

Appendix 9.8:

Detailed SWOT of AKIS options

Background to this document

This document contains the full-length Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analyses of the 35 options identified. Each option is numbered accordingly (1-35), organised under 6 themes.

These SWOT analyses were undertaken as part a series of stakeholder workshops, where stakeholders were asked to assess the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of each option. The tables were initially populated with researcher findings from the academic and grey literature reviews and statements made at the initial Edinburgh workshop. All comments from the subsequent workshops were recorded and amalgamated into the SWOT tables. As such, the diversity of views exhibited in these comments should not be taken to represent a consensus of views, the view of the researchers, or the view of the Scottish Government. They are included here to reflect the range of evidence and perspectives which were expressed throughout the process. In order to avoid creating a hierarchy of responses, the views of researchers are not separated from other sources in the below tables. Readers looking for an expert summary can refer to the SWOT tables in the main report. Some comments may appear more than once if they have relevance to different SWOT categories.

In addition to the 35 options, readers will also find theme-level SWOTs within 3 themes (Theme 1, Theme 2 and Theme 3). These sections record broad feedback points which were not specific to particular options.

In addition to the 6 themes discussed in the main report, this document also highlights stakeholder feedback with regards to crofting – Theme 7. Much of this feedback was found to be well-represented across the other themes. However, given the distinctive nature of crofting, this information is reported separately for ease of reference, as well as to highlight specific needs.

Document navigation

Theme 1 Click [here](#) for **Creating a more Unified AKIS**

- [Overall SWOT for Theme 1](#)
- [Option 1: Institutionally integrated AKIS](#)
- [Option 2: Direct AKIS supports to a broader range of organisations](#)
- [Option 3: Formal AKIS Governance Structure](#)
- [Option 4: Strategic plan for AKIS](#)
- [Option 5: Establish regular AKIS evaluation](#)

- Theme 2** Click [here](#) for **Regionalisation and Specialisation**
- [Overall SWOT for Theme 2](#)
 - [Option 6: National knowledge hubs](#)
 - [Option 7: Crofting thinktank](#)
 - [Option 8: Expand KTIF and OGs to all land managers](#)
 - [Option 9: Environmental clusters](#)
 - [Option 10: Regional green sector investment groups](#)
 - [Option 11: Regional AKIS hubs](#)
- Theme 3** Click [here](#) for **Supporting Peer-to-peer learning and Farmer Collaboration**
- [Overall SWOT for Theme 3](#)
 - [Option 12: Expand Monitor Farms](#)
 - [Option 13: Establish networks of \(commercial\) demonstration farms](#)
 - [Option 14: Ambassador Farmers and Crofters](#)
 - [Option 15: Innovation competitions](#)
 - [Option 16: Farmer Field Stable Schools](#)
 - [Option 17: Fund on-farm demonstration by commercial farmers](#)
 - [Option 18: Include funding for on-farm demonstrations in research funding](#)
 - [Option 19: Enable Cross Visits](#)
 - [Option 20: Mentoring](#)
- Theme 4** Click [here](#) for **Promote Diversity and Generational Renewal**
- [Option 21: Embed rural skills in the educational system](#)
 - [Option 22: ‘Young Trained Farmer’ status](#)
 - [Option 23: Expand apprenticeships](#)
 - [Option 24: Training courses specifically for women](#)
 - [Option 25: Events tailored to typically marginalised groups](#)
 - [Option 26: Create opportunities for new entrants and remove barriers to succession](#)
- Theme 5** Click [here](#) for **Digital Opportunities and Upskilling**
- [Option 27: Digital Innovation Hub](#)
 - [Option 28: Web platforms](#)
 - [Option 29: Digital sharing platform for benchmarking](#)
 - [Option 30: Virtual demonstrations and online agricultural shows](#)
 - [Option 31: Facebook groups, Twitter, and other social media](#)
- Theme 6** Click [here](#) for **AKIS capacity building**
- [Option 32: AKIS networking events](#)
 - [Option 33: Training for facilitation](#)
 - [Option 34: Mandatory CPD for farmers and advisors](#)
 - [Option 35: Fund commercial farm trials of applied research](#)
- Theme 7** Click [here](#) for **Crofting specific options**

1. Creating a unified AKIS

Desired outcome: To develop a coordinated innovation ecosystem in Scotland which enables innovation across the land-based business sector. All relevant AKIS actors are connected and acting together to provide an efficient and effective AKIS in Scotland.

Challenge addressed: At present, the AKIS is not systematically organised into an easily described whole. The Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is delivered by two organisations: Ricardo Consulting and SAC Consulting. There are a number of other organisations and charities providing advice to farmers, as well as universities and colleges developing applied research, which could be better integrated into the service. There are also a number of actors (e.g. from the financial sector) which offer advice on business decision-making, as well as processors and input supply companies who offer information in relation to the products they buy and sell, but may not be seen as AKIS actors. LANTRA – the provider of land-based training – operates separately from the FAS. Lack of ‘near market’ applied research has been identified: commercial farm-based applied demonstrating how changes to management practices can impact on emissions and sequestration under Scottish conditions. Gaps and duplication in service provision should be identified and addressed in order to ensure effective deployment of resources. The changing knowledge needs and enabling factors make it essential that the AKIS is flexible and able to respond to new demands.

Theme 1 overall SWOT

Overall SWOT and enablers for ‘Creating a unified AKIS’	
This section records the broad feedback points on creating a unified AKIS made by stakeholder participants in the workshops which were not specific to particular options.	
Strengths	<p>Current provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAS website is a really good repository of information <p>Agreement that a more unified approach is needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversight is needed, so long as it doesn’t become too bureaucratic; need aspects of unified AKIS, need overarching principles. A form of unified AKIS would provide the benefit of a single voice and coordination. Easier for gov to administer and monitor, unified messages, coherent activities, can be strategic.
Weaknesses	<p>Lack of long-term political vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No long-term cross-party commitment to AKIS. Need to be able to plan for the long term to effect change properly. <p>Lack of shared vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to define the purpose of AKIS and the scope of a future AKIS, as there are potentially a large number of players. AKIS is not a familiar term. Need to name the service to make it obvious that it is broader than agriculture and show relevance to a wider range of partners and stakeholders; ‘rural’ could be used but could itself be too broad a term and could imply that all rural business is included. Be careful about the language that is used, acronyms terms, names as can create barriers and disenfranchise.

Weaknesses with current approach

- There's so much material on the FAS website now it can be hard to find things.
- The MRPS, Hutton, SRUC etc may be perceived as parochial and lack innovation; hence farmers may go their own way.
- The R&D tax allowance is based on private good - no recognition of community benefit or knowledge transfer; need to consider public good in incentivisation schemes
- There are an enormous number of institutions, but better coordination is needed, on the regional level too.

Advice provision

- There has been a revolutionary change in advisory services in the last 25 years – some things changed to better, some rather not (as overbureaucratisation).
- Lack of promotion for advisory systems. Advisors' role must be interactive.
- Private funding of advisory services is lacking in the system.
- So many people advising farmers, lots of contradiction.

Government relationship with farmers

- Much seen through an urban lens.
- Agriculture in Scotland is overregulated, there must be more flexibility for farmers.
- Absolutely key precondition for farmers is profitability of their farms. They need to earn enough money to keep their business going; this is the real problem.
- We overburden farmers – they have pressure from climate crisis, food production, nature crisis and have to deal with technical aspects as well as finance, HR, packaging etc.
- Scottish Government should be more interested in the countryside; there is a perception that the connection between SG and farmers is getting worse and there is a lack of support of SG for advisory service.

Timescales

- Short timescale to next AKIS – how much can be changed in practice before then?
- Need to be upskilling now for next AKIS.

Opportunities

- Need to align outcomes, and with CAP/best practice.
- Opportunity to align resource allocation with the repopulation agenda.
- A form of accreditation for AKIS members would help provide a level playing field for some of the smaller actors including independent consultancies.
- Shape of the networks is important most effective is small world which has dense connections where there are some long-term existing relationships. Forestry Scotland formed in this way through a visit to Norway where strong relationships were built.
- Create a central funding pot, or a simple way to navigate all the different funding
- For a FAS, a consistent point of contact is needed – the same phone number and webpage that doesn't change for years. Flexible enough to adapt but certain things are always the same.
- Farmers think that the status quo with regards to advisory services/KE/existing farmer groups wouldn't work for dealing with something as massive as reaching net zero and a few suggestions in here on how to put farmers at the centre [a7353c_db9fa0546fb2487dbf014e8cc4865019.pdf \(usrfiles.com\)](https://www.usfiles.com/a7353c_db9fa0546fb2487dbf014e8cc4865019.pdf)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create regional hubs reporting to a central point (spoke and hub) - these could be an extension service as part of a reformed RPID. This role would be more of convening than advisory, where staff would have facilitation and brokerage skills rather than technical expertise. They would bring in relevant actors from within and outwith the region to deliver appropriate AKIS services for known farmers in that region. If it was RPID then, in theory, activities would directly deliver SG ag policy outcomes (currently climate, nature, high quality food). <p>Opportunities to broaden vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a mechanism for identifying and addressing emerging opportunities, e.g., insect farming. • There is an overlap which we are not currently exploiting, e.g., saltmarsh for carbon sequestration, fish and shellfish by-product not used as much as it could be for, e.g., fertiliser, growing interest in seaweed. • Only seeing progress in terms of the land is a weakness; need to cross and share information with marine; could learn from other countries experience of the land sea interface - Iceland is a good example. <p>Advice provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs for information regionally are very different; needs regional approach. • Farmers don't like certain advice, e.g., from HSE, but will take it from the NFUS (point about the role of the FAS as legitimate communicators who are on the farmers' side) • DEFRA project on farm resilience - a two-hour meeting with an adviser is funded. The advisor had discretion to recommend and fund follow-on activities
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One particular challenge may be how to blend/interface the international or national specialist knowledge needed to help address some of the major challenges (e.g. climate change) with local expertise/knowledge/networks that might be most effective at mobilising locally-relevant responses. • Becoming too bureaucratic. • Unified AKIS could miss important voices, less 'competition' could lead to poorer service, regional differences and relevant initiatives could be sidelined. • Funding levels cover central admin costs at the expense of service provision. • Government actions should be enabling, not prescriptive.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more people on the ground; trained skilled facilitators as well as technical experts. • Long term, apolitical, flexible strategy/plan (don't keep changing policies). • Joined-up approach within government. • Funding. • Clarity of purpose and scope. • Clarity of relevant policy and incentive schemes. • Engagement of all players in the agri-rural arena.

