

## SCOTTISH FARMING AND LAND MANAGEMENT NEEDS MUST BE RECOGNISED

The unique nature of Scottish farming and land management has to be recognised within UK rural policy after Brexit, Scottish Land & Estates has said.

The rural business organisation has this week responded to DEFRA's consultation, Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit. A copy of SLE's response can be read [here](#).

Whilst the consultation is primarily focused on farming and land use south of the Border, SLE has warned that DEFRA needs to work collaboratively to develop shared policy across the home nations and avoid a level of divergence that would distort the market.

Among the key points raised by Scottish Land & Estates in its response:-

- Land management would have benefitted from UK and devolved administrations jointly agreeing on the common frameworks and the practical issues of how these frameworks will work prior to each administration developing its own policy and support mechanisms.
- The current devolution settlement should be respected and maintained but Farming Ministers across the UK should ensure that potential differences in application of agricultural policy should not adversely impact on internal trade, threaten to curtail access for other parts of the UK to third country markets or affects the UKs adherence to its international agreements.
- The organisation is supportive of the general direction of travel of focusing support for farming more clearly on the delivery of public goods but has concerns about an approach that seeks to phase direct support out altogether.
- With Scotland home to 80% of land designated as LFA, it is important that Scotland is be able to support farming and land management in these areas and so what England does on supporting remote farming will be important to avoid large policy divergence.

David Johnstone, chairman of Scottish Land & Estates, said: "Whilst we understand the need to press on with developing agricultural policy post-Brexit, it remains worrying that we still don't have agreement on the fundamental structures under which that policy will operate.

"It is clear from DEFRA's consultation that they are further ahead with developing future agricultural policy than we are in Scotland and that leads to a risk whereby the choices now starting to be made south of the border could leave Scotland with less room to move in shaping its own priorities moving forward.

"Whilst Scottish Land & Estates has recognised the direction of travel, with support being provided in return for public goods, we cannot have a situation that is implemented in England without due consideration to supporting farming on poorer quality land in remote regions of Scotland. There are distinctive land management systems in Scotland so any decision taken must satisfy the nature of farming in all parts of the UK.