



One-to-one Farm Advisory Service

April 2020 - December 2020 | Report for Scottish Government

Customer:**Scottish Government****Customer reference:**

Farm Advisory Service

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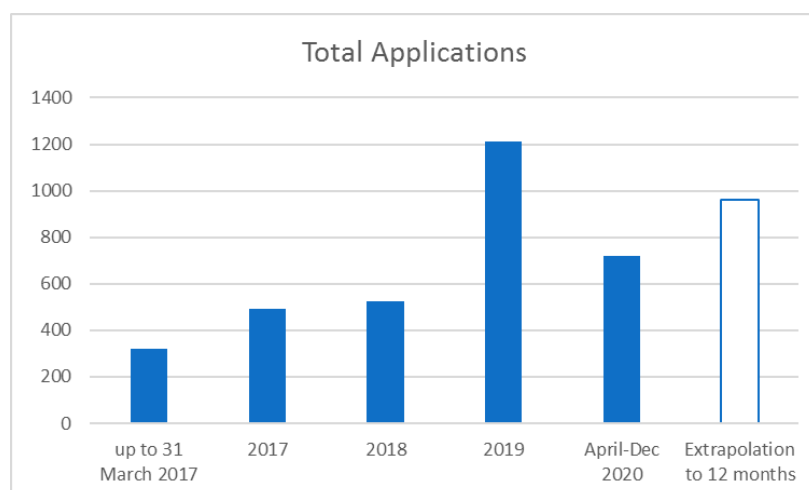
Executive summary

This report covers the delivery period April 2020 to December 2020 for the One-to-One Farm Advisory Service. The service commenced delivery of one-to-one support to farmers and crofters on the 20th September 2016. This comprises the delivery of Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMP), Specialist Advice, Carbon Audits and Mentoring for new entrants.

Ricardo manage the delivery of the one-to-one service, providing a full grant management service; a quality management process to ensure high standard of reports; and training to FBAASS advisers delivering ILMPs. The FAS website, helpline and overall promotional campaign is delivered via the One-to-Many contract however Ricardo implement a promotional plan for the one-to-one programme, to ensure that the support is promoted through all available channels.

It is encouraging to see that despite the potential for covid-19 restrictions to disrupt the programme, the rate of applications has held up well and shows a general upward trajectory (see figure 1). The uptake in 2019, was extraordinary due to the impact of a huge influx of Beef Efficiency Scheme (BES) participants driving demand for Carbon Audits. The BES impact was far more moderate impact this year and the uptake provides a better reflection of actual industry demands. The demand for carbon audits is still high, but the drivers for this demand now reflect supply chain pressure and increasing sector demands rather than the BES deadlines.

Figure 1: Application numbers during the FAS contract period



The programme has continued to evolve and develop through the year, ensuring the availability of the service to farmers and crofters throughout the covid-19 restrictions while also delivering to the needs of the industry. The Service has not only been maintained but has been enhanced through this period. Most notable of these developments are:

1. The electronic verification of documents. The agreement of Scottish government to allow email verification of documents came just in time to enable Ricardo to launch a totally electronic application and verification process. This has been vital through the covid-19 restrictions, it means that no one needs to leave the farm and we are not reliant on the postal service. This has enhanced the speed and efficiency of the administration process.
2. The tailoring of specialist advice rules. In response to concerns that land managers were not taking up the specialist advice available on woodland management and conservation, out of step with Scotland's ambitious targets for tree planting, we up dated the scheme rules to allow this specialist advice to be available independent of an ILMP and worked closely with Scottish Forestry to promote the opportunity. As a result, there was an immediate surge in interest and the level of demand has remained elevated through the year.

Whilst continuing to deliver and enhance the current service, Ricardo have an eye to the future and are cognisant of our role in training and preparing advisers for future advisory needs. The training programme this year focused on enhancing the advisers' confidence and knowledge in discussing woodland planting opportunities with businesses; understanding and communicating the net zero

challenge for farmers and land managers; and preparing businesses for the likely challenges that are inherent in new trading relationships post- Brexit.

Feedback from all users of the service is gathered and has been analysed for this reporting period and is summarised below. The feedback during this period has been consistently above the scheme requirements with very significant majorities of participants rating all aspects of the service as good or excellent. This continued exceptional feedback is encouraging and shows the value of the service and the recognition of improvements year on year.

Feedback

ILMP

- 98% of users rated the ease of access to information as excellent or good.
- 98% of users rated the helpfulness at initial contact point as excellent or good.
- 95% of users rated the ease of application process as excellent or good.
- 91% of users rated the efficiency of scheme administration as excellent or good.
- 100% of users of the ILMP would recommend the service to others.
- 95% would rate the adviser's working practices as excellent or good (-3% on last year)
- 96% would rate the quality of the report as excellent or good
- 75% of farmers state that they will implement all the actions recommended in their ILMP

Specialist Advice

- 97% of users rated the ease of access to information as excellent or good.
- 100% of users rated the helpfulness at initial contact point as excellent or good.
- 95% of users rated the ease of application process as excellent or good.
- 97% of users rated the efficiency of scheme administration as excellent or good.
- 99% of respondents would recommend the service to others.
- 98% would rate the adviser's working practices as excellent or good.
- 96% would rate the quality of the report as excellent or good.
- 79% state that they will implement all the actions in their advice plan.

Carbon Audits

- 87% of users rated the ease of access to information as excellent or good.
- 91% of users rated the helpfulness at initial contact point as excellent or good.
- 85% of users rated the ease of application process as excellent or good.
- 84% of users rated the efficiency of scheme administration as excellent or good.
- 88% of users of the carbon audit would recommend the service to others.
- 95% would rate the adviser's working practices as excellent or good.
- 88% would rate the quality of the report as excellent or good.
- 74% state that they will implement all the actions in their Carbon Audit mitigation plan.