Option 1

Option 1 Institutionally integrated AKIS	
Description	Formal integration of the publicly funded organisations involved in AKIS, e.g., FAS and private advisory services, colleges and universities, major research providers. This could take on a number of forms, ranging from full integration of these institutions through to a 'Hub and Spoke' model, where a central organisation coordinates spokes to the major AKIS actors. The spokes would offer more specialist advice grounded in applied research NGOs, charities and research institutions. More strongly integrate education, training and advice to create a culture of life-long learning.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Flemish farmers' organisation 'Boerenbond' offers a range of services for agriculture and rural areas, including a fully-fledged innovation support service. Innovation support services play a key role, leading initiatives that connect people and projects, and fostering knowledge flows that generate innovative ideas. • Teagasc in Ireland encompasses academic research, agricultural advice and food standards inspections in the same organisation.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a substantial degree of centralisation inherent in the current model, where advice and research are both provided through SAC Consulting and SRUC.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on current FAS. • A 'one stop shop' for farmers. • Reduces duplication of efforts.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would be very expensive to achieve. • Future AKIS needs to represent a wider range of actors. In a fully integrated AKIS who would be in and out? Might make it harder for those on the outside to participate. • How would different organisations' objectives be reconciled? • Would there be a willingness for organisations to integrate? • How would a combined organisation deal with frictions between the organisations being assimilated? • No strong benefits over other less centralised options such as hub and spoke or network. • Considerable logistical barriers to overcome to integrate the various institutions. • Over-centralisation could make AKIS unwieldy and slow to respond, could become too bureaucratic.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP newsletter is great; summarises research, has pictures and is easy to read; received great feedback. If more info is needed or wanted, they can ask for it. • Streamline the funding process. • Better integration between land uses. • Accessing tailored information quickly. • Better coverage of advice. • Improve quality of advice through CPD. • Better alignment to (emerging) needs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Models of collaboration highlighted by the group are the five Land Use Partnerships and NESAAAG.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High transaction costs to organise initially. High risk if there were problems with the delivery organisation. Loss of identity of participating organisations. Ability to create a centralised organisation within the required timescales. No noted appetite for this option. 'If there were a single organisation, it would have to do everything well'.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant funding required. Innovative suggestions for Just Transition funds in NE Scotland. Willingness/ability of multiple organisations with different objectives to come together.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 2

Option 2 Direct AKIS supports to a broader range of organisations	
Description	Subsidised advice available through membership organisations (e.g., NFUS), charities etc. At present 'free' advice is provided through the Farm Advisory Service, and input supply companies (who include advice as an element of their sales). This option would formally recognise and support the role of organisations like SAOS, Scottish Agronomy and SLE who provide advice to their members.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations across Scotland already collaborate to run events, e.g., Arable Scotland, Potatoes in Practice. Funding for these activities comes from various sources (e.g., SEFARI Gateway memberships).
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversify the services available. Increase capability. Lots of existing provision and resources for information. Good advisory network already in place; broadens reach of advisors. Proven demand for services. Large consultancy industry supporting land use managers. FAS web portal provides good overview of the support available.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential fragmentation and duplication of services. High transaction costs. Sometimes the advice provided by different organisations can be contradictory. The informality of flows of knowledge creates weaknesses. Lack of integration between advice about different types of land use, for example, intensive farming, forestry, nature-friendly farming – need common objectives. Changes in land system management too slow compared to targets for change, for example, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Scepticism of some advisors/consultants by industry. Farmers don't want to be told what to do. 20% of farmers not engaged with support – how would his approach change that? Lag behind industry innovation, can't rely only on academic organisations to be ahead of the curve. Many delivery organisations working on smaller projects could increase bureaucracy overall, with a high administration cost per project vs a centralised system with dedicated administration resource. Needs to be flexible due to (emerging) policy changes. There might need to be a prioritisation of activities agreed between AKIS members. There must be sufficient funding attached to ensure that resource is aren't spread too thin. Currently lots of voices; loud ones tend to be heard.

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better integration between land uses. • Getting tailored information quickly. • Better coverage. • Decentralised hubs would allow innovation to happen more quickly. • Hubs can be more independent but would still need coordination. • Regional hubs would be best to address local topics and issues. • We need to build in how we provide effective support to communities. Perhaps a network of existing networks. • Need to provide support to rural communities, could we have better connected existing networks of support – network of networks. • Could be possible to have a lighter touch reporting regime where trust, freedom to fail, and adaptive management (and governance) can be built into project management to respond to changing circumstances, and ongoing programme evaluation (rather than a post-programme evaluation). This could reduce administration costs. • Models of collaboration highlighted by the group are the five Land Use Partnerships and NESAAG (North East Scotland Agricultural Advisory Group). NESAAG in particular was highlighted as an approach that could be adopted more widely. • A form of accreditation for AKIS members would help provide a level playing field for some of the smaller actors including independent consultancies. • Streamline the funding process. • Allowing different actors to play to their strengths may make for better advice/support. • Innovative suggestions for just transition funds in NE Scotland to support region.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeframe for implementation of a new AKIS – needs a structure that could be agreed in time. • Unable to fully fund – what would respective organisations be expected to contribute? • Getting agreement between organisations/institutions. • Lack of common objectives. • Could lead to duplication and competition for funding. • Recipients may receive advice more readily from organisations with whom they have trusted relationships. How to address this with multiple organisations delivering, not all of whom may be seen as ‘being on the farmer’s side’.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed scope of AKIS. • Identification of key players/stakeholders. • Mechanism to include new players over time. • Joined up policy to enable clarity of objectives. • Mechanism to be able to respond flexibly to emerging and evolving opportunities and priorities. • Oversight to avoid duplication of provision and identify gaps in provision.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 3

Option 3	Formal AKIS Governance Structure: AKIS secretariat and/or oversight board
Description	<p>A governing body, charged with defining roles of participants, bringing together public and private partners to provide a wide (and expanding) range of delivery partners, creating a governance structure, ensuring good knowledge flow between actors, overseeing delivery to minimise fragmentation, identifying gaps in provision, assessing future demand/requirements, developing skills base of advisors (and possibly their accreditation). This could be achieved by a secretariat (staffed by government employees) – or an advisory board (comprised of industry representatives) - or a combination of these approaches.</p> <p>Kick off actions could include mapping the AKIS structure to identify gaps in provision; periodic review and revision would help the system adapt to emerging priorities.</p> <p>Systematic evaluation of the AKIS at intervals could be led or commissioned by this group (option 1C).</p> <p>Requires central and ongoing funding with a longer-term commitment.</p> <p>Option was raised at the first AKIS stakeholder consultation session held January 2023.</p>
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is currently a FAS stakeholder group which meets quarterly. This group could form a foundation for the oversight board; it would require a new governance and means of directly influencing the AKIS.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide oversight of the entire AKIS. • Reduce duplication in provision. • Identify gaps in provision (top down and bottom up). • Explore why people don't choose to engage with the service and generate new models of engagement. • Promote consistency of information provided. • Almost have a central coordination function (currently with SRUC): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Single point of contact ○ Focus well on key priorities ○ Tackle big issues' • Having a largely decentralised model would enable the “spokes” to be independent, able to address local issues and take advantage of local opportunities. • Central secretariat would provide an element of coordination to make sure they were on the same page and to have KT between them. • Could have regional spokes – but what would the regions be? If just had three, they would be very large – Highlands size of Belgium. • Secretariat could have role in linking hubs together. Should be light touch approach.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could become quite bureaucratic.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a danger that if you add a management layer, it will take funding away from actual support. • Need to know available funding. • How would you reconcile competing interests within secretariat? Not every organisation could be represented. • Possible duplication if have both a regional and a sectoral approach. • Different opinions/thoughts are good but can lead to unwanted tensions.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build Hub and spoke model (with Oversight Board as Hub) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would enable specialists to play to their respective strengths. ○ Could provide a more personal service, e.g., Wales National Forest Scheme Regional connections can be very meaningful, connections based on trust. • Scottish Rural Action as example, exist as secretariat. Paid staff, membership-based. • Secretariat could have role in linking hubs together. Should be light touch approach. • Could have regional spokes – but what would the regions be? If just had three, they would be very large – Highlands size of Belgium. • Secretariat could have role in linking hubs together. Should be light touch approach. • Need a mix of top down and bottom-up support– don't always know what we don't know. • Should bring a wider array of actors (e.g., financial services, input suppliers, research institutions, forestry bodies) actively into AKIS considerations.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any form of secretariat must have a wide overview and must be able to engage with a wide range of organisations (both suppliers and beneficiaries) or risk failing. • Failing to agree overall and common objectives amongst stakeholders. • Inability to align different/competing interests. • Loudest voices are heard and smaller players not engaged or become disengaged. • Authority to enact meaningful change might be difficult to ensure.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear remit and objectives for AKIS. • Strong governance. • Creating a level playing field for service deliverers. • Role of professionalism, need to demonstrate competence and be seen as a trusted source.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 4

Option 5	Strategic plan for AKIS
Description	<p>AKIS descriptions were required in all EU member state CAP strategic plans for 2023-2027. A similar process could be conducted in Scotland, as part of the Agriculture Bill. It would be state funded.</p> <p>AKIS descriptions in the strategic plans are required to include: the organisational set up of the AKIS; a description of how advisors, researchers and CAP networks will work together; and how advice and innovation support services are provided.</p> <p>https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_5183</p>
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide oversight of the entire AKIS. • Clear identification and articulation of AKIS scope, objectives and priorities; measurement of success. • Reduce duplication, identify gaps. • Steer actions.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic plan must align with policy. This could be reviewed an annual AKIS meeting. • Increases bureaucracy.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See strengths above. • Alignment with EU policies. • Spreading and leveraging knowledge should be a key role of AKIS. • Good governance is important to ensure opportunities for participation of a wider group. • A role of AKIS could be to help avoid conflict over land use. • AKIS annual meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ but to encourage attendance needs to not just always be in Edinburgh. ○ Could supplement a face-to-face meeting with online meetings which would increase interaction without increasing costs too much. ○ Challenge and refine strategy, share good practice, identify emerging opportunities, keep everyone on the same page, offer training and skills-building workshops.'
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of joined up approach between policy areas to have consistent objectives for AKIS. • Stakeholders don't engage meaningfully. • Good governance is important to ensure opportunities for participation of a wider group.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to define the scope of a future AKIS as there are potentially a large number of players. • Clear objectives that bring together different policies. • There might need to be a prioritisation of activities agreed between AKIS members. • There must be sufficient funding attached to ensure that resources aren't spread too thinly. • There needs to be common/shared goals for AKIS. • Need good governance.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 5

Option 5	Establish regular AKIS evaluation
Description	<p>Undertake a formal evaluation (e.g., every three years). Process could evaluate key performance indicators, fit to strategic objectives; fit to user needs (current and anticipated future needs of the identified beneficiaries, potential to align with local needs rather than one-size-fits-all approach); Ability to deliver, including staff skills and knowledge – impact on current delivery team, training requirements; ability to address inequalities; financial assessment; fit with other services/support (seeking to create additional value through joined-up approach).</p> <p>Organisation and funding: Tendered as an independent evaluation. May be overseen by an AKIS oversight board or associated governance structure.</p>
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAS providers are currently reviewed (separately) annually. • There is currently a FAS stakeholder group which met quarterly prior to covid, which has recently been reinstated.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing independent evaluation is important. • Need for evaluation a given. • Need to include farmers and crofters who are not accessing FAS at present.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AKIS not currently subject to an overall evaluation. • Requires a clear specification and tendering process. • Frequency of evaluations may not allow quick response to any issues or new needs identified.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should build effective ongoing evaluation into programmes. • Should be suitable funding for communication and evaluation. • Evaluation should at least involve ongoing light touch surveying followed by secondary evaluation by interview for a % of participants, and possible focus groups. • Potential for social science researchers to work with deliverers to consider how best to evaluate and improve programmes on an ongoing basis. • Reporting requirements and KPIs should be flexible enough to respond to findings on an ongoing basis, for example if something isn't working well then there should be an opportunity to adapt the programme to respond to this. • Evaluation team could be commissioned externally, on a competitive basis. • Evaluation to be seen as a positive exercise to gather learning and aim for continuous improvement, rather than as a potential threat.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of willingness to experiment/try new actions due to fear of failure. • Over reliance on key performance indicators. • How to measure progress in a meaningful way.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear AKIS objectives and outcomes. • Performance measurement framework that takes into account the complexity of support. This includes both tangible measures but also intangibles and at macro and micro levels.

2. Regionalisation and Specialisation

Desired Outcome: To ensure a more targeted AKIS which meets regional and specialist needs.

Challenge addressed: Scotland’s diverse regions have different knowledge needs and ability to access advice. Specialisation is linked to regionalisation, as some commodity types are concentrated within a few regions (e.g., dairy in southern Scotland, arable farming in the east). To meet the challenges of achieving net zero, as well as the climate and biodiversity crises, there is also a demand for regional and specialist environmental advice.

