

Delivering our Vision for Scottish Agriculture. Proposals for a new Agriculture Bill - Consultation

05/December/2022

Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) is an umbrella body for organisations working in the built environment in Scotland. Drawing on extensive expertise in a membership-led forum, BEFS informs, debates and advocates on the strategic issues, opportunities and challenges facing Scotland's historic and contemporary built environment. BEFS is a supporting member of the [Climate Heritage Network](#).

Other relevant consultation responses from BEFS can be seen below, as many issues overlap and demand associative consideration:

- [Draft National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\) Consultation](#)
- [Land Reform Net Zero Nation Consultation](#)
- [Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy Consultation](#)

BEFS Statement:

BEFS welcomes this consultation on the Scottish Government's Vision for Agriculture but is concerned that the proposed new bill fails to recognise the contribution of the historic environment and any connection to existing historic environment policies and guidance. This is a missed opportunity - the historic environment is a key part of Scotland's landscapes. Farmers, crofters and land managers look after a significant amount of our archaeological heritage and built historic environment, such as drystone walls, hedgerows and historic rural buildings.

The existing and historic built environment, whilst often recognised in part, frequently lacks full integration within other national policies; it delivers ecosystems services benefits including habitats, carbon retention and supporting soil health. We know that existing buildings and infrastructure are positive solutions across a variety of policy areas, they should not sit separately. BEFS considers the importance of ensuring that the historic environment is integrated into the agri-environment process; a system which recognises the symbiotic nature of heritage and landscape would reveal opportunities for funding for the effective management of heritage assets, conserving or enhancing them for a range of social, environmental, or economic benefits.

BEFS recognises that Scottish Government proposes to align Scottish agricultural funding with the EU's Common Agricultural Policy objectives, which include the management of landscapes and of landscape features. We would however reiterate our concern that the consultation paper is silent on the contribution of the historic environment. Any modern system of agricultural payments should recognise both the importance of the historic environment and incentivise farmers to look after it to ensure that, through good management, it can continue to benefit people now and in the future.

If, at the very least, the current system for farm payments - where some funding is channelled towards heritage projects and general stewardship - is not maintained, there will very likely be detrimental impacts in the long term. However, there is scope to do much more by including the historic environment - designated and undesignated - on the face of the bill, and to raise the profile of the historic environment at this early stage of the legislative process.

BEFS supports a thorough integrated approach to seeking cross-cutting benefits from any agri-environment scheme interventions on historic assets. For example, maintaining the existing historic and built environment - such as stone walls or historic agricultural buildings - can provide valuable habitat for species.

We consider that the historic environment is a positive asset towards meeting the Scottish Government's wider goals, including contributing to the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change; integrated

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agri-environment schemes would unlock cross-cutting benefits. An example of what can be achieved is set by Wales, in their recent agricultural bill.

BEFS responses to a number of Consultations in relation to the Built Environment can be found at: <https://www.befs.org.uk/resources/consultations/>

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference: **Publish response with name**

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise? **YES**

I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy. **I CONSENT**