

SIMPLIFICATION TASKFORCE
Update Meeting
Thursday 27th June 2019 – Saughton House – B3

ATTENDEES

SG

Douglas Petrie Chair
Marcus Mackenzie
Andrew Watson (after parliamentary session)
Heather Campbell
Eddie Turnbull
Yvonne Nova (Secretariat)

Apologies

Claudia Rowse
Sion Williams
David Lawrie
Robert Fleming
Anne Rae MacDonald
Aimee Budge

External Panel Members

Jonnie Hall
Hamish Lean
Gail Watt
Jennifer Struthers
Kirsten Williams
Donald McKinnon – Lerwick VC

1. Welcome & Coffee

Douglas welcomed everyone to the room and set out the format for the meeting, explaining that Andrew Watson (Agenda item 6) was attending a parliamentary session and would join the group later and the Agenda may change to accommodate this.

2. Minutes from last meeting

No amendments and accepted

3. Simplification ideas, Taskforce, NFUS & Internal ideas to 2020

Marcus circulated a paper with a summary of the main themes and ideas generated by the Simplification Consultation from all staff, the sub-groups and associated bodies. Marcus gave a resume of the paper (with discussion) and an update on changes since the last meeting.. Marcus noted that there were a number of entries that require endorsement, as follows:

a. Mapping – Land change cut-off date

More information required from other countries on how they deal with submissions after close date, to base our model on. Careful consideration will be needed on the cut-off date coinciding with historical land transfer dates etc..

Emphasis through effective communication should be made, that maps are the responsibility of the farmer to update/maintain and notify and SG should enforce this

responsibility. Detailed business impact analysis will also be required. Protection for farmers/growers must be ensured.

Action Point – Enquire about other countries protocols in relation to map submission cut off dates – Kirsten Williams

Recommendation

Panel agreed in principle to take forward. SG to undertake Business Analysis taking into account points raised above. Feedback from Kirsten to be included in the analysis.

b. Interpretation of Guidance

Essential for both SG and appellant to adhere to timescales. Steps in progress/in place to improve adherence.

Recommendation

Review in 12 months to verify whether deadlines are being met.

c. Non Land Inspections and Penalties

More/better use of warning letters (yellow card system) rather than issue of Penalties for 1st offences. Nothing can realistically be achieved in the short term but this should be fed into the 2021-2024 Policy/Delivery Coordinator Group as a principle of future operational controls.

Recommendation

Panel agreed in principle.

d. Inspections Charter

Working examples are in place in other countries e.g. Ireland. SG and representatives from NFUS have been in discussion on this topic separately from the Task Force.

Communication very important, and gives farmers/growers more tools (checklist system prior to applications etc.) to assist in compliance and reducing stress. This links in with the proposed use of 'yellow cards'.

Re -introduction of a FAQ's type page required – 'Common problems and how do you fix them'

Have legal requirements as an annex to lessen fear to customers, making it more collaborative and encourages customer engagement

Livestock Team have already started work around this and outcomes will be shared with the group.

Recommendation

Panel agreed in principle to take this forward.

- e. Change of notification period for inspections from unannounced (0-3 hours) to 24 hours minimum as default starting point.

The issue of advance notice has been discussed at a number of different forums. There are pros and cons to having a longer notice period to help prepare for an inspection.

Recommendation

Panel agreed in principle for SG to make enquiries as to whether it can be taken forward under CAP rules but recognised that there are pros and cons to increased notification times.

- f. Communications

Panel was shown an example of the new Customer Guidance: Instructional Videos that will be made available on RP&S, Youtube, and Social Media. Panel members liked the content, format and availability of the videos and agreed that this was the way forward whilst agreeing that a blended approach would still be required.

Communication must be clear and consistent across all Agencies, SG and external Bodies etc.

Douglas updated on the current project relating to Reductions & Exclusions letters stating that it was at the user information gathering stage currently.

AP – Land Map and customer guidance videos to be distributed to the panel – Marcus

- g. Applications – 100% online applications

Currently no agreement for recommending 100% online applications for SAF 2020 onwards.

Does this suggestion alienate people that have no/unreliable broadband access or are IT reluctant? Marcus noted that RPID offer 'assisted digital' appointments within all area offices to help support those customers who have barriers to move to applying for schemes online.

Recommendation

Panel agreed in principle to recommend:

- **Aim for 100% online applications but in a non-mandatory manner**
- **Provide a support mechanism i.e. toolkit, drop in sessions at AO for guidance/provision of IT facilities,**

- **Continued availability of pre-populated forms but at Customer Request only**

h. Policy/Scheme Implementation – Capital Grant rates

Good in principle but take into account remote areas/islands/remote mainland in relation to higher costs.

Further investigation required.

i. Forestry Grants

Marcus noted that the joint report by the Forestry Customer representative Group and the Taskforce has yet to be published..

4. **Pilots post 2021**

Invitation extended to the panels members and STF members not in attendance to submit correspondence to Marcus via email around this point.

5. **Future taskforce direction**

Douglas updated on the proposed way forward for the Simplification Taskforce.