Mentoring

- 100% of users rated the ease of access to information as excellent or good.
- 100% rated helpfulness at initial contact point as excellent or good.
- 100% rated ease of application process as excellent or good.
- 95% rate efficiency of scheme administration as excellent or good.
- 100% of users of the mentoring would recommend the service to others.
- 95% would rate the mentor's working practices as excellent or good.
- 95% would rate the quality of the support as excellent or good.
- 100% state that they will implement all the actions discussed with their mentor.

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1 Service uptake

1.1 Applications received

It is encouraging to see that despite the potential for covid-19 restrictions to negatively impact the programme, the application rate has held up well and shows an upward trajectory (figure 2). The uptake in 2019, was extraordinary due to the impact of a huge influx of Beef Efficiency Scheme (BES) driving demand for Carbon Audits. The BES impact was far more moderate this year and the uptake provides a better reflection of actual industry demands. The demand for carbon audits is still high, but the drivers for this demand now reflect supply chain pressure and increasing sector demands rather than the specific influence of BES deadlines.

Figure 2 Graph to show application rate compared to previous years

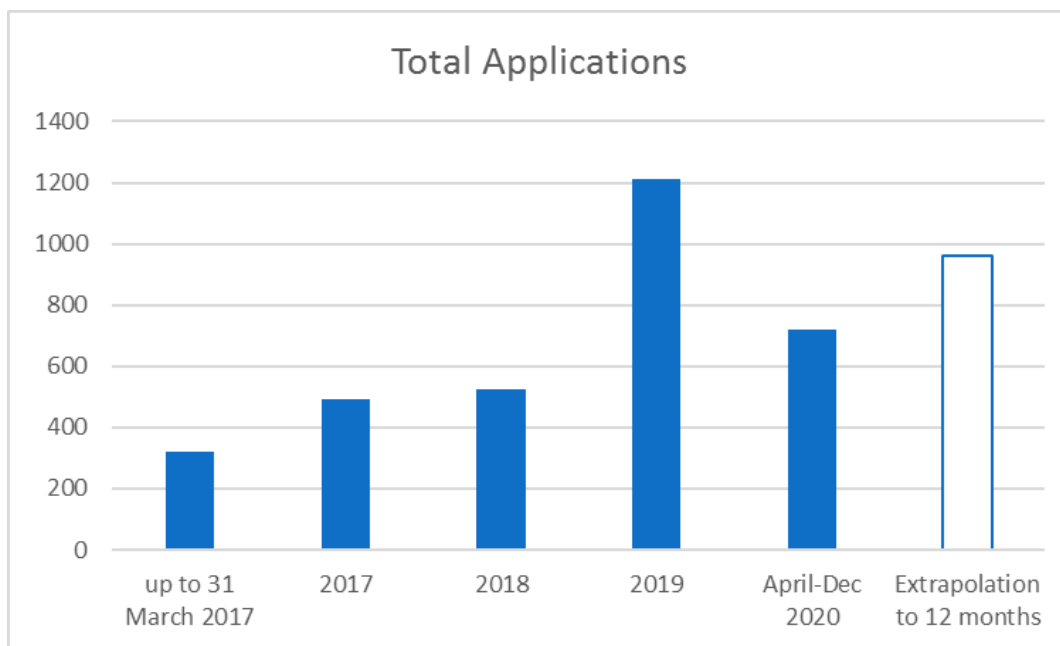
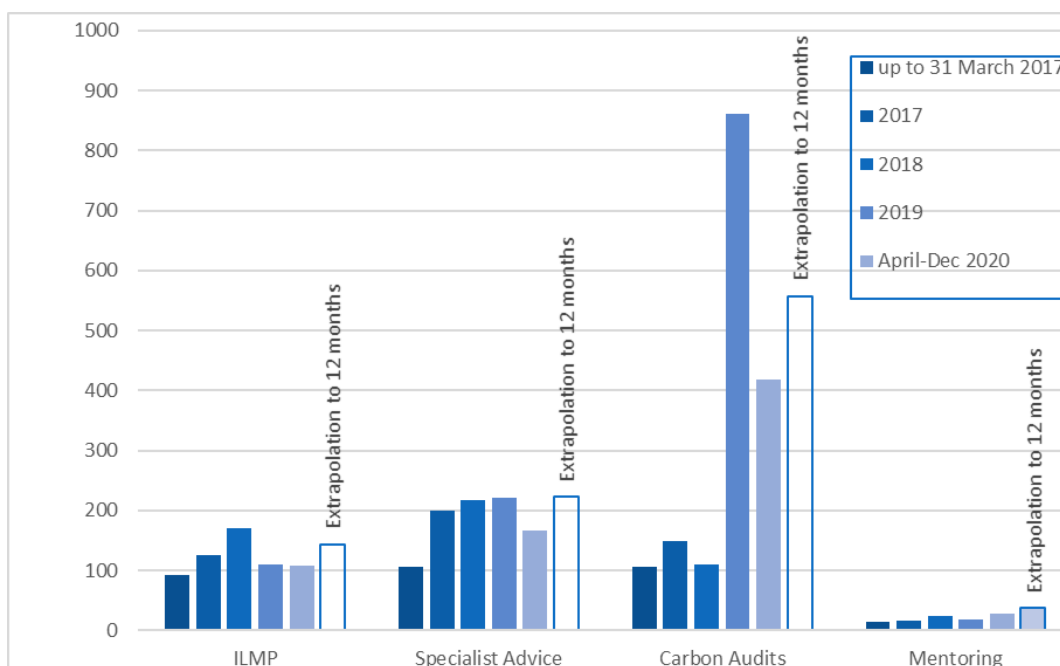


Figure 3 Graph to show applications for each service



Applications in April-December 2020 period.