Theme 2 overall SWOT

Overall SWOT and enablers for ‘Regionalisation and specialisation’	
This section records the broad feedback points on regionalisation and specialisation made by stakeholder participants in the workshops which were not specific to options.	
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South of Scotland Enterprise is an example of regionally connecting farmers with other actors. • Rural Innovation Support Service connects farmers into networks and is farmer-centred, • NFUS links stakeholders.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every subsector of agriculture is slightly different and the regions in Scotland are different too – it would be silly to expect one solution for AKIS for everybody. AKIS needs to be adapted to the needs of individual sectors, regions. • Regional and thematic hubs enable tailoring and high quality support. • Benchmarking groups can help incentivise knowledge transfer and improvement. • Farmer discussion groups are great. People are meeting to discuss their problems as they are friends. • Also supports better farmer mental health and tackles loneliness issues in the sector. • The most effective way to communicate advice is when farmers are meeting farmers (we need to support networking among farmers).
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to unfragment a fragmented industry? Important not to encourage furthering siloing, for example, between agriculture and forestry.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise tools like Zoom groups for discussion on common interests over a much wider area as well as providing local and regional level engagement. This could also be an effective way of bringing in an international dimension. • Twitter and farming forum very useful for knowledge sharing between farmers and also “watched” by public interested in farming. • Groups could explore new topics/niche areas. • Could offer opportunities to learn from other sectors (e.g. forestry). • Could use a ‘challenge approach’ with groups, for example, examining circularity in nutrient cycling, or the use of microplastics in slow-release fertiliser.

Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative definition of regions not necessarily aligned with needs. • In a joined up approach it is hard to isolate the impact of a single intervention, so difficult to measure impact. • Not enough specialist advisors in some areas eg forestry and environmental. • Research providers not well enough linked.
Enablers	<p>A farmer-centred approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These hubs/clusters need to be farmer centred. What works, is peer-to-peer exchange of experience. Networks are also great, but it is good if these are led by farmers. <p>Consideration of network structure and access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shape of the networks is important. Most effective is a ‘small world’ which has dense connections where there is some long-term existing relationships – this is what it was like historically in Scotland. Strength of this approach observed on a visit to Norway where strong relationships were built. Personal networks are crucial when thinking about where farmers get their knowledge. • We need to consider access to the networks and overlap of individual networks. Access to networks should be make easier for newcomers. • Existing official or semi-official networks should be interconnected. <p>Facilitation and coordination of networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There must be some inner structure/clear governance in the hub to make it actionable: coordination is needed. Can’t expect everyone to know everything – need common awareness and help coordinating. • Better facilitation and more facilitators are required. • Have an innovation translator embedded in regional and specialist groups. <p>Mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More mentoring and fewer formal interactions required. <p>Regional frameworks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need regional framework to bring together top-down and bottom-up perspectives. • More formal regional structures – identify local opportunities/new opportunities. <p>Research and advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers must take part in agricultural research for it to be useful to them. • Strategies to meet the needs of larger farmers and crofters and for specialised and targeted advice. <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are limits to what can be achieved without private funding streams. There is a clear need to involve commercial companies. • Long-term and secure funding to support a long-term view/approach.

Option 6

Option 6 National knowledge hubs	
Description	Bring together participants in a particular supply chain (e.g., dairy, poultry) with government and other relevant participants, to identify challenges and share best practice. Researchers and a budget for applied research could be included in these hubs. Supported by innovation coaches.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swedish model: National Knowledge Hubs address a) animal husbandry, b) ecological sustainability, c) business development and entrepreneurship, d) rural development, and e) local food system. • In Wales, the Farming Connect programme has four Development Centres (Dairy, Red Meat, Organic and Land Management). These centres have Knowledge Transfer (KT) officers. The interaction is that each region has monthly meetings between Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) Farming Connect staff, KT officers and FLS staff to share information and ideas on delivery and promotion of Farming Connect services, including FAS. • Scottish Meat is an example of well operating supply chain. • Pastures For Life supply chain model. • Southwest Dairy Hub reflects interests of members, not constrained by administrative borders.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer-led Groups were established to develop advice and proposals to the Scottish Government on how to cut emissions and tackle climate change as reaffirmed in the recently published Climate Change Plan update. These groups focused on the arable, dairy and high nature value (upland farming/crofting) sectors. Additionally, the existing Scottish Pig Industry Leadership Group reported to Scottish Government on behalf of the pig sector. A Suckler Beef Climate Programme Board was also established to take forward the recommendations of the farmer led Suckler Beef Climate Group. • Scottish Government funds Centres of Expertise (e.g., EPIC, CXC).
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to bring together people from the supply chains.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative burden: coordination of FAS with non-FAS organisations (e.g., QMS). • Regional hubs would be best to address local topics and issues. • Need both regional and specialist hubs.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to create holistic supply chains – farm to fork – and include all actors. • A chance to join up geographically disparate small-scale supply chains (which is high risk).
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses resources on existing sectors; may not lead to transformative change.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hub would require inner structure and governance: who is in charge? • There could be a role for technical translators within the hubs who help with links between research and practice. This could be top down or bottom up. • How to effectively bring together all the participants in the supply chain? Stakeholder mapping for individual supply chains would be helpful. • Determine what scope of innovation should be and who should the beneficiaries be? Need to consider the market and the whole supply chain - Glenkens local food hub example.

Option 7

Option 7 Crofting thinktank	
Description	Form a multi-stakeholder group to develop bespoke advice and innovation support for crofts and small-scale farms. Group would have budget authority for experimentation and service provision.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Parliament has a Cross-Party Group on Crofting. • Advice for crofters already receives additional state support.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique group that reflects and highlights the needs and importance of crofters and small-scale farmers for local food, heritage and the environment. • Empowerment of crofters. • Contribution to sensitive land management. • Promotes public benefits of crofting. • Maintaining population and economic activity in remote rural areas.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentration of the crofts to a couple of regions. • Bureaucracy.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could act as an integrator for the suite of services available to crofters.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding. • Clear mandate. • Preventing duplication of service provision.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to ensure fully resourced, with clear structure and governance. • Specialised and targeted high-quality advice will require highly trained advisors. • Mapping of all relevant stakeholders.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 8

Option 8	Expand KTIF (Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund) and Operational Groups to all land managers
Description	<p>KTIF Provides funding to organisations to deliver vocational training, coaching, workshops, courses, and farm visits.</p> <p>Operational Groups bring together multiple actors such as farmers, researchers, advisers, businesses, environmental groups, consumer interest groups or other NGOs to advance innovation through collaborative development of new initiatives or technologies.</p> <p>https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/all-schemes/knowledge-transfer-and-innovation-fund/</p> <p>These resources could be expanded outside of farming to include foresters, community landowners etc. Reframe the FAS as a rural advisory service.</p>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmer group on Arran, supported by a SAC consultant. Their collaborative approach is expanding on data and processes from the Beef Efficiency Scheme and the Farming for a Better Climate Initiative, with the ambition to involve other local wider actors in the community such as Taste of Arran and Arran Eco Savvy. They are also looking at the link between farm businesses, processors, and retailers. Spain: In the dryland cereal areas in Spain’s interior, climate change is creating challenges for rainfed cereal farming. To help farms become more resilient, Operational Group ECOPIONET has set up a knowledge exchange network to foster collaboration and build a viable organic farming sector. The Operational Group includes experienced organic farmers, technical consultants and applied researchers who shared their knowledge with local advisors and ‘pioneer’ farmers, to support their conversion to organic production. This created an efficient and dynamic flow of information where advisors and researchers even learnt from the experienced farmers. Project partners also used a digital platform to share knowledge.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAS ‘one to few’ and ‘one to many’ events are regional (i.e., located in specific regions). FAS connect (one-to-few model) has been well received. Groups of generally 6-7 form (up to 15) with a similar or shared interest connected by a WhatsApp group. The groups are self-selecting and decide their priorities. Financial support attached to enable visits and speakers etc – externally funded. Seen as a safe space and an opportunity to trial different things. Can bring in private companies and needs are facilitated. For example, extensive West Coast hill farmers with a focus on net zero.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dynamic flow of information enabled, region-specific advice and expertise accessed; and stakeholders interconnected for co-learning. Enables peer learning at regional level.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to connect that many connected stakeholders/farmers?
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NFUS and other membership organisations could apply for KTIF funding to carry out KE and innovation work that would support members and find solutions to their problems.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for NFUS regional staff to become innovation brokers as part of a future innovation support service, but this would require a change in organisational capacity and strategy.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to spread resources too thinly. • Difficult to achieve effectively in sparsely populated regions. • Trained facilitators are key to ensuring success; these may not be readily available.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the expansion of the scheme in order that stakeholders from other sectors are represented. • Stakeholder mapping. • Importance of specialist facilitator role – people working at the interface between researchers, farmers, other rural actors, and industry. Would almost have to act as translators. Facilitators should help with coordinating but also be skilled in conflict and tension management and be good at connecting to different hubs.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 9

Option 9 Environmental clusters	
Description	Initiatives which bring farmers together to address an environmental challenge, supported by a professional facilitator. This group may or may not include other relevant actors. These can include operational groups. By working together, helped by an advisor or ‘facilitator’, farmers and land managers can work more cohesively together in their locality. This enables them to collectively deliver greater benefits for soil, water and wildlife at a landscape scale. Agri-environmental schemes may support the application of the work.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ireland: Sustainable Uplands Agri-environmental Scheme (SUAS) pilot project: five-year pilot is to develop practical and innovative solutions that will address the complex agricultural, environmental and socioeconomic challenges associated with the land management of commonages and hill farms in the Wicklow/Dublin upland. Project is based around the idea of commonage management groups, which can be effective to deliver best practice management, a sustainable stocking rate and appropriate timing of grazing using proper breeds. • Sweden: Regional “green” clusters strengthen the sector through cooperation between organisations, business activities and education for developing a region's competitiveness and attractiveness. How each cluster works differs depending on geographical area, enabling local activities to reflect local priorities and requirements. There are 14 green clusters in Sweden. • Italy: BioDistricts - A territorial approach to organic farming: a locally rooted multifunctional project based on the values of organic farming. They involve farms, institutions, supply chain actors and consumers, as well as any other actor that wish to be engaged. Each of them could be the promoter of initiatives that will lead to the elaborations of activities that, starting from local food supply chains, will meet the needs of the territory. The objectives are the development of local organic agriculture, the shortening of agro-food supply chains and their integration with other sectors food education and continuous training for operators. • Piloting an Outcome Based Approach in Scotland is an NatureScot-led project working with 40 farmers and crofters in four clusters across Scotland (Skye, Argyll, Strathspey and East Lothian) to test innovative approaches to delivering environmental outcomes on farms and crofts in Scotland. • These can also be termed ‘LINSAs’ – learning and innovation networks, addressed in the FP7 SOLINSA project.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust establishes regional ‘Farmer Clusters’, where farmers work with facilitators to develop and test environmental actions on farm.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Region specific solutions are more likely to be successful. • Potential for landscape-level application. • Benefits from peer learning.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial funding is required get additional actors involved

