

LOTHIANS MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Prestonhall & Saughland, Pathhead, Midlothian
Meeting Number	18 – Final Meeting
Meeting Date	Tuesday 4th February 2020
Next Meeting	Project Finished
Report date	5th March 2020

Prestonhall Farms and Saughland Farm independently run arable and livestock enterprises at Pathhead Midlothian. Pete Eccles is farm manager at Saughland and Bill Gray at Prestonhall. The businesses work collaboratively on arable operations. Livestock at Saughland; 65 AAX suckler cows running with Lim & Hereford bull plus 2,300 Chev, Lley, Aberfield, Mule ewes with Tex, NZsuff, Abermax lambs at foot on rotational grazing system. Arable at Prestonhall; Combinable Crops, WW 175ha, WB 80ha, SB 160ha, WOSR 65ha, WO 20ha, Grass 75ha.

Community Group Chairman Willie Thomson welcomed 50 farmers to the Monitor Farm Final meeting at Prestonhall. Willie ran through the agenda for the day and explained how some of the agenda items had been chosen to reflect on the progress made during the project but also set a vision for the future. Willie thanked everyone who had supported the Monitor Farm and congratulated involved for their input in making it such a successful project.

KEY MESSAGES

Kate Rowell (QMS) & Chris Leslie (AHDB)

- Both delighted with the success of the Lothians project and congratulated all involved.

Ian Davidson (Scottish land Matching Service)

- Seeing generational movement but more people looking than offering
- Communication is key with openness and honesty
- Trust is the most important, ensuring fairness to both
- Various agreements
- Joint ventures/contracting/share farming/tenancy/partnerships
- Mobility/flexibility/trust are all key
- Working examples are powerful, social media, accountants, collages and case studies



Neil Wilson (Sab Advisory)

- Never has the population been so well fed but so concerned about what they are eating
- A Farm business vision is important to know where you are going and to help build a structure
- Consumer engagement is still a priority & public accountability
- Food Production is important, but the environment and climate are equally as important
- Food and Farming education must be better
- Huge challenges but also opportunities going forward
- Management Capabilities – when going to the bank make sure you show high level of management ability

Claire Taylor (The Scottish Farmer)

- Farmer views are negative – with good reason
- Media informs and shapes public perception
- Veganism – rise above it – its more noise than figures
- Headlines that sell cause division
- Farmers have their guard up against some that can help the sector
- Please contact US - the Ag press - don't be afraid



Panel Session

- Scottish agriculture going forward
 - Neil - Consumer engagement, children will inform parents
 - Claire – Teachers are not on board, teachers leave a large impression and we need to influence the voices of the future
 - Kate – Front Foot on climate change
 - Ian – technology will be key
- Where are workers coming from and how do we attract them?
 - Claire – Rural courses, increase awareness Uni
 - Ian – Skills development, lantra
 - Kate & Neil - on farm education and raise awareness of wider industry opportunities
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Continued Discussion – don't market ourselves well, our own worst enemy, not confident to deliver the story or have the facts, famers awareness of how the urban population live and what motivates them is very poor

- Looking back in 20 years' time, what should we have been worried about?
 - Farmers are very adaptable, mental health and wellbeing is key, should we have been worried, the next big issues might not be here yet, experience (foot and mouth) would tell us farmers and farming are adaptable and resilient with a huge support network and are eternal optimists



Colin MacPhail (Project Overview)

There have been significant on farm changes and achievements throughout the project and Colin summarised some of the key changes. The wider community benefits were discussed.

Suckler Herd	2017	2020	Change	Sheep Flock	2017	2020	Change
Suckler Cows & In-calf Heifers	31	65	↑	Ewes	1024	1050	↑
Youngstock (replacements)	15	24	↑	Gimmers	364	710	↑
Calves	38	66	↑	Hoggs	432	440	↑
Outwintered Suckler Cows	0	50	↑	Tups	18	30	↑
Total Cattle on Farm	84	205	↑	Total Sheep	1,838	2,230	↑

Cropping	2017/ha	2019/ha	Change
Winter Oilseed Rape	71	77	↑
1 st Winter Wheat	62	71	↑
2 nd Winter Wheat	76	55	↓
Spring Barley	114	140	↑
Winter Oats	40	41	↑
Winter Barley	78	76	↓

