaluable.

We also received advice at the start from the local SAC office. I was also part of a New Entrant to Farming group (Lanark area) and I am in a local beef and sheep group.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

Build a wide variety of skills, you will need them, especially at the start. Surround yourself with good people and ask to be challenged. Also, if the business plan is too complicated you lose focus hence my lower input easier care approach.



What are your future ambitions?

First off, generate sufficient funds to build a viable future in farming. That needs to be through profits, but I need to continue selecting cows and ewes that are low input in terms of labour and costs but generate a high market value - producing what the market wants.

Financials are majorly important, but I aim to build something that is viable and enjoyable.

"Build a wide variety of skills as you will need them all once farming. Go and talk to people and see different systems; and save everywhere possible - these will help identify then grasp opportunities"

William Boyd

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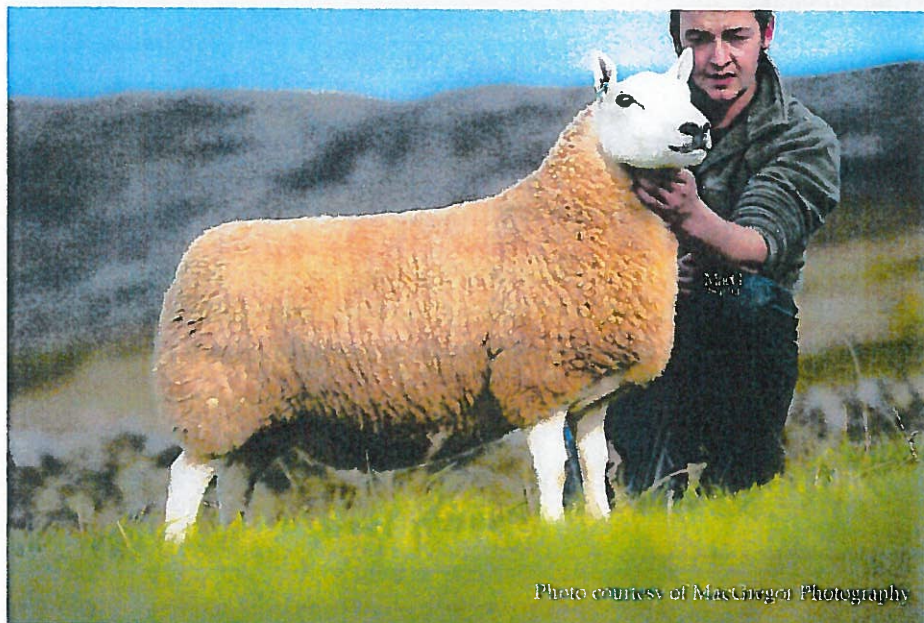


Photo courtesy of MacGregor Photography

Callum Hume

Callum and Duncan Hume are brothers who were given the opportunity to take over the owner occupied family farm of Sundhope, based near Selkirk in May 2007. This was following their fathers decision to pursue a career in politics. At this point the brothers were in their early 20's and accepted the challenge.

The hill farm extends to over 2,000 acres of grassland. Both cattle and sheep are produced by the business in a closed flock/herd basis. The herd consists of 80 Aberdeen Angus cows and 1,200 pure South Country Cheviots bred on the hill. There are a further 300 Cheviots which are crossed to the Suffolk, Texel and Bluefaced Leicester for cross lamb production.

After leaving school, both brothers attended college where Callum studied Agricultural Engineering while Duncan studied Agriculture. They have both travelled and worked in New Zealand, where they gained a wealth of agricultural experience.

They are also very lucky to have a lifetime of agricultural knowledge passed down to them from their father.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

The biggest challenge we have faced, was actually learning how to manage the farm and delegating the day to day tasks involved.

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The Scottish
Government

What hurdles have you had to overcome?

As new entrants, we initially found it a challenge to source finance, as we ourselves didn't have a credit history with the bank.