Opportunities	<p>The use of compliance/certification as drivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arla have a pilot project where farmers who meet certain environmental/ESG standards receive a premium on their milk sales. This might be to help their members prepare for forthcoming legislation. • Tesco suppliers must become LEAF certified. • Red tractor certification for nitrogen-inhibited fertiliser use. • AHDB stopped potato support due to levy cut, now have GB potatoes trying to do similar. Due to GDPR they are having to start from scratch with members. Not statutory. <p>Take a long-term, nature-based system perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature-based systems are complex and interconnected. KT projects often just focussing on one item but doesn't achieve much because not looking at system. They need to take an adaptive approach; the system is constantly evolving and approaches that worked in the past may no longer be relevant to the system in its current state. • It takes a long time to establish a nature-based system e.g., 5 years to see anything, 10 years for profitability. Need to support people through that transition. • This kind of system doesn't get rewarded by current market structures and help with costs is required. For example, Pastures for Life is not market led; the ethical market is not the sum of it. • Need to be clear on motivations for taking a nature-based approach to farming. Is it for personal motivations or financial benefit? <p>Funding for quality environmental advice and guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-environment funding should be focussed on farmers and forestry (in preference to consultants), to maximise environmental benefits. • There needs to be additional funding to re-establish FWAG advisors who are based rurally, remote from the (urban based) research institutes, but on the doorsteps of the farmers who need help. • There needs to be additional funding and support for organisations like Nature Scotland and SEPA, to enable them to carry out their duties and advise/police farmers and foresters appropriately.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current market structures.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term funding. • Closer collaboration with Nature Scot and NGOs, e.g., RSPB, Soil Association. • Appetites for more sustainable farming practices.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 10

Option 10 Regional green sector investment groups	
Description	Regional organisation or limited company which brings together commercial, public, and charitable investors to sponsor innovation development and applied research for environmental benefit.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweden: Regional green sector investment group: AgroÖst was created in 2006 and is a regional actor that aims to encourage municipalities, regional associations and county administrative boards to invest in the green sector. AgroÖst is owned by organisations and companies in the counties Östergötland, Sörmland and Örebro and works to get research institutions to become more active within the development of green sector through distributing research and development assignments (AgroÖst n.d.). Sweden: Agroväst has existed since 1992 and is a development company that aims to contribute to a more sustainable and profitable agriculture in western part of Sweden. The company identifies a need for development and knowledge within the green sector and its actors. Agroväst has a close contact with agricultural practices and generate financial resources to stimulate, initiate and refine activities and projects that benefit the green sector and the whole society.
Any relationship to current services	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilises private capital for environmental benefit.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be strongly influenced by specific private interests; potential for conflict with public objectives and between participants.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for regional variation and creative structures. There is scope for a small percentage of the funding to go to regional expert committees to develop regional agri-environmental priorities, and help focus/tweak incentives for regional incentives (for example, to agree top-up funding for re-wetting peatlands, re-connecting rivers with floodplains, conserving scrub habitats; organic farming, and regenerating native woodland; and, if necessary, agree to reduce incentives for land use changes which seem excessive, such as for intensively extensive spruce plantations). This would be like the set-up we had when developing Environmentally Sensitive Areas, 20 years ago; where regional groups agreed regional distinctiveness and priorities and set the incentive levels accordingly.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not be equally feasible in all regions.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires facilitation

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 11

Option 11 Regional AKIS Hubs	
Description	Regional hubs where services are co-located, and events to bring together local AKIS actors. This option emerged as strongly valued in the stakeholder consultations.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some services are already co-located, e.g., SAC consulting offices, NFUS offices and wind energy companies at Thainstone Mart. • Digital Dairy Chain in SW Scotland is a good example of peer-to-peer support involving different actors and innovation translators. Crosses Scotland and UK as well as different parts of Scotland (cross-border projects can pose challenges to funding and positive governance). • Ireland has 'local county enterprise boards' – a regional actor that provides direct grant-support to farms and other businesses.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAS advisors already have region specific knowledge and networks.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates collaborative development of solutions. • Regional 'one-stop-shop' for advice and information.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge of defining 'regions'. • Increased administration. • Concentration in some regions may limit access for advice for those producing commodities which are not common in their regions.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be suited to mobilising non-traditional actors (e.g., supply chain) which have strong regional presence.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National actors (e.g., research institutes, universities) may prefer to work in a limited number of regions, disproportionately benefiting those regions.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional coordinator

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

3. Supporting peer-to-peer learning and farmer collaboration

Desired Outcome: Increase on-farm innovation through peer-to-peer learning

Challenge addressed: Up-take of innovations and development of new innovation needs to increase in order to address global challenges. Farmers are often other farmers’ best source of advice. Farmer-led demonstrations increase innovation up-take. Pioneering farmers take risks to innovate. Enabling farmers to skillfully demonstrate to and advise their peers is an important enabler for innovation.

Theme 3 overall SWOT

Overall SWOT and enablers for ‘Supporting peer-to-peer learning and farmer collaboration’

This section records the broad feedback points made by stakeholder participants in the workshops which were not specific to options.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to provide options that bring farmers together; this approach has a good multiplier effect. • Farmers and crofters enjoy getting together; provide social occasions for knowledge transfer informal and small-scale interactions as well as formal events. Good general interest from many farmers to collaborate and share information. • Farmers listen to other farmers. • Peer-to-peer collaboration generates a richness of detail that can be captured. • Provides ability to tackle project/landscape scale issues and opportunities.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any interventions need to be tied to policy drivers – a lot of uncertainty amongst farmers at the moment. • Lack of well-trained and trusted facilitators to support the groups and the discussions they have. • Accountability – how to measure impact and identify and address unintended consequences (learnings). • Example: a small farm run as a social enterprise, people want to visit all the time. This is difficult to manage timewise and there is an opportunity cost. There needs to be an easy mechanism for people to be able to offer these kind of demonstrator activities. Perhaps an easy charging structure with a standard payment model. • In rural communities, especially remote areas, people normally need a lot of different skill sets. How to reflect this in support mechanisms?
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage the private sector more – but state subsidies, compliance etc. make this difficult. • Informal or social occasions might also help pull in farmers who for whatever reason don't feel engaged to bigger formal projects. • Need to target landowners as well as land managers. Land managers can effectively have their hands tied by the owners so it's important to engage them in peer-to-peer learning. • Ensure that charities like RSPB and the John Muir Trust are included within the networking groups. • Important when setting up projects to ensure fit with policies or regulatory approaches to enable them to perform. • Innovative farmers exist. Need to be able to identify more of them and utilise them effectively.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative dairy business example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Innovative market-led approach to cow-calf separation (a concern to consumers) ○ Generates additional income from farm tours and training • Use more well-trained and trusted facilitators to bring farmers together for knowledge exchange. They don't have to be technical subject specialists but they do have to be good facilitators, which is a different skill set. • Look beyond Scottish and UK borders for innovation and learning. • Use of technology to help enable this e.g., webinars. Harness the reach of social media. • Identify existing approaches in different sectors and look at how these could be tailored in different situations. • Ensure peer-to-peer groups can explore new opportunities, e.g., saltmarsh for carbon sequestration, fish and shellfish by-product not used as much as it could be for, e.g., fertiliser, growing interest in seaweed. • Include broader land use, not just farming, within collaborative projects – support early adopter farmers. • Incentivise or support early adopters to reduce their financial and business risk in trying new approaches. in exchange early adopters which have a commitment to share their learning. • More benchmarking. • Build more on the shows and events such as AgriScot as opportunities to bring people together, both formally and informally.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More nuance and complexity in future decision-making– need support that can address multiple issues and objectives. Need to upskill advisors to deal with this. • Fear of failure will stop people taking risks that may impact negatively on their business/lead to loss of income. How can this be mitigated? • Apathy can develop and progress slows down if not well managed. • Quality of information can be an issue where it comes from unverified sources on the internet. Not always easy to know what is real evidence and what is essentially fake news. • One-size-fits-all approach would not work as it's not a homogeneous environment.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge transfer should get more prominence – should not be a side job. Need specialist translators who can bridge the research and practice interface. • Important when setting up projects to ensure fit with policies or regulatory approaches to enable them to perform.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 12

Option 12	Expand Monitor farms
Description	<p>Monitor farms bring together farming peers, advisors, with industry representatives, commercial companies and occasionally researchers to share farm performance information and observe innovations as they are implemented. Monitor farmers host 4 to 6 meetings on their farm in a year. Monitor farms are delivered by QMS with support from AHDB, funded by QMS. sponsored by AHDB and QMS, with some input from FAS.</p> <p>Monitor farms could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased in number and diversity of topic (e.g. including agri-environment, farm diversification, fruit production). • Monitor crofts could be established, focusing on townships and common grazings. • Applied research could be undertaken on monitor farms.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept of Monitor Farms originally came from New Zealand, where they are still ongoing: https://www.dairynz.co.nz/about-us/research/forages-for-reduced-nitrate-leaching-programme/monitor-farms/ • Ireland also has monitor farms. https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/dairy/joint-programmes/kerry-agribusiness/2016-to-2019-programme/monitor-farms/ • Strategic Dairy Farm Programme (AHDB).
Any relationship to current services	<p>Scotland’s monitor farms are highly valued by industry. Scotland has identified 9 Monitor Farms for 2022- 2026. https://www.monitorfarms.co.uk/farms/</p>
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model exists and is well thought of; it already has credibility. • Can help embed innovation and new ideas. • There is a richness of detail that can be captured. • Good integration and get good input. • People talk more freely when it’s peer-to-peer discussions. • People more willing to be vulnerable in a trusted group. • Can involve industry and technical specialists. • Tend to be well attended with a good range of ages. • Young farmers find visits useful to tap into older/more experienced peoples’ experience. • Have personal development as well as business benefits. • Example: New monitor farm group on Islay. Initially participants weren't able to answer certain questions about inputs, but now opening up and collecting more data. Can also discuss wider issues, e.g. succession, within these groups.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farms that are monitor farms or some sort of flagship farm are under pressure to perform well, otherwise the reputation of the person family and business is at stake (strength and weakness). • Monitor farms are very expensive and (by definition) limited to specific farms. How can diffusion of learning and innovation be improved through comms to provide value for money? • Big investment, need knowledge transfer to go beyond the group. • New Monitor Farms have fewer physical meetings – more face to face is better. • Monitor Farms aren’t paid or insured – this should be considered.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be bureaucratic. • Funded through different routes so have different objectives, could be more connected. • Can be siloed. • Currently a narrow focus. • Disjointed delivery by different partners with different objectives. • How to engage those that aren't already involved? • Be careful with naming – differing perceptions, e.g. “regenerative” - could exclude participation.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to build on this model – increased number, broader range and links between monitor farms. • Monitor farms and benchmarking groups can be broad or very specific (e.g., reduced inputs). It's important that they are set up and run effectively. They need facilitators and champions to help them be successful, as well as an easy mechanism to participate Include broader land use. Not just farming, within monitor farms etc. • Opportunities to widen focus areas and engage with more participants e.g., forestry/agri business/woodland expansion/knowledge exchange. • Opportunities for a whole farm approach as a rural business, vs a specific focus e.g., AHDB beef. • Experimental husbandry farms used to exist – good learning from these. • Involve more diverse range of actors in monitor farms to reflect increasing complexity and choice in decision-making. • Include broader biodiversity and environmental metrics in schemes to help drive actions. • Make attendance at events compulsory – mixed views. Could be a bad idea, participants not there for right reasons and therefore not engaged. • Recruit facilitators based on their soft skills not necessarily technical knowledge (as in NZ). • Reflect that the rural economy is wider than food production.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Lack of joined-up approach could limit benefits.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires skilled facilitation.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 13