Table 1 Number of applications for each grant scheme

	Applications received									Total April to Dec	Targets for April to Dec
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December		
ILMP	5	3	7	10	10	13	17	6	24	95	225
Specialist Advice	40	-6	26	28	12	-19	7	23	36	147	75
Carbon Audits	-2	8	9	41	21	74	107	16	125	399	187.5
Mentoring	4	3	1	4	9	4	0	0	2	27	45

Throughout the year the grant managers undertake data cleansing, contacting businesses who have not moved forward with their grant during the delivery window, to establish if the support is still required. This results in some negative numbers in some months as we withdraw grants that are no longer required.

1.2 Reports Completed

Table 2 Number of reports completed in April-December 2020

	Reports Complete									April-Dec 2020
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
ILMP	11	10	5	13	9	8	7	8	9	92
Specialist Advice	9	17	8	12	16	23	16	19	19	166
Carbon Audits	15	62	30	32	22	24	15	25	95	367
Mentoring	4	3	1	4	9	4	0	0	2	28

2 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Farming Advisory Service requires all users of the grant schemes to complete an evaluation of the service prior to payment of the grant. Whilst this report provides a high-level summary for April 2020-December 2020 detailed analysis of the feedback from each grant scheme has been provided as separate reports included as appendices to this report.

- Appendix 1 April-Dec 2020 FAS one-to-one review of ILMP Feedback
- Appendix 2 April-Dec 2020 FAS one-to-one review of Specialist Advice Feedback
- Appendix 3 April-Dec 2020 FAS one-to-one review of Mentoring Feedback
- Appendix 4 April-Dec 2020 FAS one-to-one review of Carbon Audit Feedback

2.1 Administration

2.1.1 How users heard about the grant?

Recommendations and promotion of the services (ILMP, specialist advice and carbon audits) came primarily through contact with an adviser. It is important that we continue to work with the adviser network to ensure that advisers are able and willing to promote the scheme to farmers they engage with. It is notable that:

- The role of advertisement and the FAS website in bringing participants to the scheme has substantially grown over the last 4 years.
- 24% of carbon audit users have come to the scheme as a result of supply chain pressure, or other external demands. The Beef Efficiency Scheme, influence of milk buyers and growers' groups is evident here.
- The uptake as a result of attending a farming event is comparatively small, one would anticipate a greater funnel through of FAS event attendees to the one-to-one service.
- The FAS newsletter is more frequently mentioned as a source of information than in previous years and this should continue to grow as the subscription base grows.

2.2 Feedback on the administration

This section of the feedback form is intended to provide insight on the quality of the administration process delivered by Ricardo, however it is clear from the comments made that respondents are often using this section to feedback on their experience of the entire support delivered.

Table 3 Feedback on the administration of the service.

	ILMP	Specialist Advice	Carbon Audits	Mentoring
	% excellent or good	% rating excellent or good	% excellent or good	% rating excellent or good
The ease of access to information as excellent or good	98%	97%	87%	100%
Helpfulness at initial contact point as excellent or good.	98%	100%	91%	100%

Ease of application process as excellent or good.	95%	95%	85%	100%
Efficiency of scheme administration as excellent or good	91%	97%	84%	95%

Feedback on all schemes is highly positive and it is really pleasing to see that despite covid-19 the high standard of service has been maintained, with systems flexing to enable delivery to continue seamlessly under continued lock-down situations.

The key performance indicator (KPI) for this service is for the quality of advice to be rated as good or better by at least 85% of participants. This has been fully exceeded in bar the application process and efficiency of administration for the carbon audit. The feedback on the carbon audits as with previous years falls slightly behind the other services, the commentary from users tends to not be specific to the administration (see appendix 4), but to focus on two areas; 1. that participants did not embrace the idea of a carbon audit, having been required to do this by another party; 2. more so than previous years comments focus on the limitations of the carbon footprint tool – in particular with regards to reporting sequestration in grassland (a new version of AgREcalc will shortly be released to address this).

2.3 Finding an adviser or mentor

Generally, there seem to have been little problem finding suitable advisers and mentors.

Table 4 Feedback on finding a mentor

	ILMP	Specialist Advice	Carbon Audits	Mentoring
	<i>% rating</i>	<i>% rating</i>	<i>% rating</i>	<i>% rating</i>
Very Easy	67%	64%	67%	57%
Easy	28%	34%	31%	33%
Not Easy	1%	1%	2%	10%

Generally, there seem to have been little problem finding suitable advisers and mentors.

10% of mentees stated that it was not easy to find a mentor (this equates to 2 farmers- The 1st farmer, identified their own mentor, but found they were not compatible. The 2nd did take longer than normal (3 months) to track down the right person for this business, but the partnership was a great success thereafter with excellent feedback provided on all other aspects.

2.4 Recommend to others

- 100% of users of the mentoring would recommend the service to others.
- 100% of users of the ILMP would recommend the service to others.
- 99% of users of the Specialist Advice would recommend the service to others.
- 88% of users of the carbon audit would recommend the service to others.

This metric is a great barometer for the performance of the programme. The % who would recommend are extremely high. It is pleasing that even with the majority of carbon audit recipients being driven to

the programme by need rather than want, that such a high % still felt that the carbon audit was worthwhile and would recommend to others.

2.5 Adviser/Mentor performance

The feedback on all grants is excellent. The key performance indicator (KPI) for this service is for the quality of advice to be rated as good or better by at least 85% of participants, this has been fully exceeded. It is pleasing to see that the advisers and the team delivering quality assurance of reports managed to maintain such a high level of performance despite having to work through unprecedented times and within the covid-19 rules.

Table 5 Feedback on adviser or mentor performance

	ILMP	Specialist Advice	Carbon Audits	Mentoring
	<i>% rating excellent or good</i>	<i>% rating excellent or good</i>	<i>% rating excellent or good</i>	<i>% rating excellent or good</i>
Working practices (helpfulness, understanding, expertise)?	95%	98%	95%	95%
How would you rate the quality of the report/support you received?	96%	96%	88%	95%

2.6 Impact of the Support

The feedback on participant's perceptions of the benefits to the business of engaging with the service provide useful insight into the intended impact of the intervention vs the policy drivers for their provision. We can see that in many cases farmers are seeing benefits to their business performance but also identify the environmental improvements as key impacts. It is encouraging that farmers are seeing both the economic benefit and improvements in their environmental performance as key outcomes from the programme.

Table 6 Benefits of engaging with the service

	ILMP	Specialist Advice	Carbon Audits	Mentoring
RANK	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Impact</i>
1.	Financial benefit from improved profit margin	Better planning/decision making	Improved soil and nutrient management	Livestock/crop improvements
2.	Improved soil and nutrient management	Financial benefit with improved profit margin	More awareness about climate change and energy use	Better planning/decision making

3.	Better planning/decision making	Livestock/crop improvements	Livestock/crop improvements	More awareness of sources of advice
4.	Financial benefit from reduced costs/overheads	Financial benefit from reduced costs/overheads	More awareness about waste and pollution issues	Improved soil or nutrient management

2.7 Implementing the actions

- 79% of users of the Specialist Advice would implement all the actions recommended¹
- 100% of users of the Mentoring would implement all the actions recommended
- 75% of users of the ILMP would implement all the actions recommended
- 74% of users of the Carbon Audit would implement all the actions recommended²

In follow up to this question, the feedback form does not ask what actions will be implemented, but which will not (see appendix reports for these details) and asks for reasons that any actions were not implemented. Cost is the most commonly sighted reason.

Table 7 Reasons for not implementing all of the actions recommended:

	Too costly	Insufficient time to implement action	I do not understand why this was recommended	I do not think this is necessary for my business
Mentoring	0	0	0	0
Carbon Audits	40	25	14	34
ILMP	6	4	0	3
Specialist Advice	8	3	0	2

¹ It should be noted that 14% of these reports were RSABI referrals, in these situations the adviser is often having to present unpalatable options for the business which may not be warmly embraced

² The carbon audit report is tasked with identifying a range of actions, we do not anticipate a business will take up all the actions.

3 Training

The one-to-one programme provides training to advisers via the on-line training portal, training workshops and ongoing communication through the advisers' newsletter.

The business plan included delivery of 3 training events for advisers and to develop the topics based on an identification of need through consultation with advisers, Scottish government and the steering group, this was achieved. In previous years training was delivered through face-to-face workshops. This year to enable contingency through the covid-19 restrictions the workshops were delivered on-line through Microsoft Teams meetings. The training was very well attended and feedback excellent. Though the face-to-face meetings are valuable for building relationships, the feedback is that on-line meetings better suit the advisers needs. On-line meetings have the added advantage of giving significant flexibility to respond to situations, we can add more training sessions as and when required without the need for significant lead times.

3.1 Attendance

Table 8 Details of adviser training sessions.

	Date and topic	Attendance at live meeting
Training session 1.	15th September, Woodland Creation	58
Training session 2.	30th September, Net Zero	74
Training session 3.	27th October, Brexit preparedness	78

The table 3 details the attendance at live meetings. The presentations and associated resources were circulated to all advisers to enable those who could not attend live to catch up.

3.2 Workshop content and resources

3.2.1 Woodland Creation - what you need to know

Delivered by Tim Gordon-Roberts, Regulations and Development Manager from Scottish Forestry, to cover:

- Why woodland creation is important locally and for Scotland.
- The opportunities, and benefits to the farmer and wider environment.
- Identifying suitable sites for woodland planting.
- The current funding available and how it works for the farmer.
- Providing farmers/land managers with next steps- how to access Information or support if they do want to take this forward.

3.2.1.1 Presentation:

- FAS Woodland [Presentation](#)

3.2.1.2 Guidance:

- Woodland Creation [Application Guidance](#), Forestry Commission Scotland
- Woodland Creation [grant rates and examples](#)

3.2.1.3 Useful Links:

- [Forestry and Grant Schemes Web pages](#)
- [Woodland Carbon Code](#)

3.2.2 Net Zero - What it means for Agriculture?

Delivered by Dave Freeman, Ricardo, to cover:

- What is Net Zero and common terminology
- Drivers to Net Zero
- Measurement and reporting
- Sources of emissions and removals
- Opportunities

3.2.2.1 Presentation:

- FAS [Net Zero Presentation](#)

3.2.2.2 Useful Links:

- [Land use: Policies for a Net Zero UK, Committee on Climate Change](#)
- [Scotland's Climate Change Plan, Scottish Government](#)
- [Farming for 1.5 °](#)

3.2.3 Brexit deal or no deal: prepare for change

Delivered by Kev Bevan, to cover:

- Previous trade arrangement (Single market; third countries)
- The transition period (to new trade arrangement being negotiated)
- The deal currently in negotiation (hard Brexit)
- What no deal means (trading on WTO terms)
- Implications of FTA's with non-EU countries
- Summarize potential impact by farm type (short and long term)

3.2.3.1 Presentation:

- Brexit deal or no deal [presentation](#)

3.2.3.2 Useful Links:

- [Vulnerabilities of supply chains post-Brexit, LSE](#)

4 Adviser FBAASS accreditation

Ricardo work closely with Lantra who manage the FBAASS accreditation of advisers. It is a requirement of advisers delivering ILMPs and Carbon Audits to be FBAASS accredited. Lantra work independently to manage this accreditation process and reaccredit advisers on an annual basis. In accrediting advisers Lantra take into account evidence of ILMP reports that they have reviewed during the previous delivery year. If an adviser is new to the programme or has not delivered an ILMP within the year then they are required to provide further examples of their work for evaluation. In addition to evidence of work, Lantra also stipulate that each adviser must demonstrate continued learning and 20 CPD points during the year.