However hard work and determination has paid off, as we now have a borrowing facility with our bank.

What is your main motivation to farm?

Farming is a way of life for us and we have a real passion for what we do.

Our motivation is always to achieve more and to produce the best animals that our farm can.

What financial and advisory assistance have you received?

We applied for funding to assist with a new cattle shed through the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). As we are new entrants we got an additional 10% funding. We used our local agricultural consultant to provide assistance with this, along with putting together financial projections for the bank.

"The main thing is that you enjoy yourself, and focus on one area at a time. Ensure you keep on top of the cash flow and budget wisely."

Callum Hume



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

Our best bit of advice for anyone coming in to the industry would be

"to take your time and enjoy yourself."

What are your future ambitions?

We would ideally like to expand both the land and the livestock numbers in the future.

If land became available near our farm we would definitely try our hardest to source finance for it. This would allow us to achieve the goal of growing the business

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Michael and Fiona Burns

Michael and Fiona are enjoying their first year farming their 114 hectare tenancy at Glenside Farm (plus 52ha seasonal let), with their two young children, Katie and Robert.

Both Michael and Fiona are from farming families, and have spent the last 7 years working towards securing a farm tenancy. A Forestry Commission starter farm tenancy became available for tender in March 2013, and they submitted a business plan in April 2013. They were selected for an interview in June and found out two weeks later they had been successful. They moved into the farmhouse in Ayrshire in September to begin their 10 year tenancy.

Since this time they have built up a flock of 250 Blackface and Cheviot cross breeding ewes, along with 8 Limousin and 18 Galloway cattle on the grassland unit.

It has been a juggling act with the farm, a young family and Michael keeping on his full time job. Both Michael and Fiona work part-time on the farm and work in unison, taking on appropriate tasks to enable the farm to run smoothly.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

There have been a few challenges ranging from, the lack of additional Scottish Government funding for new entrants, to competing with established farmers to buy stock in the auction ring.

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What hurdles have you had to overcome?

Providing a strong enough application to even get an interview was our first hurdle. Once we had secured the tenancy we had to set up the business, and settle into the lifestyle.

What financial & advisory assistance have you received?

Michael and I put together the initial business plan for the tenancy with the assistance of our local agricultural consultant, for the final details. She had previous experience of Forestry Farm bids and provided excellent assistance. Our consultant also assisted with gathering the documentation required for the bank. The Royal Bank of Scotland has been very supportive with finance and suggesting useful contacts. It really is worth looking round for someone that is enthusiastic about the business.

Parents and siblings have provided advice along with some financial support. When we were first awarded the tenancy we received small financial gifts from various family and friends, which all helped to establish the farm.

What is your main motivation to farm?

It's a good lifestyle for the family and we have our own personal goal to establish a successful business.

"Don't be discouraged if you are knocked back, follow your dream and keep motivated."

Fiona & Michael Burns



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

Ensure you know your business plan inside out for an interview so you are prepared for any questions. It will enable you to give stronger answers in interviews as the answers you provide reflects you and your business. You will need to work hard but it will be worth it.

What are your future ambitions?

Our future goal is to save enough money to put towards a future tenancy. Having already been through the process with this tenancy we feel this will provide a competitive edge in any future applications.

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Ian McKnight

Ian has always been interested in farming, it is in his blood, with his father being a tenant farmer.

Ian's agricultural career began when he left school, at this stage he studied at the Scottish Agricultural College and gained a BSc (Hons) in Agriculture. Following this he travelled on a working holiday to New Zealand and Australia, which he admits gave him valuable agricultural experience. When he returned from his travels he started employment with the Scottish Government Rural Payment and Inspections Directorate. However, just under a year later, Ian decided this wasn't the career for him as he missed the practical side of the industry. He then became an agricultural contractor working at various local farms.

Ian has always had a goal of farming on his own right, which became a reality in November 2011, when Ian inherited a traditional tenancy from his uncle. The hill farm covers 1,600 acres, with the tenancy being located next door to his family's tenant farm.

