

PRESS RELEASE

17 August 2018

LONG-TERM VISION REQUIRED FOR SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE

Scotland must seize the opportunity to carry out a comprehensive review of how the nation's agricultural sector is to move forward in the long-term, Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) has said today.

The organisation made the comments as part of its response to the [Scottish Government's Stability and Simplicity consultation](#) - examining the post-Brexit transition phase for agriculture - which concluded this week.

SLE said it welcomed the clarity that the Scottish Government is seeking to provide in the short-term - but warned that the significant sectoral change needed to deliver long-term resilience should not be kicked into the long grass.

David Johnstone, chairman of Scottish Land & Estates said: "Whilst we appreciate that the Stability and Simplicity consultation focuses on the short-term transitional period, there is a clear need to seize this opportunity to open a larger review of where and how Scottish agriculture might move forward.

"The Scottish Government has to be commended for seeking to provide more certainty to the sector but we have to acknowledge that other factors such as trade and access to labour will impact significantly on Scottish agriculture, as will any common frameworks either at an EU or UK level. These issues must be considered alongside Scottish Government policies and funding mechanisms.

"We need to do more to increase the resilience of Scottish agriculture and also to increase the clarity of messaging around priorities for land use and land management - this was required regardless of the Brexit situation. For too long a sectoral approach has been taken which has resulted in farming, forestry, conservation and moorland management operating separately. Future land use policy and funding frameworks should help break down the silos rather than reinforce them.

"The Ministerial Foreword to the consultation states that 'change now seems inevitable' - the government and the industry needs to act on this, not defer real change for future review and implementation from or after 2024."

The organisation added that it was concerned that the pace of change in other regions of the UK may disadvantage Scotland in terms of discussions on common frameworks, budgets and trade deals.

Mr Johnstone continued: “The fragility of Scottish agriculture is not solely down to Brexit, and this must be recognised. There are issues which will have to be addressed which are not directly associated with the Brexit transition – such as supply chain issues, demographics of those involved in the sector, infrastructure, addressing the challenges in delivering a thriving tenanted sector and the lack of viability of some farming models or enterprises. These thorny issues must be tackled during the transition phase. Change is inevitable and the impact of any change on the sector or parts of the sector – such as smaller units on marginal land – must be fully recognised and addressed without delay.

“If we look at what is being considered in other parts of the UK, Wales is looking to a more radical approach to supporting the sector – moving from direct support at holding level to more sectoral/collaborative economic resilience schemes. We believe that this is something that the Scottish Government should explore during the transition phase.

“We need to move the debate away from individual winners and losers at a holding level to an approach which delivers the desired outcomes in the most effective way.”

ENDS

A copy of Scottish Land & Estates’ consultation response is available on request.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Scottish Land & Estates

Scottish Land & Estates is a membership organisation for landowners, rural businesses and rural professionals.

Scottish Land & Estates promotes the wide range of benefits land-based businesses provide: tourist attractions, leisure facilities and landscapes enjoyed by the public, as well as, housing, employment, tourism & enterprise and farming opportunities.

For more information, visit www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk