

Case study

New Entrant Journey: Highland Cattle for Woodland Regeneration

Using FAS support to develop an ILMP that shapes sustainable land management



Name: **Kate Tuer, Dalness Estate**

This case study shares Kate's journey as a new entrant farmer managing a Highland estate, who introduced Highland Cattle to support woodland regeneration and grassland improvement. Kate drew on FAS resources to develop her Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP), gaining expert guidance to shape her approach.

What inspired you, as a new entrant, to pursue farming or crofting?

As the manager of a diverse Highland estate, I was constantly faced with balancing competing land uses and trying to find ways to make them complement one another rather than conflict. We had large areas of woodland regeneration underway and upland grassland that needed improvement, so introducing Highland Cattle felt like a natural solution.

Their hardiness and ability to graze outdoors year-round meant they could play a role in reducing scrub and bracken, while also contributing positively to the estate's wider ecological goals.

What were your initial goals or vision for your farm/croft?

My vision was centred on creating a system where healthy cattle could thrive outdoors while actively contributing to the landscape. I wanted them to graze in a way that benefited native woodlands, helping to reduce bracken, briars, and other invasive growth that had taken hold. At the same time, I hoped to restore grassland areas in the upper glens, which had suffered from historic overgrazing. It was about harmony between livestock, wildlife, and habitat.

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Why did you apply for an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP)?

We had already been using FAS as a reliable source of information, so when the ILMP was advertised there, it immediately caught my attention. At that stage, we were looking for structured support to help us make informed decisions, and the programme seemed to offer exactly that. The combination of learning materials, site assessments, and tailored advice in one package was appealing because it provided practical guidance alongside expert input. For a new entrant, having access to that kind of resource felt like a valuable opportunity to strengthen our approach and avoid costly mistakes early on.

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What did your advisor help you in these early stages of your business?

Jenny, our advisor, brought a fresh perspective to our farm business model and helped us see beyond the immediate challenges. She was able to draw on her experience to highlight routes we hadn't considered, and she provided examples that made the options clearer and more achievable.

One of the most significant contributions was the soil sampling, which revealed a very different picture than we had assumed. That insight alone changed how we approached grazing and land management. Her guidance gave us confidence to adapt our plans, knowing they were grounded in evidence rather than assumptions.

What benefits do you anticipate for your business as a result of having the ILMP?

The initial support gave us confidence to manage and improve the available grazing, and streamline the herd size, quality and breeding programme to match the land capability much more quickly than we might have otherwise! We sell surplus store bullocks and hope to sell pedigree heifers in future as the herd develops. Importantly, Highland Cattle are now embedded in the estate's long-term plans, not as a separate enterprise but as part of the wider land management strategy.

Would you recommend ILMP to other new entrants?

Yes absolutely! The programme provides a level of expert input that helps guard against the temptation to rely on assumptions or follow practices that may be common but not necessarily best. The advice we received informed our decision-making from the very beginning and continues to do so now. Having access to structured support and professional insight makes the journey less daunting and more rewarding. I would strongly encourage others to take advantage of it, as it can make a real difference to both confidence and outcomes in those early stages.

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