In the three years since entering the farm, Ian has been building up a sheep enterprise consisting of 500 Scottish Blackface ewes.



Ian continues to offer contracting services to neighbouring farmers to augment the output generated by the farm.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

I had no Single Farm Payment, until I bought entitlements from my uncle after my first year farming. The first year was especially difficult as there was limited support available, yet all the costs still existed. There was no income until lambs were ready for sale, which made cash flow particularly difficult.

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What hurdles have you had to overcome?

Some day to day duties, such as learning how to efficiently process the paperwork. I'm fortunate I can ask family for advice.

Having enough time in the day and being able to bring in enough of an income to support the family. I didn't have any financial support for the first year.

What is your main motivation to farm?

I grew up on a farm and farming is something I have always had a passion for. I previously had a desk job but I missed the hands on experience and the enjoyment of being out on the land. I know I'm lucky that the farm became available, otherwise it would have been very difficult to obtain any land.

What financial and advisory assistance have you received?

I have had a whole farm review carried out on my farm funded through the Scottish Government. I have had some assistance for general farm accounts from my own accountant.

I have attended the New Entrants Workshops and found them to be very useful.

"Be prepared to work hard, you need to do the best job you can to get the desired results. New entrants may feel they aren't getting anywhere for the first few years but stick with it and you will get there."

Ian McKnight



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

My advice would be to stick in, keep your head down and work hard. The first few years are the hardest, but if you keep focused you will get there.

What are your future ambitions?

In terms of the farm, I would like to continue improvements and expand. Hopefully this will provide a more stable farm income so that I can reduce my contracting hours.

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Katie Francis

Katie Francis was raised on the family farm of Whitmuir in Selkirk. Unfortunately, due to bad health, her father put the 162 hectare less favoured area owned farm out for tenancy 20 years ago. In November 2013 the opportunity arose for Katie to take over the ownership of the unit and farm it in her own right.

Katie, whose husband works full time off farm, has three young children. Being on the farm full time allows Katie to focus all her efforts on the children and establishing the business.

Katie attended university and previously worked as a Land Agent. However she always knew she wanted to go back home and work on the land.

Katie produces 62 hectares of arable crop (winter wheat and winter barley) and is establishing a flock of ewes. The flock is being built up by purchasing breeding hogs, this process began in 2013. The sheep numbers will grow on the holding as fencing works and ground improvements are completed over the unit.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

The biggest challenge to date has been sourcing capital, to have enough money to buy start up equipment. Although the land is family owned there was no machinery or equipment. It seems I took over the business when there wasn't as much Government financial help available.

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What hurdles have you had to overcome?

The largest hurdle since I have taken over the farm is sourcing finance. As I am a new entrant, I didn't have any business credit history. Finance has been required for maintenance work on the holding, fencing, etc. and purchasing machinery and livestock.

What is your main motivation to farm?

I have always loved being on the farm. As a young girl I enjoyed helping my father. The farm has been in our family for 300 years, and I feel a real sense of pride being able to carry on farming the same land my family has for generations.

What financial and advisory assistance have you received?

I applied for SRDP grant funding for an agri-environment scheme. I used my local agricultural consultant to assist me with applying for the funding, she was very helpful.

I have been very lucky having good neighbouring farmers they have been very supportive with helping me when I have needed anything, and I know I can ask them for advice anytime I need to.

"It's very important to know where you want to be in the future and work back from there. Be realistic with your business plans and think carefully about your budgets."

Katie Francis



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

Be realistic when setting your goals, and remember not everything needs to be achieved in your first year.

What are your future ambitions?

There is maintenance work to be carried out on the farm such as fixing the fences. I'm looking at biodiversity and the wildlife elements of farming along with focusing on organics.

In the future I would like to have a closed flock of Cheviot Mules.