Saughland Business Changes

- Increased Cattle and Sheep numbers
- Agri-Environment (collaborative application)
- Collaboration – Sheep grazing, Cattle Outwintering
- Cattle Away Wintering Project
- Sheep - genetic improvement
- Increased Output – 410kg/lwt/ha to 664kg/lwt/ha
- Rotational Grazing and Grass Utilisation
- Benchmarking – Business Group
- Innovation – Target Selective Treatment
- Technology – Clipex Sheep handling system
- Diversification Options – Meat Box Business
- Labour – less staff but better equipped
- People - Management Team and Network in place

Prestonhall Business Changes

- Grain Store (build)
- Biomass Upgrade
- Agri-Environment (collaborative application) – Pollinator Project
- Collaboration – Sheep grazing, Cattle Outwintering
- Machinery Changes (scale)
- YEN – In-depth Analysis
- Benchmarking – Business Group
- Innovation - Virtual Agronomy
- Technology – Grain Store Barn Owl System
- Diversification Options – Farm Buildings at Rosemains
- Succession discussions - (on-going)
- People - Bill -RHASS Chair, Will and Family moved North
- Management Team and Support Network

Fergus Younger (Cattle Outwintering collaboration project)

There has been significant interest from both Livestock and arable sectors in the Outwintered Cattle project and the group visited the field to review the cattle and soil conditions given the extremely wet weather since the cattle arrived. Fergus talked through the arrangement whereby, Norman Stirrat’s Luig cattle from North Ayrshire are being outwintered on Bill’s stubble field and the straw with Peter providing the silage, labour and stockmanship skills. The group enjoyed fantastic discussion on the cattle performance, potential arable benefits and also the likely field use and cultivation options when the cattle move off. Bill took a few spades of soil and the group were encouraged at the low level of fairly shallow compaction given the weather conditions.



Ian Davidson (Scottish Land Matching Service)

Ian talked through his role as part of the Land Matching Service. There are more young entrants looking for opportunities than farms available but there is now more movement with various different tenancy/contact type arrangements evolving. Ultimately, any arrangements come down to trust, transparency, communication, openness and honesty with people being key to any arrangement as Ian emphasised the collaborative approach which the Monitor Farm has taken

being a prime example of all of the above. There are some case studies available to review and the group discussion highlighted the role of social media, accountants, colleges and other professionals in helping promote the SLMS.

Neil Wilson (SAB Advisory)

Neil Wilson facilitated an interactive session on what our visions should be for our businesses and for the wider industry. The session brought up a wide range of discussion on food production, public perception and accountability, business vision, business skills, consumer engagement, education and collaboration. Neil extrapolated and distilled down the main discussion points to summarise that; never have we been so well fed but never have the population been so concerned what they eat. Understanding and engaging with consumers has never been more important and farmers must improve their business skills and management capabilities to deliver a well thought out vision for their businesses. Collaboration and consolidation will be key and there will be huge challenges but lots of opportunities for those with a strong business management structure and the ability to implement change.

Claire Taylor (Scottish Farmer)

Claire delivered a fantastic session on the public and press perception of agriculture and encouraged interaction from the group. Claire pointed out that farmers views were negative towards the press and rightly so as they have lost trust in journalism. However, Claire explained how the mainstream press works and how “selling headlines” generally cause division. Going forward, farmers can engage with the press to raise awareness and deliver huge benefits to the industry but only if they let their guard down and move away from the “them and us” attitude which currently exists. Claire also explained about the rise of veganism, the implications of trade deals with the US and her experience visiting the recent farmer demonstrations in Germany.

FARMERS UPDATE

Bill informed the group that they were only 12ha short on WW area and so far, crops had progressed well but too early to judge and looks challenging going forward. Marketing strategy has been working well with input from James Bolesworth at CRM as hearing advice helps and currently in a reasonable position. WB and Oats doing okay, benefiting from the market with additional storage and planning fert applications when conditions allow. Benchmarking meeting was hugely valuable with a good level of discussion and will be a focus going forward. The business has submitted a planning application for 9 commercial units in the traditional buildings at Rosemains and everything will require reconfigured with the workshop moving to the old grain store buildings.

Peter informed the group of the livestock activities since the last meeting, outwintered cattle doing well, lambs sold averaging £78, scanning next week, moved onto Fodder beet before Christmas, hedge planning complete, new self-employed person different skill set and complimentary for Bill, Grazing benchmarking group has been useful, lots of investment in last 3 years and time to consolidate and fine tune on numbers. Business is moving in right direction and thank you to the group for invaluable input and hopefully Saughland can continue to build the collaborative working relationship with Bill and Prestonhall.

FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

- All facts and figures are on the Monitor Farm Hub

ACTIONS

Project Finished

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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