Lantra are tasked with ensuring the advisor panel is sufficiently robust with approximately 90 advisers and an appropriate ratio of advisers from SAC to other organisations.

4.1 Re-accreditations

At the close of December 2020, there were 81 full advisers and 35 associates March 2020 (115 total advisers), the pool of advisers increased by 14% during the 9 month period. There is growing interest, particularly from advisers wishing to deliver resilience plans and carbon audits for farmers. 53% of the advisers are from SAC Consulting.

5 Review of reports

A new accreditation process was introduced in 2016, to quality check each advisor and create a clear benchmark for the standard which all advisors should achieve – this relates to both technical competences, style and use of language.

Our accreditation process is integrated into our quality assurance process. We conduct a ‘peer’ review with first reports peer reviewed by a panel managed by Lanta. The reviewers provide feedback on areas for improvement (if required) and score reports against the following matrix:

Table 9 Report scoring protocol

Description	Score	Summary
Report clearly lays out how scope has been met	10	Technical advice provided appears to fully meets client requirements
Report meets scope but not fully described in report	9	Technical advice provided appears to substantially meets client requirements
Report meets scope but only partially described in report	8	Minor omission in terms of technical advice
Report doesn't cover one minor element of the scope	7	Significant omission in terms of technical advice
Report doesn't cover or describe why one significant element of scope wasn't covered	6	Major omission in terms of technical advice
Significant omission in terms of scope (e.g. primary focus of report not covered)	5	Wrong technical advice in one part of the report
Major omission in terms of scope (e.g. primary and secondary focus of report not covered)	4	Wrong advice throughout the report
Substantial omissions in terms of scope (i.e. majority not covered)	3	Serious technical errors in most of the report
Serious omissions in terms of scope (i.e. failure to address nearly everything)	2	Serious technical errors in all areas of the report
Nothing in report matches scope (i.e. none of the requested support provided)	1	Insufficient technical information in to allow any assessment (report generic not tailored to the client)

The peer review group have been pleased with the overall quality of reports reviewed, with many considered excellent.

Ricardo work with the advisers to ensure that comments from the peer review are addressed and it is only once these have been addressed that reports are issued to customers. The standard of reports is generally good, if a report scores below 6 the subsequent reports from this adviser will be sent to peer review. Otherwise all reports receive an internal review by Ricardo. Should Ricardo have concerns and require a second opinion the peer review group will provide this facility.

5.1 Standards setting

The Quality Review Group met on a quarterly basis throughout the year for a standard setting day. The group jointly review ILMP reports to ensure consistency in scoring between the group. Jim Seaton, the

head reviewer also provides a secondary review of reports on occasions when a reviewer has significant concerns.

6 Communications

6.1 Website

During 2020, FAS have continued to build the case study portfolio available on the website to ensure there is fresh, engaging material to engage the farmers. With changes to services such as access to woodland management and conservation specialist advice Ricardo have worked closely with Will Searle (SAC) to update the pages and amend the on-line application forms to facilitate new applications. The website continues to be reviewed and refined as new content is developed and hosted.

6.2 Case studies

The one to one programme had a target of developing 6 case studies during the delivery period. It was envisaged that these would be a mix of video and podcast recordings. As the covid-19 restrictions continued to limit travel and face-to-face contact the majority were delivered as podcasts as these could be recorded remotely. The target was met with 5 podcasts (audio recordings) and 1 video.

In the case studies we have tried to achieve a balance of promotion across the schemes and how the support has been used and benefitted a range of holding types, from small crofts to large estates, mainland/island, new entrant and those with long experience, women and men.

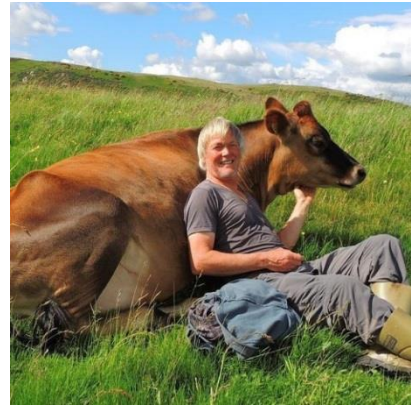
All case studies developed have been hosted on the FAS website and YouTube channel and have been promoted to stakeholders, via the stakeholder pack and the FAS newsletter.

These are all available on the FAS website

- a podcast conversation with a new entrant crofter Catherine Mitchell on her experiences as a mentee. <https://make.headliner.app/download/c2d6e8c8-008d-4891-9014-ea6743678281> Catherine is enthusiastic about the support she received and hopes others will be encouraged to use the service.
- a video case study of one of our mentors- Liz has been supporting new entrant crofter Catherine Mitchell <https://audioboom.com/posts/7582977-breacan-beithe-croft-feeding-the-local-community>, both found it a really rewarding and positive experience.
- An interview with FAS mentor Beth Kendall <https://www.fas.scot/mentoring-new-farmers-crofters/> Beth has 20 years' experience of running a croft with suckler cows, sheep and commercial poultry. She heard about the Service at the end of 2019 through friends and offered her services as a mentor as she wanted to help others and benefit the crofting community.
- A podcast with FAS Mentor John Matteson was produced in September <https://audioboom.com/posts/7726888-mentoring-new-entrants-an-interview-with-john-matheson> . John runs a 300 acre suckler cow enterprise. John's first experience of the FAS was when he was requested as a mentor by a FAS applicant, he has since gone on to mentor several businesses through the programme, providing both practical on farm advice and valuable signposting to other sources of support. The podcast will be uploaded to the FAS website, once this is complete Ricardo will circulate the links and promote via the FAS Newsletter.
- A podcast was recorded with Andrew Farquharson. Andrew undertook a Carbon Audit following a recommendation from Strutt and Parker. Andrew wanted to look at the efficiency of the business. He feels, as a result of the carbon audit that he is now more aware of his carbon impacts and where he can target for efficiency. The audit highlighted a number of actions he will implement on farm. They have already followed up the carbon audit with an ILMP and specialist advice on climate mitigation in which they have looked in more detail at woodland planting options.