Option 13 Establish networks of (commercial) demonstration farms	
Description	A coordinated network of demonstration activities on commercial farms within a geographic region; enables farmers to learn from each other and establish best practice across a region. Each farm hosts a demonstration every few years.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European projects PLAID, AgriDemo and NEFERTITI have identified the utility of increasing the number of on-farm demonstrations and enabling demonstrators to learn from each other through regional networks.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEAF 'open farm Sunday' encourages member farms to open to the public.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good at bringing people together. Provide good discussion and learning opportunities. Exposure to different approaches.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for poor quality demonstrations. Cost of running a good on-farm demonstration. Farmers may not have the right skills (e.g. event design, facilitation)
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More farmers would probably become demonstrator farms and try innovations if funding was available and the risk could be mitigated. Link this to conditions of funding to ensure that the resulting knowledge is shared and lessons learned. Researchers could help farmers validate new technology that they had identified to provide an independent assessment of the impact of adoption. This could apply to general innovations as well as technology e.g., a minimum tillage approach. Award early adopters by risk sharing the caveat being that they then must share their knowledge. Trial approaches in different locations/contexts to broaden relevance and encourage KT. Bring together groups around a common theme that affects several landowners. See it as learning opportunities, not as failure – critique, not criticise. On-farm visits involve lots of different aspects; it is a process of gradual absorption; lets you bounce ideas around and see things in action. It shouldn't be about teaching but picking things up that suit your system.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to show benefits to encourage participation. Business risk in undertaking trials if they are novel/unknown/perceived as high risk.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitation fund would allow farmers to work together for the greater good where a common issue is shared for example water catchment management and deer management.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 14

Option 14 Ambassador Farmers and Crofters	
Description	<p>Successful, well-respected innovators could be identified and funded to lead events (e.g. on-farm demonstrations, discussion groups). Opportunities to travel to see innovations in other regions, the UK and Europe could be linked to ambassadorship.</p> <p>Diversity champions could be appointed to challenge perceptions of who farmers, crofters, growers and foresters are.</p>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poland: Within the Agroinnowacja EIP project, sowing a catch crop for forage has enabled the six partner farmers to improve higher gross margins and cattle performance. Each of the six farmers participating in the project act as ambassadors to spread results.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Champions for Change (SWT and NFUS) aims to highlight the positive action some farmers are already taking – such as creating woodland, targeting pesticide and fertiliser inputs and restoring peatlands. LANTRA Scotland Industry Champions: LANTRA awardees act as experts, supporting peer to peer learning. The NFU has Young Farmer Ambassadors: https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/nfu-student-young-farmer-ambassadors-2023/
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcases different approaches. Inspire farmers and raise aspiration. Augments knowledge available from peer farmers. Creates a platform for influence.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a relatively small community of farmers in Scotland so there is a danger that the same people keep being put on a pedestal. Can create an “us and them” perception “this is for someone else, not me”. Needs to be accessible and relevant to “normal” farmers.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to increase global engagement. More equitable and have higher engagement if anyone could apply, rather than being recruited. A bursary fund (one ran in South of Scotland) might be good. Anyone could apply or be encouraged to apply by a peers and advisors.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to increase pool – insufficient diversity.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanism for identifying and funding a broader pool of Ambassadors. Have a direct payment for farmers to visit other farms (new income stream).

Option 15

Option 15 Innovation competitions	
Description	Individuals or groups working together with their advisors, researchers, entrepreneurs. Prize could be seed money to develop or implement the innovation.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defra's Future Farming and Countryside programme sponsors innovation competitions. Successful consortiums win funding to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explore and idea and develop a team, check if an idea works in practice, develop a new product or service, work on longer-term innovations. Farming Innovation Programme – Farming Innovation Programme (ukri.org)
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational Groups are awarded competitively. This is commonly practiced in Europe, through European Innovation Partnerships (EIP).
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation pathways in England are an interesting example – providing funded farmer-led innovation projects. Ability to tackle project/landscape scale issues and opportunities. Capital grant scheme was helpful to bring innovations in. These were proven but still new technologies. Funding was just enough to encourage uptake.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear of failure will stop people taking risks that may impact negatively on their business/lead to loss of income. Need to mitigate risk aversion. Innovation may fail, or benefits may take a while to become apparent. At the end of the day the farm is a business. Could something like an insurance scheme be created to support innovative actions that meet policy objectives? Lots of people seem to try different things based on Internet searches. However there seems to be a high attrition rate and don't know what happens to the projects next. Quality of information, not always easy to know what real evidence is and what is essentially fake news. Prohibitive land use models. One-size-fits-all approach would not work it's not a homogeneous environment. Need to explore barriers to innovation uptake. SAC and Agri-Epi Centre have done trials. More of these activities need to be done on different farms for KE and to show results/relevance in different contexts. How to de-risk innovation for farmers to encourage uptake? E.g., integrated pest management approach. How do you deal with innovative projects that can be seen as industry disruptors – may not get funding. Need more Support for early adopter farmers. Innovative (semi)unique approaches may lose out if too different from main players.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides funding to support farm business to come together. Connects researchers and farmers. Works on a challenge or opportunity basis.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers could help farmers validate new technology that they identified to provide an independent assessment of the impact of adoption. This could apply to general innovations as well as technology e.g., a minimum tillage approach. Award early adopters by risk sharing, the caveat being that they then must share their knowledge. Fund innovations led by growers and industry, well as led by academics (demand-led innovation). • Look beyond Scottish and UK borders for innovation and learning. • Currently a lack of investment in new technology. Provide financial help in return for demonstration to wider audience. • Identify existing approaches in different sectors and look at how these could be tailored in different situations. • Incentivise or support early adopters to reduce their financial and business risk in trying new approaches. In exchange early adopters have a commitment to share their learning. • It would be helpful, if a farmer is interested in a trial of something new, if they could connect with the relevant researcher, access funding and perhaps engage with the student on the project. • Farmers could be incentivised to offer land to run trials, so that trials happen in different contexts and are visible in the community. • Share available funding out more – could apply to different sorts of organisations and different sorts of visits - currently driven by FAS. • Not everything that is better is new. Look at learnings from indigenous communities elsewhere in the world and their sustainable long-term stewardship of land.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could become exclusive, focus on incremental 'safe' innovations • The R&D tax allowance is based on private good no recognition of community benefit or knowledge transfer. Need to consider public good in incentivisation schemes.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of technology to help enable this e.g., webinars.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 16

Option 16 Farmer (Field) Stable schools	
Short description of option	A group of farmers within a region are brought together around a similar topic and undertake visits at each other's farms to compare experiences and learn from each other. The concept was developed in Africa and adapted to European conditions.
Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denmark: The farmer field school approach was adapted to Danish conditions and named "stable schools." The programme involves a 1-yr cycle with 2 visits at each of the 5 or 6 farms connected to each group. Four groups were funded the first year. These also exist in New Zealand.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exist informally now in Scotland
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders supportive of this option. Very inclusive. An interesting approach to support peer groups. Very good for mental health. Stable farms are good for generating ideas (bottom up). Benchmarking groups can help incentivise knowledge transfer and improvement.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of facilitation funding to help enable collaboration. Farmers too busy to coordinate a group themselves. Need excellent facilitators – take away admin burden and stimulate interaction. Need a broad range of groups and funded facilitators. Time and money are barriers to participation.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise tools like zoom groups for discussion on common interests over a much wider area as well as providing local and regional level engagement – this could also be an effective way of bringing in an international dimension. Innovative farmers exist. Need to be able to identify more of them and utilise them effectively. If stable schools were local, the relationships between the participants may already exist and the benefits may not be so great. Shouldn't be too specific – look also at the farms in the round. RGFNSWS good example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm walks. Soil health group with WhatsApp group. Weekly zoom meetings – wide range of participants from different geographical areas enables a wider conversation. Has a funded facilitator. Social element important. NFFN brings people together, mostly online. Carbon calling (?) network also mainly online looks at regeneration and innovation. Several interest groups exist – way to integrate without losing specialism?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer groups work best if farmers are willing to put their data on the table. There is value in benchmarking. • Could also include a monitor farm in the group to set aspiration, show what is realistically possible. • Example of adaptation of approach: had an active discussion group but membership and activity tailed off as the farmers got older. Now do farm visits, travelling together by bus. This has also been successful in bringing in a group of young farmers. • Need to involve the next generation in farm visits etc to engage younger farmers and to help with succession planning. • Need a facilitator a person who can organise and also link across to other projects and groups, creating extra value.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need strong coordination and support team to work well and funding.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled facilitators required to take the pressure off the farmers. • Facilitators may also help where a farmer is not particularly comfortable speaking in public or to groups. • Visits could include something else like a stock judgement, which gives another reason for participation for those who might not otherwise (e.g., older farmers).

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 17

Option 17 Fund on-farm demonstration by commercial farmers	
Description	On-farm demonstration events could be included in the options for which farmers can access in under the new Rural Development Programme from 2025. Funding could cover costs of catering, advertising, training in event design and facilitation etc.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is an option with the European Rural Development Programme to directly fund on-farm demonstration, but not all member states take it up.
Any relationship to current services	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders generally positive about this option. Need to provide options that bring farmers together; this approach has a good multiplier effect.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be seen as sales opportunities.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More farmers would probably become demonstrator farms and try innovations if funding was available and the risk could be mitigated. Link this to conditions of funding to ensure that the resulting knowledge is shared, and lessons learned. Use innovative farmers for demonstrations and knowledge exchange to others.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk/reward balance to encourage participation
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to skilled facilitation support would be beneficial

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 18

Option 18	Include funding for on-farm demonstration in research funding
Description	Applied researchers could access funding (e.g. through SEFARI gateway) to undertake demonstrations of their innovations on commercial farms.
Examples	
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations currently presented at ‘Arable Scotland’ and on the Major Research Provider’s farms.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables more applied research. • Yields practical evidence for farmers.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-farm trials: need accuracy of data, getting data can be difficult, need buy in from farmers and facilitation. • Should this be driven only by researchers? Should it not be more of a partnership with farmers?
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trials on different farms, showing different contexts. • Benchmarking across similar trials.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs strong buy in from farmers. • Should not be entirely researcher led – needs a partnership approach.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could the share farming model, which is currently seen often as an exit strategy approach, be repurposed to help risk sharing.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 19

Option 19 Enable Cross Visits	
Description	Exchange visits for land managers, advisors and relevant others to different regions and countries. Typically 3 to 4 days in duration, involving 4 to 8 individuals. Programme involves a series of farm visits and group discussions. Participants are responsible for promoting what they have learned when they return (essentially becoming Ambassador Farmers and Crofters – Option 14).
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wales: Farming Connect Management Exchange provides a travel scholarship of up to £4,000 to enable farmers to learn about different ways of working outside Wales. Beneficiaries can travel to other parts of the UK or elsewhere in Europe to explore ways to improve one aspect of their current business or to diversify. On return, beneficiaries are expected to disseminate learning more widely. Cross visits are frequently undertaken in European Commission funded 'thematic network' projects, which are designed to establish networks of practitioners and researchers on a specific topic. For example, in this blog post, a policy officer from the Scottish Land Commission writes about his experience of visiting farm incubators in France, funded by the Newbie project: https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/news-events/blog/farm-incubators-learning-from-france In this blog post, a Hutton researcher writes about the cross visit NFUS Next Generation Committee and SAYFC took to learn about new entrant activities and supports in France. https://www.nfus.org.uk/news/blog/next-gen-get-insight-into-access-to-land-and-agricultural-education-opportunities-in-france
Any relationship to current services	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brings different perspective. Allows immersion.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hard to quantify the benefits. Hard to create metrics for this type of engagement.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on schemes like Erasmus, which allow a concentrated period of time to meet different people and get immersed in a different situation. Can take participants out of their comfort zone. Can have a long-term impact on approach and thinking.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future ability to participate in European initiatives and collaborative projects.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 20

Option 20 Mentoring	
Description	Formalised one-to-one peer support for innovative business development.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ringlink Model: Ringlink survey showed a big change in access to knowledge over the years. The Ringlink model is worth it.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring is currently provided under the 1:1 of the FAS
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to specialist experiential knowledge. • New Zealand were previously far ahead of us in terms of sharing information. We were quite closed and it was problematic. We've evolved to be more open and to share more openly. • Creating critical mass of people with knowledge and training will allow for this to be passed along through informal mentoring. • Could also have positive impacts in terms of succession processes, in terms of arming people with the skills they need to pass their knowledge on. • With farmers more open to sharing and mentoring, the potential for indirect spin-offs increases. With support, more willing to innovate. A more organic process. Will support willingness to learn from mistakes, creates safe space to make mistakes.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence issues. • Misunderstanding of what the role entails.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully embrace the power of peer-to-peer learning. • 'FAS Website could provide a space for willing farmers to be listed as possible mentors or buddies to help with peer-to-peer knowledge transfer and support.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of a specific age are those who end up participating in mentorship training but then there is an issue with succession. How to get more fresh voices involved? • Burnout of potential mentors. • Misinformation and liability for resultant decisions.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively target and recruit members from specific demographics and sectors. • Make mentoring a more attractive and non-intimidating process.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

4. Promote diversity and generational renewal

Desired Outcome: Young people with strong skills and enthusiasm for land-based industry and rural life are equipped and enabled to pursue careers. All individuals involved in land management decision-making have access to training and learning opportunities.

