



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

ARGYLLSHIRE

Summer Open Meeting Report
12 June 2025



MEETING REPORT

FARM WALK AT DAILL, VIRTUAL FENCING AND MANAGING BIRD SPECIES .

Around **36** members of the farming community attended the meeting.

Community is at the heart of the Argyllshire Monitor Farm, and we were delighted that group member Ewan Findlay extended an invitation to visit his farm – Daill, Bridgend, Islay.



Ewan has farmed at Daill since 1982. The farm is all down to grass which has been maintained successfully **without** ploughing.



50 cross Highland cattle and **280** Cheviot produce store calves and lambs. Due to heavy tick burdens the sheep no longer use the extensive 2000 acre hill ground-it is now **deferred grazing** where all cattle are out wintered.



The farm is host to many natural habitats and species and Ewan has also built a shelter for **Chough**. Where old buildings become derelict, chough can lose their nest sites and find a shortage of good alternative sites. Chough nest shelters, containing a **nesting platform**, are designed to provide a nest site, close to an area of suitable habitat, as an alternative to traditional nest sites.

Thanks to Ewan for showing us his farm!



MONITOR FARMER UPDATE

Craig Archibald

CATTLE

Calving went reasonably well – cows were a bit leaner and calved **down easier**. A bit of grass on the ground has helped for calves to nibble at.

Setting up **rotational grazing** of nine, 10-acre **paddocks** again this year, making it slightly more permanent with **double strand** electric fencing along the roadside to enable fencing off the paddocks. Waiting on a **solar water pump** to address water provision, costing around £3500. Easy fill water troughs are being looked at too.

It seems quite a big **investment** but only had one empty cow and one set of twins and **calving was tighter** from the cows on rotational grazing so a good pay back to keep going at it. It will be good to look at **calving performance** over a few years to **fully assess**.

A **Virtual Fencing** meeting with Rob Wainwright was held in early May which coincided with the arrival of the collars for our cows. The cows were **weighed** and given a **body condition score** at the time of getting the collars and they have been through their **training**.

We want to **compare** the cows in the fields on **rotational grazing** with those using the **virtual fencing collars** on the rougher ground and using weights and body condition scores as a measure.

We are looking at it very much on a **commercial** basis with **aim** of getting **more** calves to sell.

FARM FACTS

- Farmers: The Archibald Family – Craig, Petra, Kieran, Niamh & Innes
- **2012** Hectares farmed – **1493ha** rough/**479ha** pasture/**19ha** barley/**22ha** wood – Tenanted/rented
- **1050** Hill ewes on and finished lambs
- **225** Angus cows selling yearling stores
- Barley grown for distillery
- Oyster farm and café



MONITOR FARMER UPDATE

SHEEP

The ewes were **bolused** twice – and so far, **no sway back** in any of the lambs – an issue which was seen in 2024.

The last of the **2024 crop lambs** went away in May along with a few cast ewes. Black Face ewes made **£128**. Lambs were **£118**.

We are working towards having **less groups** of sheep for an **easier** lambing in 2026 with **cross sheep** in the fields and the **rest** will be lambed out on the **hill**.

The next **decision** is on what **tups** to use. Previously used a Logie Durno but need to move away from that. Suffolk or Badgerface Texel are in the mix – it's trying to **identify** what will sell best at **store sales**.

CROPS

The **barley field** this year has a **buffer** strip with a rougher, tussock type grasses suggested by Watsons seeds for cover in the Spring for **ground nesting birds** such as Corncrakes. Such strips can also reduce soil run off.

INNOVATION

Went back to using the **Clip-fitter** system when marking **lambs** this year. Clips are now all **biodegradable** and using the **larger** size on the **Blackface** lambs due to wool cover. They do **work well** with **no miss mothering** of the lambs with the **clips**.



Three **drive over gates** have been installed along the road to Killinallen which makes traveling much **easier**. They work **very well** with the **quad bike**, but they need some **refinement** for use with a **pickup**.



