



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

ARGYLLSHIRE

Winter Open Meeting Report
3 December 2025



MEETING REPORT

AGRICULTURAL DRONE DEMO, BIRD MANAGEMENT AND MONITOR FARM UPDATE.

Around **21** members of the farming community attended the meeting.

Management Group member **Andrew Jones** of Coull Farm, kindly hosted our demo of the day from **James Braid** from [Sky-Pin Drones](#).

James explained that there were many uses of **drones** in farming and they were being widely used across the globe. Small drones could help with **checking livestock** in remote areas or at crucial stages, such as calving.

The drone demonstrated was the XAG PRO P100 which could be used for **precision spraying** and **seed applications**. Many of the group were interested in its use for **broadcasting** in **cover crop** seeds.

This drone could be flown **autonomously** in conjunction with an application and GPS and James **demonstrated** this with great effect-the drone flying across the **pre-set area** of the field.

As we face **wetter** weather, drone use could become **routine** as they have **no impact** on the ground and **soils** and can reach more inaccessible areas.



You can see the drone in action and find out more from James in this video:



MONITOR FARMER UPDATE

Craig Archibald

CATTLE

243 cows scanned at **104%** (17 twins and 8 empty). Cows on **rotational grazing** have scanned well and using **boluses** has made a big difference along with giving cobs to cattle on virtual fencing.

Calves were weaned with **nose clips** both inside and out of the sheds. Overall, the nose clips worked well, and all calves were **weaned** by the end of **October**.



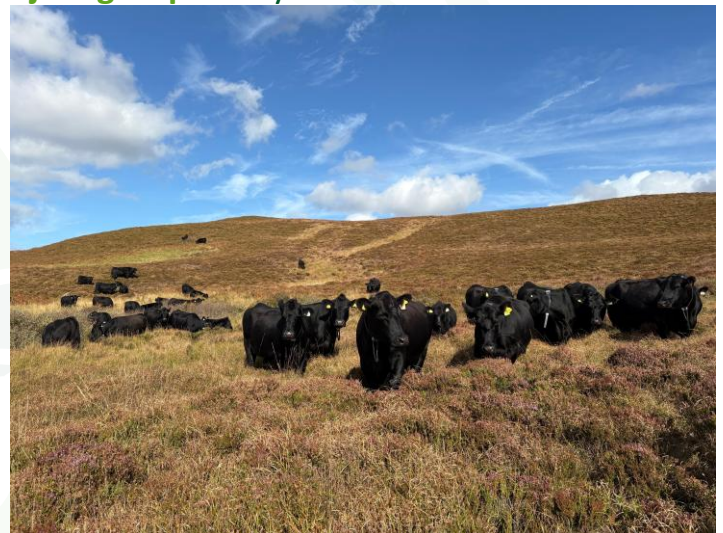
The **rotational grazing cows** managed without supplementary feeding until the 5th of November. 150 head are **outwintering** on deferred grazing at Killinallan. In-calf **heifers**, **lean** animals and those carrying **twins** are now **housed**.

Calves tested for **fluke** with little to **none** found, so will be given a fluke dose **seven weeks after housing**. They have been clipped and treated for worms. With **no draff** available, a load of **soya hulls** has been purchased as an **alternative** fibre and protein source.

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

Virtual fencing has struggled in the last month due to **connectivity issues** which has drained the **batteries** resulting in cows being **housed** and not outwintered as planned. Collars will be recharged and **started again** in **March**, **calving outside**. Craig and Thomas will **analyse** which cows have **done best** and look for **similar types** to **join group** next year.



Keiran purchased a bull and one other **Charolais** and possibly another **Aberdeen Angus** will need to be bought for the **virtual fencing group**.

MONITOR FARMER UPDATE

SHEEP

- Ewes were **bolused** and have shown improvement, with **no sway-back** issues recorded this year.
- Purchased stock includes: a **grass-fed Suffolk** and a **Texel** tup from Hilton of Culsh, five **Blackface** from Stirling Market, one Hillhead **Cheviot**, and ten Newbank gimmers. Tups were turned out on **18 November** with Super Energy blocks.
- Despite challenges with the virtual fencing project, the cows have **improved grass quality** for the sheep, making it more difficult to keep sheep grouped with the tups.
- One load of ewes and lambs away so far off grass. **Lambs** are **not fattening** quickly on **rape** but hope to still get them away a week earlier (before Christmas). Building **access roads** and feed areas on **hill** for **mules**.



OTHER

- **Shed roof** has been fixed after storms.
- Areas have been **fenced** for an **Agri-Environment Climate Scheme** to apply for two wet fields for **waders** and **rash management**.
- Exploring potential to **assess rotational grazing** as a fit for **Chough management**.
- Looking to **graze** small **forestry** area with **virtual fencing** group and help push down the **Rhododendron**.



GOALS FOR 2026

- ✓ Lambs off mules away sooner.
- ✓ Use accounts package to split out enterprise costings.
- ✓ Sell more calves.
- ✓ Reduce cow mortality.
- ✓ Have a better lamb finishing system.



FODDER CROP 2025

Craig **trialled** five **different** fodder crops in 2025. They were Sown **mid-July** with a **Moore drill**, **subsoiled**, and given a split **fertiliser** application. **All** plots had **turnip** included to allow for **wet** weather/areas. Craig noted a **clear difference** when looking at the **field plots** and Watson Seeds [Roots and Fodder Guide](#) **descriptions** were found to be **accurate**.

Plot	Fodder Crop Varieties (Sowing Rate kilo per acre)	Yield (Tonnes per hectare)	Craig's Comments
1	Unicorn (3.75kg). Massif turnip (0.25kg).	7.5t/ha	Reasonable height, medium stalks. Some mushy roots.
2	Mainstar (3.75kg). Massif Turnip (0.25kg).	6.75t/ha	Medium height, a lot of small stalks. Few turnips established.
3	Emerald (3.75kg). Massif Turnip (0.25kg).	7.5t/ha	Short, open midsize stalks.
4	Redstart (0.75kg) Swift (0.75kg) Gorilla (0.8kg) Massif Turnip (0.2kg)	8.25t/ha	Tall, open, big stalks.
5	Gorilla Dwarf Rape (3.75kg) Massif Turnip (0.2kg)	7.5t/ha	Even, mid-sized stalks. Few turnips established.

CRAIG'S VIDEO UPDATE



MANAGING BIRD SPECIES ON THE MONITOR FARM



- 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.
- Louise Muir RSBP Conservation Adviser of Argyll, Arran and Ardnamuchan, has baselined the bird species and populations on the Monitor Farm.
- She delivered an excellent presentation on the findings and the potential to enhance habitats to both encourage and maintain bird populations. The Archibald's are keen to put Chough roosts in suitable locations and have applied for an **Agri-Environment Climate Scheme** to apply for two wet fields for **waders** and **rash management**.



You can view Louise's presentation [HERE](#).

THANK YOU!

Our sincere thanks are extended to the following people who made the meeting such a success:

- The Archibald Family
- Andrew Jones – Coull Farm
- James Braid – Sky-pin Drones
- Louise Muir – RSBP
- Jenny Love – SAC Consulting
- Kilchoman Distillery
- Watson Seeds



**MONITOR
FARM**
Scotland

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

Regional Adviser - Christine Cuthbertson

07769 366671

ccuthbertson@qmscotland.co.uk

monitorfarms.co.uk

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