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Neil McKinnel

Neil and his family farm Garrarie in the south west of Scotland, near Stranraer. Neil's career in agriculture began when he left school and attended Barony college to study agriculture, whilst also working part time on the family farm. When Neil turned 20 he became a partner of the family business. Some 12 years later the business was restructured making Neil the majority partner.

The farm is spread over 500 acres of land which includes 60 acres of rented land. The stocking on the unit consists of 160 Simmental cattle with the progeny either being retained for breeding stock or sold store at 12 months old. In addition there are 250 pure Lleyne breeding ewes, with the progeny again

either being retained as breeding stock or sold prime.

The business diversified into harvesting wind in 2012, when a 15kW turbine was erected on the farm. Neil admits that it was expensive, but he feels it was a good diversification project.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

Understanding all of the regulations from cattle records to cross compliance, a series of Statutory Management Requirements and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions. It takes time to keep on top of everything, as even the smallest of mistakes can lead to significant consequences for the business.

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What hurdles have you had to overcome?

The largest hurdle for our business has basically been understanding legislation, ensuring that everything is being adhered to and that we are always compliant.

Our next hurdle will be readjusting the business so that it is still profitable with the new CAP reform system.

What is your main motivation to farm?

Our main motivation is basically success. It is to run the farm as a successful and profitable business. It is very rewarding watching calves being born and then a year later selling them for a good price.

What financial and advisory assistance have you received?

We have been awarded an SRDP grant for slurry storage and silage clamp. We obtained a 10% top up on the grant for being a young farmer. With this application we had assistance from our local agricultural consultants.

It is good to speak to neighbouring farmers as they may have previously been through similar situations.

"Ensure you do your homework and that you don't over stretch yourself in any way. It's great that you can get finance towards starting up the business but remember whatever you borrow you will have to pay it all back and that takes time."

Neil McKinnel



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

I personally think it would be very difficult for someone to enter the industry without financial backing.

My advice would be to talk to established businesses and to do your homework. Take your time and don't bite off more than you can chew.

What are your future ambitions?

The main aim of the business is to be profitable and I'm always on the lookout for new opportunities to expand the farm.

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Stewart Wilson

Stewart has a farming background, with his grandparents being tenant farmers. Unfortunately he has not been the successor of this tenancy. To fulfil his dream of having his own agricultural business, he has had to venture off on his own, with drive and enthusiasm he did this at the age of 20.

Four years later he now rents 47 acres of grassland for grazing his 35 pedigree Simmental and cross cows. In addition to this, he also cuts a crop of haylage on an annual basis from the land.

He is a busy man, beginning the day as a relief milker, then feeding his own cattle before going to his full time employment of a stocksman for a 120 head of pure Simmental cows. After this he then attends to his own cattle which he turns out for shows in the summer months.

Due to the fact that he does not have a tenancy or a permanent holding, he lives in the town of Kilmarnock which is some 15 minute drive from his cattle, this can be especially tricky at labour intensive times such as calving the high value stock.

Stewart's ultimate goal is to gain a tenancy to run his own sustainable business, which would allow him to work for himself.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

My biggest challenge has been finding affordable land to rent. It is very hard as a new entrant to be able to compete against more established farmers who can afford to pay a higher rate for land.

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What hurdles have you had to overcome?

Capital and cash flow have been my largest hurdle. I don't want to borrow money to establish my business due to high interest rates. From buying my first cow, it took four years to sell her progeny at two years old and release some capital to reinvest in more stock.

What is your main motivation to farm?

My main motivation is to be successful. There is nothing more rewarding than watching a new born calf maturing into an animal that you can show or sell and know that you have achieved that.

What financial and advisory assistance have you received?

I have attended the New Entrant Workshops and found them to be very useful in various ways. They provide opportunities to meet young entrants like myself and hear how others have overcome obstacles, and help in identifying new information such as the potential funding under the new CAP reform, business planning, etc.

I have received no financial assistance to establish or grow my business.