- Our final podcast recorded in December is an interview with Mark Foxwell, a successful crofter based in Sutherland who applied for FAS support to improve his crofting business <https://audioboom.com/posts/7779868-living-off-the-land-expert-help-to-support-self-sufficient-croft> . Mark and his wife moved to their croft in the highlands in 2018 to become more self-sufficient. As part of their crofting business, they manage a smallholding of livestock including cows, sheep, pigs and chickens, run a thriving horticultural business and produce tree planting stock. In this podcast, Mark describes how expert help with an ILMP, specialist advice, mentoring and a carbon audit, is helping them make worthwhile improvements to their business and invest in future profitability.



6.3 Articles

Monthly articles promoting the One-to-one service have been published in the FAS newsletter and press releases are circulated to press contacts. During the period April to December, the Rural Matters newsletter which previously published FAS articles on a monthly basis ceased due to difficulties publishing during covid-19 restrictions. Ricardo have recently heard that it will no longer continue in its previous format but will be replaced with an email subscription service, ARE communications have confirmed that they will help promote FAS via their other channels such as social media.

6.4 FAS Infographic

A short animation has been created to promote the one-to-one services available. This is hosted on the FAS website and has been supplied to SAC for inclusion in FAS webinars. A gif has been created from this and is currently hosted on the Scottish Farmer website to promote the service.



<https://www.fas.scot/publication/fas-one-to-one-services-what-you-need-to-know/>

6.5 Social media feed

Ricardo provide Will Searle/Alex Blott, SAC with a twitter and social media schedule, this provides one-to-one content for two tweets per week. Will, issues these via the FAS account.

6.6 Stakeholder pack

The FAS stakeholder pack containing links to all FAS press resources, case studies, press releases, articles and flyers was first developed in December 2017 a new pack is issued on a quarterly basis. The premise of the stakeholder pack is to provide information in order that stakeholders can pick and choose relevant material for inclusion in their own publications. The stakeholder pack is sent to a growing list of stakeholders, currently 183. Links below provide detail of the content of each pack:

- The April 2020 pack focused on promoting the support and resources that are available to farmers to help support businesses through COVID-19. In addition the pack promoted the latest mentoring case study and a podcast illustrating the lessons that can and are being learnt through the BES genomics work. <https://www.fas.scot/downloads/fas-stakeholder-pack-April-2020/>
- The July 2020, stakeholder pack highlights the resilience planning support available to farmers and crofters impacted by the coronavirus lockdown and how integrating trees and woodland could offer businesses a viable opportunity to diversify their enterprises. We also promote the mentoring service with a new podcast and video <https://www.fas.scot/downloads/fas-stakeholder-pack-july-2020/>
- The November 2020 stakeholder pack. Continues the theme of resilience planning from the last issue, FAS again highlights the importance of farmers and crofters investing in business resilience now so they can cope better with the challenges of an uncertain future and potential market change. In this issue of the FAS stakeholder pack, we highlight funding support for resilience planning, and how having an ILMP can help farming businesses identify potential growth opportunities and cost savings. We also feature details of new podcasts made by experienced farmers to help new entrants 'set up shop' and links to a new, 2 minute animated video covering core FAS services https://www.fas.scot/downloads/fas-stakeholder-pack-november-2020/?utm_source=Ricardo-AEA%20Ltd&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=12006983_SFAS%2FNAO%2FED61746005%2FStakeholder_Nov2020&dm_t=0,0,0,0,0

6.7 Stakeholder Meetings

The stakeholder meetings are an opportunity for FAS to discuss delivery plans and provides a forum for information sharing, building collaboration between groups and ensuring that the various streams of advice delivery are complimentary well-coordinated. Two stakeholder meetings were held during the delivery period.

Table 10 The current invitation list for FAS stakeholder meetings

Name	Organisation
Colleen McCulloch	Soil Association
Bruce Pearce	Soil Association
Caroline Wood	Ricardo
Andrew Bauer	SAC
Chris Bailey	RSPB
Allan Young	Land Matching Service
Lyn White	Scottish Forestry
Ian Muirhead	AIC
Neil McCorkindale	SBA
Eleanor Kay	Scottish Land and Estates
Patrick Krause	SCF
Duncan Waldman	SG
Gordon Jackson	SG
Lorna Teague	Lantra
Jim Booth	SAOS

Stephen Young	SLA
Chris Leslie	AHDB
Stuart Martin	Dairy Hub/NFUS
Penny Montgomerie	Chief Executive, Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs
Bruce McConachie	QMS
Mags Granger	RSABI
Jack Dalziel	SG
Will Searle	SAC
Jen Craig	NSA
Peter Begbie	SG
Kevin Patrick	Lantra
Claire Hodge	AHDB
Megan Welford	Soil Association
June Geyer	Women in Agriculture
Jeremy Moody	CAAV/SAAVA
Liz Barron-Majerik	Lantra
Henry Graham	Agricultural Champions
Stewart Hendry	Forestry and Land Scotland
Sarah Allen	Land Commission
Derek Wilson	SG
Liam Allison	SG

- 1st April, as an on-line meeting, the meeting was less well attended than the normal 'physical' meeting, there were 12 on the call. The agenda covered the; Annual Business Plans for FAS and new ways of working in light of Covid, SAC updated on the changes that are underway to further develop AgREcalc and Ricardo delivered a session on what carbon neutrality means for agriculture.
- 11th September, via Teams, with 20 attendees on the call. The meeting provided a progress reports on FAS delivery, an update from Scottish Government on FAS 2021 and the procurement situation, a discussion of future priorities for FAS and an overview of SAOS activities from Jim Booth. There was a good level of discussion and engagement in this meeting.