Challenge Addressed: Generational renewal is critical to the vitality and innovativeness of land-based economies. Research has shown that younger farmers are more innovative; farmers with successors are more likely to invest in their farm businesses. Women represent an important resource to the land-based sector but may feel marginalised by events and training opportunities that are primarily attended by men.

Option 21

Option 21		Embed rural skills in the educational system
Description	<p>The agri-food sector is an important source of ‘good green jobs’ for Scotland. To ensure a highly capable and qualified new generation of farmers and agrifood sector workers, the opportunities of these professions need to be promoted and supported at secondary level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a National 5 and Higher qualification in organic/agroecological food, farming and forestry • Promote agri-food jobs to secondary school students (e.g. agrifood career days, work experience placements) • Establish bridging programmes between secondary schools, colleges and universities • Training of teachers and the various types of industry Ambassador, in what the career possibilities are a Toolkit and videos to illustrate course content, qualifications and career opportunities. 	
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberdeenshire, Dumfries & Galloway are piloting Rural Skills at schools. 	
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During COVID, Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) phone a farmer (Farmer Time) feature was very successful. Free fortnightly calls between farmers and classrooms. Highlighted what farming looks like to inner city kids, embedding it within the curriculum. Highlighted food production but also other rural land uses. • The Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET). 	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could raise the profile of rural and agriculture careers and bring more people in. • Could help to bridge the rural-urban divide. 	
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires substantial reskilling of primary and secondary school educators. 	
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin conversations at the primary school level to normalise rural life and jobs <p>Integrate more with current curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it more than about agriculture: economics, sustainability, environmental learning etcetera, and tailor it to what’s already there in the curriculum. • Embedding more widely through secondary education will have more impact; very limited at the moment. • Confusing material out there with regards to impact of agriculture on environment; there is an opportunity to talk about what farmers do for the environment and what farms can do for the environment. 	

- There can be a focus in schools about the negative impacts of farming and the need to reduce consumption of red meat, e.g. the Cowspiracy.
- Look at disagreements on what the countryside should produce. Deliver a balanced view of what countryside can deliver, different culture and needs.

School outreach (especially urban)

- How to target those from urban areas to get involved? It would have to be a campaign or targeted activity.
- Getting into primary schools through RHET who are doing a fantastic job; need for more outreach in schools is high; poor knowledge of farm life amongst children and adults (e.g. not knowing what a chicken is).
- Stand outside schools and sell local produce to parents.

Farm to fork perspective all the way through education

- Need to link food to primary and secondary education.
- Tie school mealtimes at school into lessons on sustainability and food providence. School menus are a great learning opportunity for diverse eating options, e.g. vegan, local.
- More emphasis on cooking skills.
- School gardening initiatives.
- Lacking infrastructure to get local food into schools. It can also be more expensive – but not always, depends on local set up.

Promote jobs in the rural sector and make them more attractive options

- Kids need to understand the diversity of options with regards to careers.
- Consider wording of Curriculum for Excellence in terms of how it links to new and emergent jobs in the agriculture sector. It's not just farmers in the agriculture sector, and there's more to the rural than agriculture.
- To get more people of all ages involved in the rural land sector, the need to move away from prefacing everything with 'agriculture' and highlight the diversity of rural roles that exist.
- Make it more appealing and highlight opportunities that are attuned to the priorities of urban populations. E.g., vertical farming, alternative proteins. It's not just about cows!
- Raise awareness among educators and the public about agricultural and rural career pathways. For example, in agri-data management. Data is currently being under-utilised because of lack of skills. Technology is constantly creating new supporting jobs with very transferable skills (for outside the agri sector).
- Build on programmes such as that of NatureScot rural surveyors promoting rural careers within tertiary educational institutes; could this be expanded?
- Encourage more bright lights into the rural sector by putting land management on a par with any other high-esteem careers. If you are doing well at school, becoming a doctor or lawyer are not your only options.
- Just not an attractive industry and there are massive problems getting people in rurally let alone from urban context; can't find people to do these jobs. Put things in place to make it an attractive industry. Would need to pay farmers more for it to become an attractive option. Farmers work such long hours and they are still on the breadline. There needs to be more attention on the actual

	<p>hours worked by farmers. It's also a very dangerous occupation with lots of different skills required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframe the problem and create an attractive narrative; highlight the positives of a career outdoors. For example, farming can offer health, sunshine, fresh air.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many groups have an interest in influencing the national curriculum. <p>Rural/urban disconnect and tensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on this should have started 20 years ago – there is a total disconnect between rural and urban communities. People don't realise what farmers are up to and get angry. • The divide in the country between food production and other people in UK is completely strange from a French point of view, sense of pride that has been lost. France is really proud. Get people interested. Can be about food, heritage, something Scottish specific, lot of different approaches that could be used. Farmer bashing hasn't helped – created more distance, in last twenty years, trashing environment. Public opinion work needs to be done. • Loss of urban farms, e.g. in Edinburgh, Aberdeen (Doonies). • Move towards more vegan menus in schools and more broadly in society; this could be seen as an opportunity; things that vegans eat are also grown on farms. <p>Lack of interest from educators/students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural skills/interests not an option at school unless there is an individual (teacher) who has the background/enthusiasm. How many people would take up a Nat 5 and how many would actually be able to deliver it? • Rural skills not seen as critical life skills for kids; they are not prioritised in the classroom.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires lobbying and concrete ideas • Feed into CfE consultation currently underway <p>Could social media influencers have a role in outreach to bridge rural/urban divide?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media influencers can have big followings and possibly impact. There are greater risks associated with social media influencers; if they recommend something and it has an adverse impact, how would they recover? Opinions shift so quickly on social media and they have to be aware of trends. Social media influencers can act as ambassadors for their community/sector – e.g. Cammy from the Sheep Game • Could there be a role for Jim Smith (the comedian farmer) in terms of mainstreaming the sector? • There are lots of 'lady farmers' on social media, especially Instagram.

Option 22

Option 22 'Young trained farmer' status	
Description	An educational qualification demonstrating competence in farm management and practices. It can be linked to subsidy access.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irish policy, grounded in EU policy, prioritises 'young trained farmers' for certain schemes and incentives (e.g. Young Farmers Scheme; National Reserve Scheme, Young Farmer Capital investment Scheme, Stamp Duty exemption). Teagasc has seen an increase in enrolment, largely due to the provision of 'young trained farmer status' and the financial benefits associated with the 'young trained status' and privileged access to CAP Pillar I payments. Teagasc also offers a 'Green Cert' programme for older learners (aged 23 and over): https://www.teagasc.ie/education/courses/green-cert/
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SRUC 'NextGen' HND is currently underway. The Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture (TIER) – could link into this.
Strengths	<p>Public confidence in sector and parity between professions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone ought to have a licence to farm – all other professions need it. Would give a sense of justification for all the investment. Agricultural labour isn't even called skilled labour, often English gov, give a better thought of career. Puts value on these skills. Provides protection to the profession. Offering professionalism, indemnity. Highlights skills actually required for farming. When this is recognised, people might be willing to pay more for their food; would bring more money into rural areas; currently lots is extracted for little return. <p>Creates clear routes into the sector from school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good for new entrants; offers better pathway into farming from schools. School leavers often looking for a route into something professional, and agriculture/rural jobs often not highlighted as such. Clear career path, you know you're coming in and that you can progress. <p>Increases skill level, confidence, and access to resources for young people entering the industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidence in skills they've got, hitting the ground running. Offers transferable skills – they can do other things with these later if they choose. Mix of skills – academic, practical – some people suited to one or the other – they will all be as qualified – a bit of equaliser. Developing their ability to collaborate and cooperate in early stages of career for future of farming. Can offer things that will help them at that point on time and later on in terms of setting up their own business.

Increases confidence for employers

- Struggling to get suitably trained labour and could help with bringing people onto farms who already who have the skills needed (e.g. contractors).
- Young people need to come into farming already trained on chainsaws and operating heavy machinery (e.g. forklifts and tractors).

Pathway for lifelong learning

- A YTF status would allow for ongoing training – a pathway for lifelong learning.

Weaknesses

- Would take years to establish

Discriminatory/exclusionary

- Could exclude those people who can't afford the time, money or energy for the qualifications.
- YTF status doesn't necessarily improve access into the industry; just improves it for people already in the industry.
- Would it just be open to young people? Exclude older people? Is it just young farmers? Or is there a focus on new entrants?
- Discouraging people from learning new skills by calling it that, miss out the 'young' part.
- A scheme such as this might be more suitable for new entrants – those that haven't grown up on farms and don't have experience.
- Farmer too broad a term; anyone call themselves a farmer.
- More than 'farmers': don't want to exclude people (e.g., contractors, who are a really important part of farming system)
- 25% of farming population is dyslexic; this can make it challenging for individuals in terms of applying for certification. Very capable farmers who are doing a good job could struggle to get the necessary certification.

If it were to be a compulsory qualification or a prerequisite to a good job:

- Could discriminate against young people that have worked very hard in the farming business but not gone to university; they might be excluded from opportunities.
- Could discriminate against others who've trained in other areas/studied something else at uni.
- A barrier to generational passing on of farms if young people don't have the qualification.
- Land ownership complicates the idea of having a licence. What happens if you already own the land – you then have to get a licence to do anything with it. Would need to move towards a licencing scheme over time.

Box-ticking exercise

- It could just become one more hoop to jump through.
- If it's not thought through well, it could become a shortcut.

Cultural resistance

- Degree of cultural resistance. Those from farming families might not believe they need learning; but they do, especially with the rate things are moving; it all comes down to how it's presented.

