



**MOUNTAINEERING  
SCOTLAND**  
WALKCLIMBSKI

## **Delivering our Vision for Scottish Agriculture**

### **Proposals for a new Agriculture Bill**

A consultation from the Scottish Government

This was a wide-ranging consultation on various aspects of agricultural support mechanisms. Mountaineering Scotland comments are restricted to the sections that touch on the funding mechanisms for path creation and management.

Bill Consultation page number: pp 8-17

#### **A Future payment framework**

*a) Do you agree with the proposal set out above, in relation to the Agriculture Bill including a mechanism to enable payments to be made under a 4-tiered approach?*

Yes

Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with more than 15,000 members and is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers, mountaineers and ski tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains. We represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering, and provide training and information to mountain users for safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.

Walkers and climbers move through the landscape from roadside to mountain or crag destinations. Our interests lie with the ability to do this through our statutory right of access, exercised responsibly, without difficulties being created for outdoor recreation activities or agricultural management operations. There are benefits to land managers if recreational access is facilitated, and support funded from the public purse can assist with this.

A recent members' survey in 2019 indicated that 93% of members say climate change is very important or fairly important to them. Regarding land management and wildlife, respondents would welcome Government policy on public financial support to benefit the mountain environment (90%), restoring natural processes in Wild Land Areas (83%), and management of wild and domestic animals for the benefit of nature (78%).

*b) Do you agree that Tier 1 should be a 'Base Level Direct Payment' to support farmers and crofters engaged in food production and land management?*

Yes

Mountaineering Scotland supports the proposal as providing a basic income to farmers and crofters is essential, for food production, wildlife management, and sustaining rural communities. We also think that access rights to land and inland water, exercised responsibly, are acknowledged as a public good and much valued by the public. We therefore urge the Scottish Government to include

a provision relating to Scottish outdoor access rights and responsibilities as one of the essential standards farmers and crofters must meet in order to receive this Tier 1 income.

There would be benefits if Whole Farm Plans included public paths and popular informal access routes and where car parks, gates and stiles, etc, are located on the estate, farm or croft. This would help the manager to carry out their work with recreational access as a factor to consider, and to inform future land uses, such as tree planting.

If recreational access is reported as being obstructed, contrary to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 or the guidance contained in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, the land manager may be subject to cross-compliance regulations to ensure that the public good is maintained.

*c) Do you agree that Tier 2 should be an 'Enhanced Level Direct Payment' to deliver outcomes relating to efficiencies, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and nature restoration and enhancement?*

Yes-

Many hillwalkers and climbers value the landscape setting and the wildlife found there. Support for management to ensure extensive habitat diversity and connectivity in the uplands would be of public benefit.

*d) Do you agree that Tier 3 should be an Elective Payment to focus on targeted measures for nature restoration, innovation support and supply chain support?*

Yes

*e) Do you agree that Tier 4 should be complementary support as the proposal outlines above? If so what sort of Complementary Support do you think would be best to deliver the Vision?*

Yes

Public funding through agricultural support mechanisms has in the past been important, and successful, in providing for recreational access through and across farmland. The Improving Public Access (IPA) scheme has provided £11m of funding since 2014 and is very popular with land managers, it often being oversubscribed.

Land managers may have little economic benefit from providing paths, infrastructure, and its maintenance from their own income. The benefits accrue to community use and protecting the environment, and it is appropriate that recreational access work be enabled from public funding. Our opinion is that it is essential that funding for enabling recreational access is continued in future agricultural support schemes.

We therefore support a Complementary Support scheme similar scheme to the current IPA system with a menu of capital items and maintenance activities, with appropriate grant funding levels available.

The Scottish People and Nature Report 2017 estimated 9.8 million hillwalking trips in Scotland annually with 88% of these trips involving use of a path. Options are very limited for managers of

upland areas to apply for funding for paths which are badly eroded, causing damage to the environment and the look of the landscape, and we suggest that a future scheme along these lines consider two additional aspects:

- options for upland paths which differ in character from a standard prescription suitable for enclosed farmland, and
- options for routine maintenance activities, such as drain clearance and repair.