"If anyone wants to start farming they should. There are plenty of people to speak to so don't be shy to ask for advice from the older generation or other farmers as they have all been through the same process."

Stewart Wilson



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

I would recommend developing and maintaining the biggest possible network of contacts as possible. People are generally willing to be supportive and are very helpful.

What are your future ambitions?

To grow my business through being financially self-sufficient. I don't want to have large bank repayments from borrowing capital. This process will mean my business will take longer to grow but at least I know I will have achieved my objectives using my own efforts and minimised the risks taken.

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Andrew and Lorna Prentice

Andrew and Lorna Prentice took on a new challenge in September 2013 when they moved from a 90 acre unsecure tenancy at Floors Farm, Stonehaven to a 240 acre tenancy on the picturesque Isle of Iona. Andrew, Lorna and their children John and Kelsie have an initial 5 year tenancy with the National Trust of Scotland for Maol & St Columba Farm. The land is made up of 70 acres of improved grassland and 170 acres of rough grazing. The family currently run 200 head of pure Scottish Blackface females, in addition to this Andrew poses as the island mechanic and helps crofters with contracting work, while Lorna works in the local hotel.

The family ran Blackface ewes on their tenancy at Stonehaven but felt they needed more land to warrant farming and something with more security for their family. They applied for numerous tenancies, going through the tendering process and reaching numerous interviews but kept coming to one main stumbling block, capital. The family were determined and kept trying, with persistence paying off when they were given the opportunity to farm Maol and St Columba Farm.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

The biggest challenge to date has been availability of capital. Limited capital is a huge weakness when competing for tenancies against established farmers.

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What hurdles have you had to overcome?

The main hurdle for the family has been the lack of opportunity to gain a secure tenancy. Luckily they were open to relocating to fulfil their goal.

What financial & advisory assistance have you received?

Andrew and Lorna completed the business plan and budgets them selves for the tenancy, this was to ensure they understood all of the figures in preparation for any questions at the interview. A consultant looked over these figures for accuracy prior to the business plan being submitted.

Prior to moving to the Isle of Iona, Andrew and Lorna attended the New Entrants to Farming workshops.

The couple have not as yet received any single farm payment or LFA payments.

What is your main motivation to farm?

To breed the best animal they can and be successful in the sales and show rings. To build a rural family life for the children.

“Persistence Pays”

Andrew and Lorna Prentice



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

To any other new entrant, the couple’s advice is to save money as soon as you can to build on capital. If you are offered seasonal temporary grazing take it, as it gives you a start to build your enterprises and finally persistence pays off!

What are your future ambitions?

To increase the flock and possibly introduce some cattle. The main driver for Andrew is to achieve success at the Highland Show with his Blackfaces, ultimately a top three placing and to top the local mart with their breeding females.

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David Cooper-Tardoes Farm, Muirkirk

David Cooper took on his first challenge in 2004 when he was just 17. He moved alone from Dartmoor to the 192 ha unit of Tardoes in Muirkirk with 350 Herdwick ewes and 100 hogs. When he purchased the farm it was made up of 103 ha of inbye land and 89 ha of hill however most of the inbye had been opencast and had been poorly restored.

David worked alone in improving the land and infrastructure and operating a maximum health, minimum input sheep system and built the flock up to 700 ewes.

In 2006 the opportunity arose to purchase part of a dilapidated neighbouring estate and 737 ha of mostly rough hill was added to the land area. The sheep numbers were

increased to 1,200 ewes made up of Herdwicks and Welsh Mountain ewes.

In 2010 a further neighbouring hill block of 830 ha was purchased and the sheep numbers were gradually increased to the present number of 3,000 ewes and 700 hogs.

Herdwicks are run on the harder hill land with Welsh Mountain ewes on the better hills. Ewe hogs are wintered on the inbye. All surplus lambs are sold finished as Euro Lamb by November. Draft ewes are all sold privately.

What is your main motivation to farm?

The first is to improve the land and farm and to leave it in a better condition for the next generation.

The second is to remain profitable.

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What hurdles have you had to overcome?

The biggest hurdle has been borrowing capital to purchase neighbouring land and expand the business. A robust and realistic business plan is required as well as an excellent working relationship with your lender. You must know your costs and margins.

What financial & advisory assistance have you received?

Farming largely without SFP, David has had to rely on LFASS (Less Favoured Area Support) and has used the SRDP (Scottish Rural Development Programme) to secure environmental payments to manage habitats and capital payments to help cover fencing costs. Approximately 1,510 ha of the land is within a Special Site of Scientific Interest.

What has been your biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

Farming without SFP (Single Farm Payment) on all of the land has meant that the sheep system must be profitable without support payments. David supplements his income by working off farm, as a fencing contractor four days per week.

“Borrow as much money as you can when you are young. It may seem like a lot at the time but in twenty years it will have been a bargain!”

David Cooper



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

- Keep it simple.
- You define the system, don't be defined by others.
- Every farm is different.
- Don't give up.

What are your future ambitions?

To continue to improve the farm as well as the stock and build up sufficient land and sheep numbers to farm full time.

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- Facebook
(www.facebook.com/NewEntrants)
- Website
(www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants)

For more details contact

Kirsten Williams, Consultant,
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01888 563333, Kirsten.Williams@sac.co.uk



The Scottish Government's New Entrants to Farming Programme



Sandy, Kirsteen and Alexander Douglas

The local Caithness family were successfully awarded a 10 year Limited Duration Tenancy on the Forest Enterprise Scotland Starter Farm on the 1st April 2015 at Achnamoine Farm, near Spittal in Caithness.

Achnamoine extends to 101ha, with 56ha being ploughable improved grassland and the remaining 45ha being rougher in quality.

Sandy was brought up on his family's small holding at Bower in Caithness and has a strong agricultural background. He worked locally on several farms before taking on the role of Head Yardsman with Aberdeen and Northern Marts in 2006.

Sandy's dream was always to have his own farm, but as we all know

the reality of this is very difficult to achieve and opportunities very rarely present themselves. The family are looking forward to running a successful business at Achnamoine where they can build up their herd of 6 heifers and approx. 300 ewes combining a small pedigree flock of Bluefaced Leicester and Charollais, as well as a commercial flock of predominately blackface ewes to establish and develop a prosperous business for their future.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

The biggest challenge to date has been the fact that the farm was pretty rundown on entry with a lot of old grass, poor soil nutrient values and poor stock fencing which has hampered the preferred grazing regime.

Case Studies

Learn from the experiences of other new entrants in a series of case studies.

Guidance notes are also available which are tailored specifically to assist new entrants to farming, with their business needs.

Find further information, including links to other case studies and the guidance notes, at www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants

This programme is funded by the Scottish Government as part of its New Entrants to Farming Advisory Activity.



What hurdles have you had to overcome?

The main hurdle for the family has been the lack of subsidy available during the initial start up year where costs have often been excessive. There has been a lot of expenditure to initially build the business for example increasing stock numbers, investing to improve grassland quality and purchasing basic items of machinery initially with very little income to cover these costs.

The business made an application to the National Reserve and would hope that Basic Payment will be awarded in early 2016—but this is almost 12 months after the business started. Sandy was not entitled to the Young Farmer Start-up Grant as he was over 40.

What advisory assistance have you received?

The family prepared their own business plan and asked a local consultant to look over the figures and make any recommendations.

What is your main motivation to farm?

To establish a good quality flock, a robust business and have a good quality of life for the family.

“Believe in yourself and embrace new skills”

Sandy Douglas



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

Follow your dreams, don't be scared to try new things and believe in yourself.

Be aware of what subsidy funding is actually available to your situation and be prepared to work hard for it!

What are your future ambitions?