Opportunities	<p>Opportunities to improve quality of education on key subject areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would allow space to create training for new innovation and technologies. • Current education for new farmers only addresses aspects like soil; environmental education is not a prerequisite. Concepts such as biodiversity and carbon need to be embedded. This is topical: there is more focus on the combination of nature emergencies. • Learning about soil health is fundamental – it is the foundation on which everything is built. • Processing and robotics are other areas to develop teaching in. • There are countless strands to address (e.g. agrarian, dairy, conservation management) but they are all siloed; production and environment have been kept apart. This offers an opportunity to integrate learning. This could be addressed by having key themes but prerequisite modules. • There needs to be an agreed level for a range of topics. • Within education settings, there needs to be an emphasis on what a responsible role farming/land management is. Quite a lot of roles that aren't 'academic' are seen as simple when in fact they are actually very demanding and complicated. <p>Creates opportunities for on-farm apprenticeships and diversified income streams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It could be run on-farm like an apprenticeship. If it's quite flexible, it could be an opportunity for some farms to specialise in training up farmers and diversify their income stream.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently no firm agricultural policy; no framework within which to plan <p>A highly skilled workforce could be problematic from some perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you upskill people, want to be paid more; this could be problematic from an employer point of view, e.g., NFUS. • Upskilling makes them more employable; you train them and someone else gains them. Positive for the young person but for not the employer.
Enablers	<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of standards / accreditation. Would need to balance against being accessible. Would new accreditation structures be needed? • Find enough teachers and examiners. • Systems for monitoring and allowing farmers to record skills. • Institutions responsible for management. • It should fit into what we've already got. • Would need to have clear progression and development stages. <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term funding would be required (annualised budgets wouldn't work). • Could create a funding pot just for young people which is not bureaucratic. <p>Inclusivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would need to be an inclusive certification process where the onus is on the educators to meet the needs of the farmers (in terms of making it accessible to all kinds of learners). • Consider more than one pathway to get to that status, so as not to exclude people at different stages of life. Offer opportunities to enter training at various different levels (e.g., SRUC vet) to create more appealing and relevant opportunities for different backgrounds and stages of life.

- Requires easy access to good quality training, relevant to specific farm situations.
- Ensure spaces for young people. It was mentioned many times that young people do not get involved with NFUS meetings. However, monitor farms and Young Farmers Clubs have been more popular with the younger demographic.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 23

Option 23 Expand Apprenticeships	
Description	Building on existing initiatives such as the Ringlink internship programme, including how best it can be funded sustainably (e.g. potential for wider industry funding), the possibility of a new qualification, and how it can be rolled out nationally. Modern Apprenticeship with new pathways as well as estate maintenance and environmental management.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of Shared Apprenticeships, which have the potential to help where rural microbusinesses have insufficient time for mentoring and supervision of an apprentice, building on pilots under Opportunity North East (ONE) and the Fife Rural Skills Initiative and including the need for sustainable funding.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ringlink and One-North East pilots as above.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables newcomers to develop skills and enter the sector. • Clear pathway to agricultural employment. • Addresses shortage of skilled farm workers.
Weaknesses	<p>Currently no clear parameters and perception of red tape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From industry side of things, not very easy to take on apprentices. Challenging because lack of opportunities, costs, lack of understanding of what is actually required. • Farmers and land managers put off by health and safety; can't expect new starts/apprentices to know how to do farm work safely on day one. They need to come with safety tickets like in other industries, makes them more of an asset, less stress and the farmer knows what they're getting. Otherwise, they stand around like a spare part, feeling useless. <p>Currently not an attractive option to young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRUC apprentices are not paid enough – being paid worse than PhD students and being taxed on top of it, unlike PhD students. They would make more in McDonalds. Currently only undertaking because they have serious drive and really want to be there. Exclusionary.
Opportunities	<p>Could consider private company training programme models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hutchisons training programme – 3-year course, taught weeds, fungicides etc towards base qualification. Everything done within the company and by year 3, trainees are ready to go. From ground zero. It's an investment that the company makes - £150,000 per person. Not just selling chemicals; advice about all aspects of farming. <p>An opportunity to train farmers and crofters to have apprentices, potentially allowing them to diversify their income streams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train farmers and crofters to have apprentices. For college students it's about getting the right people to talk to them and teach them practical skills. Not all farmers and crofters are ideal candidates. Requires support to change farmers'/crofters' mindsets and give skills and confidence.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For people who want to be on farms and crofts, it's important to offer opportunities for practical skill building with experienced farmers, not just classroom-based approaches. They can learn through a combination of on-farm work experience and internet research. <p>An opportunity to reassess how things are taught</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider new integrated approaches. For example, integrated land management, where teaching is not compartmentalised. This may broaden appeal to younger people.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very similar threats to those of the Young Trained Farmer status.
Enablers	<p>Infrastructure and funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and training of new trainers, instructors, assessors and verifiers. • Wider industry funding. Feed/fertiliser industry – worth asking the question. <p>Ensuring it is highlighted as a skilled career option</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting it in front of people when they are making career decisions and highlighting that so much more to the farming sector than being a 'farmer'. • This opportunity needs to be made available to everyone; not just those from a rural background. Currently those from urban backgrounds will actively have to get out and seek work experience. There should be mechanisms for this; it shouldn't be left to chance. • Ensure spaces for young people. It was mentioned many times that young people do not get involved with NFUS meetings. However, monitor farms and Young Farmers Clubs have been more popular with the younger demographic.

Option 24

Option 24 Training courses specifically for women	
Description	Establishment of women-only training courses normalises participation in sectoral training which would otherwise be dominated by men.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish Government has initiated training in 'Be your Best Self', 'Knowing your Business' and 'Leadership Development' for women, on the recommendation of the Women in Agriculture Task Force. These training courses have been very well received.
Strengths	<p>Any approach to bring more women in can be seen as a positive given the nuanced perspectives they can bring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More women in agriculture and the rural land-based sector is a positive because they bring a different perspective. They tend to be more engaged in local community – how rural connections work. They also tend to have multiple roles in society – nurses, teachers, etc, and integrate those perspectives. Important to be considering the whole rural landscape.
Weaknesses	<p>Can be seen as an exclusionary approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some strong feeling that a more open and inclusive approach needs to be taken: when was the last time men were given funding to go off farm? There should be opportunities for all - women, men, non-binary people in agriculture.
Opportunities	<p>Different kinds of support are needed to get women more involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is separate training required? It should not be enforced. What is needed is encouragement to get involved. To speak up as a woman at an NFUS meeting currently, you have to be brave. Support networks are more important: regenerative farming community are supportive. When you go out to NFUS meetings, you feel the backing of your community behind you – important to set up supportive networks for this purpose. Often, it's the same people being overbearing in meetings and workshops; other men will be struggling to be heard too. Better facilitation and leadership are what is needed in this context. On the Reforesting Scotland board, they operate a policy of age/gender ratio in order to get a range of ideas. It takes work to maintain; drift happens; whatever is dominant soon takes over.
Threats	<p>Rural attitudes are slower to progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average age of farmers is quite high and not very representative of other groups. Rural areas tend towards less progressive social attitudes with regards to race, gender, sexuality etcetera. They have got to accelerate. Macho attitudes are very common at NFUS meetings; hard for women to have a voice. Equally, attitudes don't need to be overt to be a problem. There can be a difference in attitudes between those demonstrated at an interpersonal level and those on display publicly. <p>There can be perception that women are well represented but the reality is that they still tend towards particular subject areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In certain educational institutions, there is overall an even gender ratio; however, they are clustered into different subject areas. There are areas where majority of students are woman, e.g. vet sciences and animal welfare.

Enablers

The role of media changing norms and mainstreaming female agricultural role models

- For example, the Archers. BBC programmes on farming and countryside play a role in. But have to bear in mind these are quite idealised versions of farm life and don't necessarily reflect reality.

Societal values and realities are slowly changing

- Anecdotally, more applications from women for agri roles. For example, a recent shepherd role in the NE had 4 or 5 women applying; this is different from how it would have been five years ago. Another example is in agri research, where some work packages are now led entirely by women.
- There are generally more women involved in sector; it mirrors society. Though women have taken on more roles than they used to, they are still often running things in background too. Could be said that they have always been in both roles, just more acceptance of them as 'farmers' now.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 25

Option 25 Events tailored to typically marginalised groups	
Description	Events for specific groups, particularly those new to the FAS (foresters, community landowners, etc). Other groups who may be marginalised can be addressed through targeted and family-friendly events where childcare is provided. Offering childcare both enables more egalitarian attendance and communicates that families are welcome. Specifically inviting particular cohorts and designing events which meet their needs builds confidence and addresses skills shortages and information needs.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive Farm Blind farmer creates route into farming for disabled students - Farmers Weekly (fwi.co.uk) • The rural LGBTQ+ network Home - Agrespect - The Rural LGBTQ+ Network • Inclusive participation in rural Scotland: research report - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural land-based businesses should be accessible to any gender expression; gender diversity is a strength. Bringing more diverse backgrounds and identities in will open the sector to new ideas and useful skills that are useful that you didn't know would be useful: unexpected ideas. • Free childcare would be very welcome for multiple reasons. • Any broadening out to include everyone is a strength because the sector is massively short of labour on the ground.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as exclusive. • Reinforces idea that these cohorts are different. • Perceived as taking resources away from 'real' farmers
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained child-care team to go around to meetings. • Showcase marginalised groups participating in agriculture and the rural sphere; this will inspire more people to get involved. Normalise presence. • A smaller community approach is needed to build interpersonal acceptance; it's about building real relationships. The contrast between certain areas is quite stark. In Argyll, people from ethnic minorities are very integrated and women are being a major force. Different sexualities are totally accepted. • Don't head for outcomes but create opportunity. Unlikely to be able to solve all problems but can create opportunities that will take us in the right direction. An example of heading for outcomes would be loading a board with people that look right. • Build more awareness of what work has already been done exploring diversity in the rural sectors, especially regarding differently abled people and ethnic minorities.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural communities are traditionally conservative: we need to approach that issue – unlikely to be many who haven't been discriminated against. • A mismatch between Scottish childcare policy provision and the number of providers actually available on the ground.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people might have very different views on things like gender expression than that of the traditional farming community, who might not be the most understanding or open to the idea of non-binary folk trying to access the community. It's 2023 and it's time to have that conversation. • Need to find ways of opening the sector up to people that haven't thought about doing anything in rural area before and spark their interest.

Option 26

Option 26	Create opportunities for new entrants of all ages and remove barriers to succession
Description	<p>Supports which enable newcomers to enter the sector and/or facilitate farm succession. This includes reintroduction of grants and targeted training for new entrants and successors. Access to land is a major issue.</p> <p>Note: This option was not initially listed as an option for consideration. However, the theme was raised at every workshop.</p>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scotland's Land Matching Service.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FONE (Farming Opportunities for New Entrants)
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New entrant supports are fundamental. They are the ones that innovate. They will push forward all the all the areas we've been speaking about. But the sector is so hard to get into.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness of existing opportunities. Resource intensive to make system level change.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and improve mentoring programmes for new entrants and successors Need more starter farms. They could start out on a 3-to-5-year basis to see how they do, on a small scale. But also backed by a long-term plan to make it work. Starter farms could be linked to apprenticeship schemes – giving the opportunity to learn on the job. Could rural councils provide facilities, land, equipment? Could be state funded. Create more opportunities to learn on the job: in New Zealand, if you are willing to sacrifice 5 or 6 years as a share milker, it enables you to build up an asset, then allowing you to get your own herd and build experience along the way. Consider other farming models: Not always a bad thing not having a family own a farm; a corporation or business (although there is a threat of being absentees) might be more likely to take on new entrants into diverse roles – e.g. land manager, data specialists, marketing roles. <p>Improve access to land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schemes that improve access to land are needed. Improve awareness of the Land Matching Service. People are unaware of its different functions. The name is misleading; bad marketing. <p>Reconfigure financial landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barriers for new entrants or successors are a lack of a capital and the current tax regime (inheritance tax, so many exemptions). There are huge amounts of capital assets but they only materialise at the end; farmers are cash poor and asset rich. In terms of succession and getting new entrants in, the tax regime is onerous and dangerous.