- The STF has contributed very well to the topics raised and the sub-group discussions. Douglas noted that the current format has completed its purpose and in future we would ask members, where willing, to act as a sounding board for future progress on Simplification as we move into new Policy formulation.
- Continue to engage with the panel members electronically from now on until next meeting, tba.
- We would aim to arrange a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary (Mr Ewing) and representatives from the Simplification Taskforce (STF), 2021-2024 Policy/Delivery Coordinator Group and Food and Farming Group- Post 2024, mid to late summer to join all of this work together.
- .
- Report to be written and distributed by end of year to update on what the STF has achieved and what is to be taken forward.

6. **Future Food and Farming Group**

Andrew gave an update on the Food and Farming Group - Post 2024 which was launched by Mr Ewing at The Royal Highland Show (June 2019), and that information had already been published in regard to the Group and its focus.

7. **Round up of Meeting**

Douglas thanked the external panel members present for the support, advice and contributions they had made to the Simplification taskforce and hoped for their continued support in the future.

Annex A

Simplification Task Force – Themes 27/06/19

The output from the work undertaken by the Task Force, Sub-groups and from internal ideas cover a wider range of aspects. Such as:

Entries requiring endorsement by Task Force in red.

Land Inspections

Inspections improvements/Simplification ideas have focused on the following:

- Planning – efficient prioritisation
- Process – remove non-value add activities,
- Training – Timely and adequate
- Communications – communicate best practice, identify barriers and remove
- SG commitment to ensuring 2019 data is returned with updated maps to customer prior to the 2020 SAF window opening.

Mapping

- The new mapping system (Land Parcel Identification System – LPIS) to support area based payments, which will enhance and simplify the customer experience when applying for CAP support.
- The major enhancement the customer will notice is access to a new GIS (Geographical Information System) Viewer which will replace the current View Only Maps viewer in Rural Payment & Services (RP&S), it will also give the customer the ability to submit new land changes on-line.
- New LPIS viewer will show Inspection layers which should provide some of these benefits
- To ensure discrepancies are avoided, we will continue to review all sources which identify map changes such as customer submitted Land Maintenance Forms (LMF's), land inspection results, Aerial Photography and Ordinance Survey Mastermap updates, but ultimately it is still the customers responsibility to only claim for eligible land in each land parcel.
- If map changes are identified by review of new information (as described above) we will complete the necessary map updates and inform the customer and request they review the changes to confirm they are correct.
- If a customer identifies any new changes (such as: sale or purchase of land; an amended boundary or new buildings in a field) they will complete a Land Maintenance Form (LMF), just as they did before.
- These actions will ensure a customer's map information is kept up to date and accurate for any future CAP scheme application and claim processing.
- **Should there be a cut-off date for land changes being notified for the coming SAF processing year. Other countries do this.**

AECS

- Training – adopt/standardise best practice
- Process - improvement
- Communications – share best practice, develop co-ordinators network
- Guidance – review, improve accessibility,

- SG will endeavour to make the AECS management prescriptions simpler to adhere to in future scheme years.
- SG will develop pilot agri-environment schemes for the years beyond 2020

Interpretation of Guidance/Appeals

- Refresher training throughout for all involved to ensure consistency.
- Improved delivery of the management of appeals to ensure consistency of approach and timescales for both the appellant and SG.

Non-land inspections and penalties

- New Livestock Inspections System introduced in 2019 providing early streamlining of inspections process. The main benefits will be seen by inspectors but any streamlining can have knock on benefits for keepers (although limited at this stage). Improvement process similar to the Land Inspections/AECS Hot house work.
- **Improve the use of warning letters – more yellow card use to reduce penalties.**
- RPID to work to support compliance with producers.
- Improved inspections procedures for better customer experience
- SG to review animal inspections and traceability as far as record keeping is concerned and that requirements are necessitated by law..
- **Possible introduction of an 'Inspections Charter' with checklists for all types of producer. Encourage self-inspection (using checklists) on a regular basis to record activity. Could help inspections process for producer and SG.**

Communications

- SG taking forward a wider Improved Communications project looking to simplify understanding by making better and clearer use of:
 - Letters
 - Communications log
 - Checklists
 - Guide sheets
 - **Screen capture instructional videos**

Applications

- **Should all applications move to online only where there is an online option. SAF currently at 90% online.**

Policy/scheme Implementation

- Increased use of pre-approval visits for Pillar II schemes where time allows in future years thereby Improving understanding and support of Pillar II schemes.
- **Investigate standardisation of grant rates and specifications for capital items across schemes.**
- SG investigate benefits to undertake all Animal By-product premises management rather than using APHA at cost.

Forestry Grants

- Barriers and potential solutions have been identified for small scale woodland creation, working with the Forestry Customer Representative Group. Report drafted, to be published.
- Streamline and provide application support/consultation for small woodland schemes.
- Improve FGS payment performance.

NFUS and STF suggestions/ideas

- The NFUS consultation response has been distilled to identify their specific ideas for simplification (41 suggestions). Most (if not all) contribute to the period post 2020.

Stability and Simplification beyond 2020

- All consultation responses analysed for all Pillar I and II questions.
- The majority of ideas from internal staff, NFUS and the respondents to the 2018 consultation will contribute to the thinking for:
- 2021-2024 Policy/Delivery Coordinator Group, and
- Food and Farming Group- Post 2024.