To develop the business in such a way that as the tenancy opportunity ends at Achnamoine the business can be moved to another location and continue to thrive. The system must be simple, financially viable and breeds selected to endure the climatic demands of the far North

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The Scottish Government's New Entrants to Farming Programme



Stuart Rutherford

Stuart graduated from the Scottish Agricultural Colleges Auchincruive campus in 2005, with an HND in Poultry Production and Management. His career has seen him work for Grampian Country Chickens and Scotlay Farm Eggs. Stuart managed Scotlay Farm Eggs before setting up his own company—Nith Valley Free Range Eggs in March 2009. He supplied eggs to Scotlay Farm Eggs before becoming a co-director of the company in 2011. Since 2012 he has concentrated solely on his own business, which he is the sole director. The business started on a 10 acre rented site with 4,000 free range hens, increasing to 9,000 hens by 2011 and 14,000 hens today.

In 2013 Stuart took the step of purchasing 30 acres of land around a disused sandstone quarry and relocated his business. The laying

houses are located in a woodland site, which gives a point of difference when it comes to marketing his eggs.

In 2010 Stuart won a Princes Trust, Young Entrepreneur Award.

(<http://www.nithvalleyeggs.co.uk/>)

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

Everything!

The equipment required in egg production is all very expensive.

The purchase of land to secure the future of the business has been a real challenge.

Case Studies

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Guidance notes are also available which are tailored specifically to assist new entrants to farming with their business needs.

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This programme is funded by the Scottish Government as part of the New Entrants to Farming Programme.



What hurdles have you had to overcome?

My biggest hurdle to date has been around the purchase of land in 2013. My bank demanded an unachievable deposit and in the end I had to change banks. This was eclipsed by problems around planning permission: prior to purchasing the site, a planning query was lodged with the Council to make sure hen houses could be built on the site, no objections were raised. When Planning Consent was applied for, it was turned down. It took a great deal of time, determination and money to have the decision overturned. If I'd failed, it would have been devastating for the business.

What financial & advisory assistance have you received?

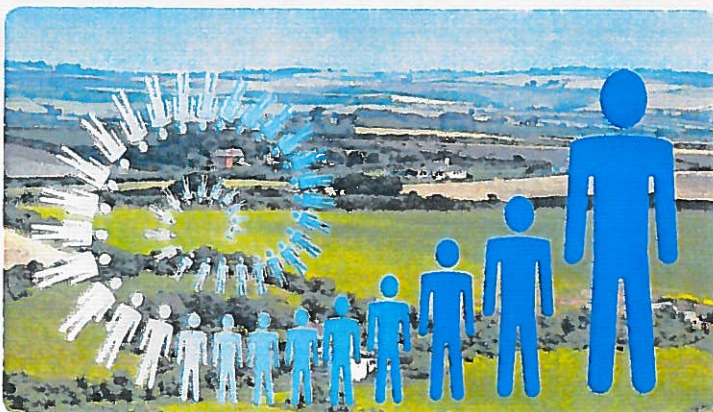
The egg industry isn't supported by subsidy. I've used my own savings and I'm very grateful to my parents for their financial help in getting me started. I haven't had any specific advisory advice. I worked in the industry and managed other peoples businesses prior to starting my own.

What is your main motivation to farm?

I enjoy what I do. There are lots of different aspects to the job- from being an egg producer, a company director and a marketing manager. Being self-employed and in charge of your daily schedule is also a big motivation.

"You have got to want it, keep focused"

Stuart Rutherford



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

Being self employed is hard work. Holidays and weekends off are a luxury (especially when you first start) - you have got to want it!

What are your future ambitions?

My main goal is to improve the marketing of the eggs and to gain a much higher share of the retail price. I've purchased a grading machine and I'm now able to sell direct to retailers with eggs under my own branding rather than sell into the wholesale market. I'm also looking at "egg vending machines" which have been very successful in Ireland: it allows a direct link to the consumer and a further point of difference over the opposition.

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