

Environment and Forestry  
Directorate

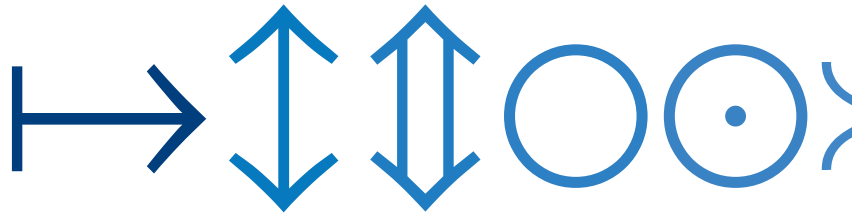
Natural Resources Division

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Secretariat on behalf of the  
High Nature Value Farming Coalition  
c/o RSPB Scotland  
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Your ref:  
Our ref: 2013/0014463  
July 2013

Dear Ms Swales,

Thank you for your letter of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013 to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment. I have been asked to respond on his behalf.

I have consulted with a number of colleagues regarding the five steps that you have outlined relating to High Nature Value farming and will comment on them in turn:

1. 'Through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) ensure that High Nature Value farmers are properly rewarded for supporting our most precious wildlife and landscapes.'

As part of the next CAP, Scotland will be moving from historical to area based payments. The CAP payment scenarios modelled for Scottish Government by the James Hutton Institute (JHI) indicate a redistribution of funding from intensive farms towards the more extensive hill farms. In all the scenarios High Nature Value (HNV) farms appear to benefit from that redistribution.

In addition, the rural development measures within the CAP provide funding for agri-environment schemes. The next Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) for 2014-2020 will include a range of agri-environment options which support farmers to carry out wildlife friendly management. These options are being developed in close collaboration with stakeholders through a series of working groups and workshops.

2. 'Prioritise spending on targeted Rural Development Programmes across the UK.'

We have also been collaborating with stakeholders, including a number of your members, to discuss targeting in order to promote best value for money and delivery of Scotland's priorities. Therefore, our first consultation document included a proposal that investments under SRDP 2014 - 2020 will be strategically targeted, to direct support to commitments which will make the greatest contribution towards delivering these priorities.

3. 'Build on what we've got.'

EU LIFE continues to play an important role for Scotland's environment (in conjunction with delivery under the SRDP) with SNH assisting the coordination of applications for funding on behalf of Scottish Government.

4. 'Make further progress in identifying and monitoring High Nature Value farming systems (building on the work done in Scotland to date).'

As you recognise, the Scottish Government has already made considerable progress in developing a HNV indicator for both farming and forestry which has helped to present the baseline situation for 2009 and 2010 respectively. The Scottish Government plans to build on the work undertaken so far by providing an update on HNV farming in Scotland over the next year.

5. 'Invest in research on High Nature Value farming systems across the UK, including an assessment of the broad benefits they provide for society and the threats they face'.

The Scottish Government is funding relevant research through its Rural Affairs and Environment portfolio, mainly through its Environmental Change Programme, which runs from 2011 to 2016.

The Environmental Change Programme's Land Use theme includes research on:

- The resilience of Scotland's biodiversity to climate change and land-use change
- Optimising the delivery of multiple benefits from land use
- Understanding land managers' attitudes and behaviour towards the management of environmental assets and responding to climate change.

Through linking these research topics, each of which includes a focus on HNV farming, the research will provide information on benefits provided to society and to the threats faced by these systems. By reviewing evidence, working with stakeholders and development of case studies, this research will contribute to an enhanced understanding of many elements of HNV farming.

Examples of specific outputs from SG research investments include an assessment of the extent and distribution of HNV systems to establish a baseline from which to measure future change, building on the HNV Farming and Forestry Technical Working Group's work on establishing HNV indicators (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/08/10135254/13>). An initial analysis of the impact of current SRDP measures on HNV systems has also been undertaken, and on-going research focuses on how future CAP and SRDP measures can best support HNV farming, working with stakeholders to inform the development of effective policy frameworks in Scotland (<http://www.knowledgescotland.org/briefings.php?id=258>).

I hope this reassures you that the Scottish Government is aware of the importance of High Nature Value farming and is committed to supporting both its farmers and wildlife.

Yours sincerely,

Lorraine Gormley