VIRTUAL FENCING PROJECT



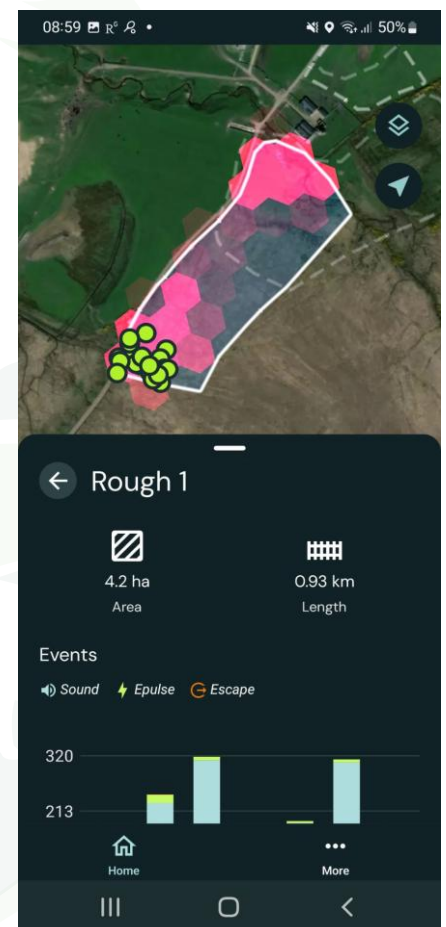
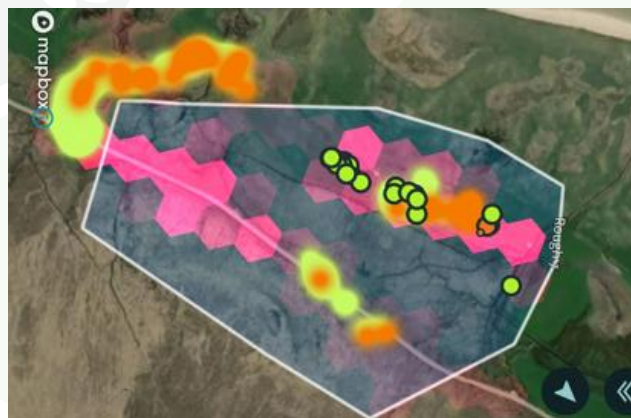
The Argyllshire Monitor Farm is **one of 4** farms trialling Virtual Fencing as part of a wider Monitor Farm innovation project.

On Friday 9 May the technology provider, **Monil** supported the Craigens team with set up of the mobile app. Craig had selected **25 cows** which were collared up and also weighted and Body Condition Scored.

A virtually fenced **training field** was created, and the cows (with calves at foot) were given a few weeks to **learn** the system. The cows quickly learned how to respond to the sounds emitted to the collar warning that the **virtual fence** line was close.

After the training period, they were turned out to an area of around **12 hectares** of a large block of **rougher grazing** which has not previously been used for cattle. Cattle will be moved around and further into the rough grazing as they learn the system. Attendees at the meeting had a good look at the cattle on the system and it was easy to see the **grazing line** in the grass. The cattle were very **contented**.

There had been a few **learning points** along the way such as how to move the cattle into new areas. But it was clear to see that the Craigens team and the cattle had **adapted quickly** to using the system. Craig's main **aim** in using the system is the potential to carry more cows (and calves to sell), improve grazing for sheep and to free up management time.



MANAGING BIRD SPECIES

Islay is well known as a haven and **preferred habitat** for a variety of **bird species** due to the unique nature of the landscapes and geographical position.

It has been noticed by Craig that there has been an increasing number of Sea Eagles around the island.

Jenny Love, Senior Consultant with SAC, was asked to speak at the meeting as she has helped other farmers in the area to apply for the **Sea Eagle Management Scheme**.

It was stressed that building up a **baseline of knowledge** about the Sea Eagle numbers on Islay was very important to log if their number were increasing and that information should be communicated to NatureScot who manage the scheme.

If farmers or crofters are experiencing issues with the species, they should **contact** the local **NatureScot** office in the first instance.

Jenny Love is happy to help discuss farm **management options** which may be eligible for the scheme.



Who to Contact:

- NatureScot Islay Office - 01496 810711
- Jenny Love – 01631 563093
- Sea Eagle Management Scheme guidance is available [HERE](#)
- Dedicated Mailbox - SEAEAGLESCHEME@nature.scot



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To find out more or to sign up, please contact:

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Initiative supported by:



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