*f) Do you agree that a 'Whole Farm Plan' should be used as eligibility criteria for the 'Base Level Direct Payment' in addition to Cross Compliance Regulations and Greening measures?*

Yes

We agree that the Whole Farm Plan should be used as eligibility criteria, with the addition of our suggestion in Question b) that public recreational access is included as an element of the Whole Farm Plan.

*g) Do you agree that the new Agriculture Bill should include a mechanism to help ensure a Just Transition?*

Yes

*h) Do you agree that the new Agriculture Bill should include mechanisms to enable the payment framework to be adaptable and flexible over time depending on emerging best practice, improvements in technology and scientific evidence on climate impacts?*

Yes

*i) Do you agree that the new Agriculture Bill should include mechanisms to enable payments to support the agricultural industry when there are exceptional or unforeseen conditions or a major crises affecting agricultural production or distribution?*

Yes

## **B Delivery of Key Outcomes**

### **Climate change**

*a) Do you agree with the proposal set out above, in relation to the new Agriculture Bill including measures to allow future payments to support climate change mitigation objectives? Do you have any views on specific powers and/or mechanisms that could support such alignment?*

Yes

*b) Do you agree with the proposal set out above, in relation to the new Agriculture Bill including measures to allow future payments to support climate change adaptation objectives? Do you have any views on specific powers and/or mechanisms that could support such alignment?*

Yes

*c) Do you agree with the proposal set out above, in relation to the new Agriculture Bill including a mechanism to enable payments to be made that are conditional on outcomes that support climate mitigation and adaptation measures, along with targeted elective payments?*

Yes

*d) Do you agree with the proposal set out above, in relation to the new Agriculture Bill including measures that support integrated land management, such as peatland and woodland outcomes on farms and crofts, in recognition of the environmental, economic and social benefits that it can bring?*

Yes

### **Nature protection and restoration**

*a) Do you believe the new Agriculture Bill should include a mechanism to protect and restore biodiversity, support clean and healthy air, water and soils, contribute to reducing flood risk locally and downstream and create thriving, resilient nature?*

Yes

*b) Do you believe the new Agriculture Bill should include a mechanism to enable payments that are conditional on outcomes that support nature maintenance and restoration, along with targeted elective payments?*

Yes

*c) Do you believe the new Agriculture Bill should include a mechanism to enable landscape/catchment scale payments to support nature maintenance and restoration?*

Yes

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### **Wider rural development**

*a) Do you agree that the proposals outlined above should be included in the new Agriculture Bill?*

Yes

Please refer to our statements in Part A of this consultation.

Mountaineering Scotland strongly supports the inclusion of “Activity in and financial support for public access and the understanding of land use” within this part of the consultation. We believe this is a fundamental part of supporting sustainable rural communities.

We draw attention to the National Performance Framework, where under the Environment Outcome there is a Performance Indicator for Visits to the Outdoors. Providing well maintained paths which people will use to enjoy their recreational activity is key to achieving this Performance Indicator and is a means to achieving targets for health and wellbeing. Public access provision can also contribute in a general sense to the wider rural economy as VisitScotland estimated in its 2017 Walking Topic Paper that long walks, hikes or rambles generated £776 million over the year.

*b) Are there other areas relating to non-agricultural land management such as forestry that you would like considered for support under the Agriculture Bill to help deliver integrated land management and the products produced from it?*

Yes

Forestry is an essential land-use sector to integrate with agriculture. The same arguments above for enclosed farmland and upland apply to forestry plantations and new woodland planting targets.

*c) What other powers may be required to enable rural development in Scotland's rural and island communities?* No comment

*d) What potential social, economic or other impacts, either positive or negative, would such powers have on Scotland's rural and island communities?* No comment

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