FAS are keen to grow the stakeholder involvement and happy to expand this group if there are others who are interested in attending.

6.8 FBAASS Advisers Newsletters

A FAS newsletter to distributed to FBAASS advisers to ensure they are kept up to date on the programme and are informed of any new developments. The newsletter is released approximately bi-monthly, but this is dependent on need. Our experience is that advisers do not have time to read communications, therefore we try to collate information and keep newsletters punchy to try to ensure that they receive due attention.

- April 2020 Adviser newsletter <https://fas-scot.com/DA4-6SSKD-CAPFJ077D8/cr.aspx>
- June 2020, a newsletter was issued in June to remind advisers that resilience plans are available without a need for a prior ILMP and to let them know that resilience plans can be delivered to specifically address coronavirus (COVID-19) risks to farming businesses. This could involve developing emergency plans, considering risks in the supply chain or change within the wider market conditions.

- The October FBAASS adviser newsletter was released on 30th October, this provided a follow up to adviser training and all relevant presentations and guidance material <https://fas-scot.com/DA4-73UNF-E5EE0EEEC8EFD6CPFJ0774D14DE2E70578FD4/cr.aspx>

7 RSABI support

FAS work closely with RSABI to ensure that farmers and crofters in need are able to access professional support swiftly. RSABI act as a gatekeeper and refer farmers to FAS who they have identified needing specialist advice often as a matter of urgency. . It was agreed by Scottish Government that in these limited circumstances farmers will be allowed access directly to specialist advice without the need for a prior/or corresponding ILMP. The specialist advice will receive funding up to a limit of £1,000. This service is well used, and the advisers brought in to deliver this support show great willing to prioritise this work and get out to the businesses as quickly as possible. The advice is not always what the business wants to hear, and in these cases RSABI are able to broker discussions and help support the business throughout.

8 Other Initiatives

8.1 Succession Planning survey

The Ricardo team undertook a telephone follow up to all businesses who had applied for succession planning specialist advice. From a review of the database it was apparent that most succession planning applicants had not moved forward with the advice. Ricardo sought to understand why this might be and if there is some further element of support needed. Feedback confirmed that the ILMP and the need to complete this ahead of succession advice was a factor in these delays. On occasion the delays were due to the adviser, but often just the time that elapsed between application and delivery caused the business's enthusiasm to cool. Ricardo concluded that tightening the process and enabling succession planning specialist advice to be more immediate would prime action. As a result of this information Scottish Government agreed to amend the rules and allow succession planning specialist advice to be delivered ahead, or without an ILMP (as per resilience advice).

8.2 Cleansing the database

Significant work was undertaken to cleanse the database of applications and to withdraw any grants which were no longer required, this ensured the accuracy of reporting. All advisers with work committed to the programme received an account of what they had in the pipeline and the required delivery dates. Advisers were asked to notify Ricardo if there are any changes to requirements, in parallel farm businesses with outstanding grants were also consulted. This resulted in a number of grants being withdrawn, which caused negative application figures in some months but will ultimately ensure that the data we hold and report on the delivery pipeline is as accurate as possible.

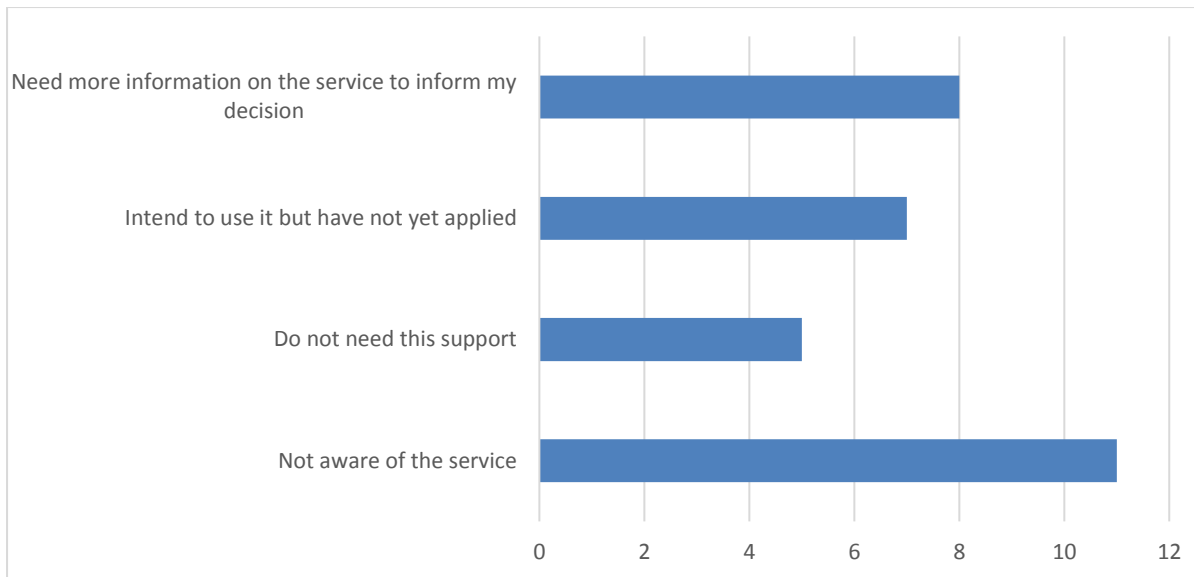
8.3 New entrants survey

A short survey was developed to help us to identify if there are barriers to the uptake of mentoring advice. It also provided an opportunity to promote awareness of the service. This was circulated to members of the New Entrant's Discussion Groups and was also promoted in articles in the FAS newsletter. The survey received 45 responses, 71% of whom had not used the mentoring service to date. Details of the responses are summarised in the chart below. The commentary provided gives a useful insight into common misconceptions of the programme which FAS will continue to address in marketing communications:

1. That this support is only available to young farmers.

2. That you could only apply if you had been a successful applicant to the new entrant/Start-up funding from Scottish Government.

Figure 4 Feedback on reasons for not using the mentoring service

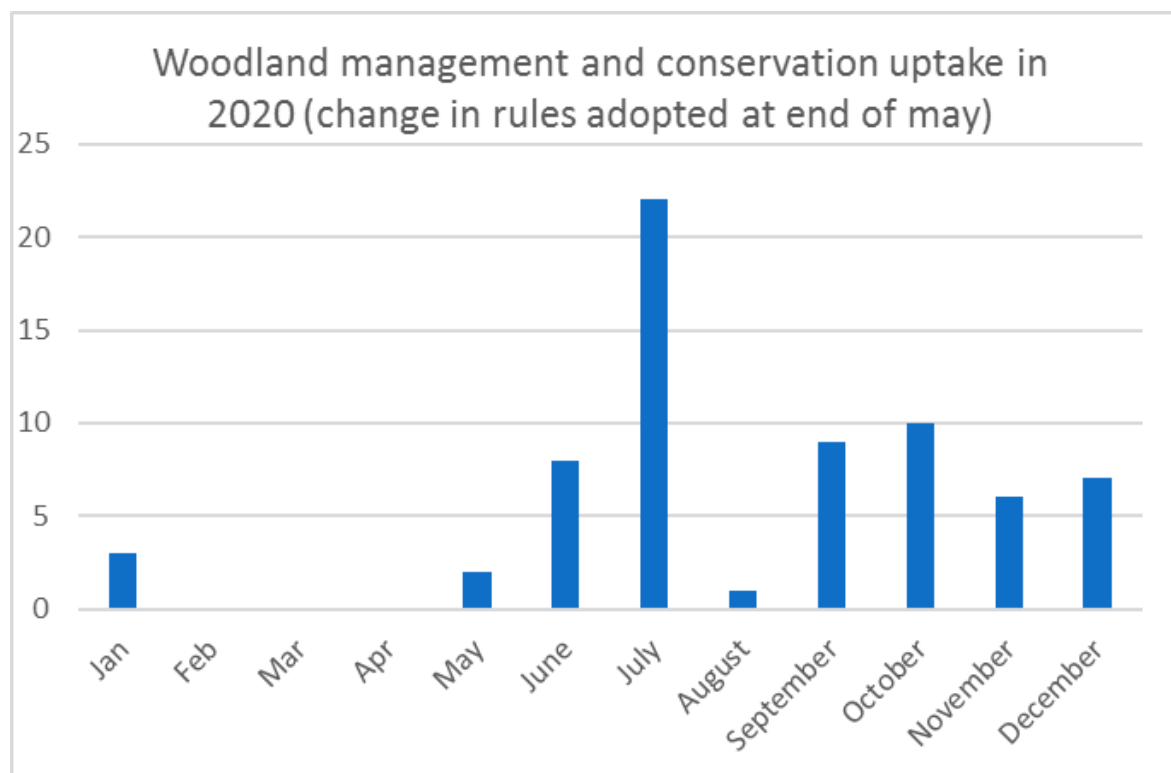


29 of the 31 respondents who had not used the mentoring service to date agreed that FAS could contact them with more information and provided contact details. Ricardo followed up with these individuals. During the period that the survey was distributed the application rate for mentoring doubled.

8.4 Re-launch of Woodland Specialist Advice

In May 2020, upon agreement with Scottish Government, the requirement to complete an ILMP prior to accessing funding support for woodland creation was lifted. Since 1 May, Scottish farmers and crofters have been able to apply for up to £1,000 of funding through the FAS to enlist the help of a specialist adviser to help with woodland creation. Ricardo worked to amend the application process, website and programme documentation and liaised closely with Lyn White (Scottish Forestry) to promote this opportunity to both land managers and forestry advisers. The change had a dramatic effect to increase the application rate for this advice.

Figure 5: Woodland management and conservation applications (2020)



8.5 Application process now fully electronic

In order to reduce the administrative burden on farmers Ricardo sought to bring the whole application and administrative process on-line. Scottish Government made checks with auditors to ensure that this was compliant with RDP requirements and approval was received in March 2020. Covid restrictions necessitated a rapid adoption of this new process, advisers were briefed, and the new process implemented within a week. This has enabled the programme to proceed as normal and we no longer require applicants to post documents or Ricardo staff to access offices to receive them.

9 Payment Mechanisms

9.1 Approach to payment

Ricardo administer the payments directly to advisers on the Scottish Government's behalf. Ricardo operate a separate bank account with funds being drawn down into the dedicated bank account in accordance with financial profiling. We have developed this process to ensure the following:

- No monies are awarded without evidence of the work being completed or support being provided (evidence saved onto the CRM).
- All monies to be paid in arrears.
- The monies are ring-fenced and separated from Ricardo's own accounts.

9.1.1 Overview of payment transfers

In the period 1st April 2020 to 31st December 2020 Ricardo administered 9 pay-runs, delivered on a rolling 4 weekly cycle.



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