Threats	<p>Succession is a very sensitive issue and a slow process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is succession happening fast enough? Families are missing out because older generations aren't passing on the farm soon enough. They will either leave the sector or have to start by themselves. This could mean the sector is losing valuable experience and skillsets. • Starting the conversation about succession is not easy for anyone involved (older generation or younger generation). • We are talking about long-term processes here. In terms of succession, not many opportunities come up for new entrants; so we will be slow to see more diversity in farming. • The professional and personal are so linked. A lot of senior people in the industry don't give up because it is so strongly linked to their personal life and sense of self.
Enablers	<p>Current subsidy system is a 'disabler' – older farmers retain control of land to retain access to subsidies as a form of pension.</p>

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

5. Digital Opportunities and Upskilling

Desired Outcome: Land-based businesspeople able to easily share information and advice on-line and through social media.

Challenge Addressed: There is a wealth of on-line information available, but it can be difficult to find specific information. Digital literacy is an enabler for accessing and sharing information and building networks. The restrictions of the Covid 19 pandemic led to digital upskilling amongst farming and land-sector actors but some have been left behind.

Option 27

Option 27 Digital Innovation Hub	
Description	Digital Innovation Hubs (DIH) are support organisations that aim to make businesses more competitive by speeding up the development and uptake of digital innovations. They provide these services close to the end-users (“at working distance”) and thereby cater to the needs of agricultural producers and food processors in a specific region.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Digital Innovation Hubs https://www.smartagrihubs.eu/project/hubs
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesigning Rural Project Redesigning Rural by Starkevents - Issuu
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds capacity and connection generally, but also in more remote regions. Addresses the issue of a lack of baseline digital skills. A lot of people are lacking digital skills and these skills are highly variable among farmers. There is a danger of a ‘digital gap’ where farmers are left behind. Covid 19 had unprecedented impact on digital upskilling and this could build on that. Improvement of communication skills of farmers, digital marketing, general promotion of their business, how to create a podcast, newsletter etc, will allow them to take advantage of more opportunities. There are enormous opportunities in digital marketing that could be harnessed with more upskilling.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally, we are relying on digitalisation too much. Personal communication (and advice) is much better and effective – we need two-way communication. A lack of trust in a digital space; knowing who you are talking to. There is too much information out there, and often useless information. We need to realise that these tools should support farm businesses to make them profitable and sustainable. Lots of people seem to be trying different things based on internet searches. However there seems to be a high attrition rate and don't know what happens to projects next.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What works effectively are “one-to-few groups”. Digital sources should be discussed with farmer peers. Bursaries to travel abroad and get experience and good examples of where digital tools are more useful.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of data for decision-making – couple with upskilling i.e., help farmers to learn to do something useful; not just random digital skills. • It would be good to focus on digital tools created by farmers for farmer (it usually works more effectively this way). So, involving farmers in development of digital tools is the way forward for me. Farmers should be part of the process from early start of development of tools. • The use of remote devices to capture data on farms.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of will among certain groups to digitally upskill; could widen the gap and leave people behind.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to rural broadband is crucial. Where is no broadband, we can't even consider digital upskilling. Digital infrastructure is needed. <p>Inclusive and targeted approach and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to think about how to not exclude older people who are likely to be less skilled in working with digital tools • We have a lot of training available in digital skills, but the content is not usually adapted to farmer needs. • One-to-one telephone support for digital skills development and general IT support is recommendable. For example, staff in the RPID office are very helpful. People also phone up ScotEID for IT support.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 28

Option 28	Web platforms
Description	Easy-to-search / utilise portals and web applications. There is a wide variety of data generated through applied research, and through the agrifood chain. Bringing this data together in a way that is easily accessible to advisors and farmers could help to bridge the research/advice gap.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ireland: ‘ConnectEd’ programme enables AKIS actors to access Teagasc research, education, knowledge resources and online tools. • Teagasc also has web-based applications for financial management, grassland management, developing nutrient management plans, and a repository of information on good farming practice for advisors and practitioners. https://www.teagasc.ie/about/corporate-responsibility/online-services/
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FAS has a repository of resources for farmers to access. • SEFARI gateway compiles research findings and facilitates collaboration between stakeholders. • The Skillseeder App offers access to range of courses across Scotland, relevant to rural businesses https://search.skillseeder.com/categories
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of useful and relevant information / advice gathered in one place to make it easily accessible.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replication. • Saturation – too much information already out there. • Some farmers just won’t or can’t engage with online sources; there will always need to be an alternative. • Digital literacy and rural broadband are prerequisites.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to create a truly integrated resource; get away from siloes. • FAS Website could provide a space for willing farmers to be listed as possible mentors or buddies to help with peer-to-peer knowledge transfer and support. • Chance to assess what is already out there and find a way to bring it together.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widen the gap. • Sensitive data on performance may not be easily shared.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective signposting to and awareness raising of the relevant web platforms. • A very user-friendly and inclusive design. • Expert curation and prioritisation of topics/issues/approaches. • Digital upskilling. • Rural broadband access.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 29

Option 29 Data sharing platform for benchmarking	
Description	Benchmarking – comparing on-farm details to anonymised information from other farms, enables farms to see how their efforts measure up, and set achievable targets.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belgium: ILVO, AVEVE, Boerenbond, CRV, DGZ and Milcobel, launched a platform for advanced data sharing within the Flemish agrofood chain: DjustConnect (https://www.djustconnect.be/en) DjustConnect is a high performance ICT infrastructure with powerful security and transparent rules. In this dashboard, every farmer can decide which part of his data, and with whom, to share with. The central role of the public research institution ILVO guarantees the neutrality of DjustConnect (https://youtu.be/DzcHya8dqsg). The platform showcases were developed in co-creation with the members of the Belgian 4D4F Hub. The benefits of data sharing and hence the use of user-friendly digital tools was demonstrated in different Hub events and workshops (https://nefertih2020.eu/NefertitiPortal/#!/app-h/hubdetail/2/8).
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is enormously useful to share and use farm data. Effective usage of digital tools in agriculture requires data sharing.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a lot of data out there, not all of them are used. Data gathered needs to be practical and accurate. Will require a lot of effort in training to ensure the tools are effectively used by farmers and other actors. The data is sensitive; it will also take a lot of work to ensure this is secure and to ensure farmers trust the system. Lack of rural high-speed broadband will limit ability to utilise.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilise existing data. Link datasets to increase their power.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data misuse. Data not being used and farmers losing faith.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance of security of shared data, which are often sensitive. Only reliable data sharing platforms should be used. Upskilling. High-speed rural broadband. Data experts with farming backgrounds to act as facilitators. Data managers and data quality assurance. Farmers gather information most frequently by themselves. This needs to be standardised. Digital upskilling goes hand in hand with data – it would be good to focus on data handling, securing, using them for decision-making, their accuracy, practical use of data (not just their gathering), etcetera.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 30

Option 30 Virtual demonstration and on-line agricultural shows	
Description	On-farm demonstration can be made ‘virtual’ through live video and virtual tours. Covid 19 restrictions led to innovative production of events for land managers which have continued to varying degrees.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ireland/Europe (H2020 FairShare project) – online agricultural shows for farmers https://www.h2020fairshare.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Practice-Abstracts_FAIRshare_Visuals-for-website-8.pdf
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The popularity of FAS TV, while not interactive, demonstrates the power of good media content. Virtual demonstration trialed at Arable Scotland in 2020
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible – reduces travel. Archive for repeat viewing.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of high-speed broadband would be a barrier to accessing these for certain groups. Would require upskilling throughout the AKIS.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a culture of on-line learning. Incentivises quality on-line content production and associated skills throughout the AKIS.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over reliance on gimmicks and tools.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural broadband. Upskilling in digital skills.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 31

Option 31 Facebook groups, Twitter, and other social media	
Description	Facebook and Twitter are widely accessed for information. Access to skilled and competent advice within these platforms could improve the quality of information available. Formation of Facebook groups to address specific topics could also improve access to quality information. Twitter is a useful way of promoting links to quality advice.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish Dairy Farmers Discussion Group Facebook • Farmer influencers, e.g. The Sheep Game
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFUS.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widely and easily accessible – many people already use Facebook for personal use. • Covid 19 was an enabler for increased acceptance of digital tools. • Facebook is already widely used as a platform for peer-to-peer learning. • Many farmers already using instruction videos from YouTube. • An overly formalised approach to social media is not advisable. Organic social media and the ‘stuff that just happens’ is better and more engaging. • Social media influencers can have big followings and possibly impact. They act as ambassadors for their community/sector.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook groups need to be moderated. • May not be a reliable source of information or be ‘too much’ information. • Requires broadband connectivity. • Requires internet literacy.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve/link to social media influencers, e.g., Jim Smith (the comedian farmer), Cammy from the Sheep Game. • Can link to podcasts and other information sources (e.g., Pasture Pod, the success of which is based on the fact it’s made for farmers by farmers).
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook is not as popular with younger generations. • Facebook can promote contentious content. • There are greater risks associated with social media influencers; if they recommend something and it has an adverse impact, how would they recover? Opinions shift so quickly on social media and they have to be aware of trends.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled moderators and advisors. Evaluation of the quality of information spread to farmers is needed. • Rural broadband access. • Upskilling in digital skills, including critical skills. • Bursaries for farmers to travel so that they can see the impact of digital upskilling (successful stories).

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

6. AKIS capacity building

Desired Outcome: All AKIS actors skilled in working collaboratively and across the boundaries of their professions or disciplines.

Challenge Addressed: Broadening the AKIS to include a wider array of topics and participants will require active integration across traditional divides. It is increasingly recognized that supporting ‘interactive innovation’ – innovations developed collaboratively – requires a very different skillset from traditional advice provision. Input suppliers, processors, supermarkets and the financial services are active ‘advisors’ to farmers and crofters. Land managers need to be able to access peer and specialist advice across an array of topics. Newcomers to the land sector need signposting and assistance to successfully integrate. Research structures need to bridge the gap between research and practice.

Option 32

Option 32 AKIS networking events	
Description	Events which bring together farmers, foresters, advisors, researchers, input suppliers and enterprise specialists to making innovative knowledge and processes for supporting innovation more widely accessible. Industry actors can work with advisors to identify where further support is needed for implementing innovations. Interactions between advisors acts as a form of continuing professional development.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Germany, under the National Rural Network (NRN), regional innovation support services meet twice a year to exchange best practices. The NRN also organises annual meetings and cross-border field visits. At these events, farmers, researchers, advisors and innovation brokers from Operational Groups share ideas with other national and international innovative projects working on similar themes. AKIS stakeholder groups also meet twice per year in Ireland. • In Sweden, the Swedish Rural Network organise one large meeting per year for actors and organisations involved in the AKIS. The meeting typically involves an up-date on the year’s activities, analysis of future needs, and priority setting actions for the year ahead. The meeting is facilitated by an Innovation Coach who facilitates the work of the network, and organises workshops, follow up events and interactivities to enable members of the network to initiate multi-actor collaborations. • Across Europe, from 2023, the innovation strands of national “CAP networks” will broaden the scope of the current National Rural Networks to support knowledge exchange and foster innovation in the EU Member States. They organise networking events that bring people together, stimulating regional, national, cross-border or international Operational Group projects (OGs) to interact, and connecting them with European projects. National CAP networks make innovative knowledge more widely accessible by collecting, translating and sharing practical project results that are most useful for their country. • In France, farmers and advisors are trained and networked through Chambers of Agriculture Training farmers and advisors - Chambers of Agriculture France (chambres-agriculture.fr) • Demonstration farms in France are a good example of bringing people together. There is involvement from young people (high school to university). They have a very different budget with a lot of money in it. Réseau des fermes DEPHY - ECOPHYTO - Chambres d'agriculture France (chambres-agriculture.fr)

Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor farms: ‘have been brilliant for networking (specifically pig monitor farms). Good for everyone in industry (farmers, vets, etc)’. • Most industry actors attend the Royal Highland Show • RISS: an existing brokerage provider.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to create new collaborations • Meeting in person is important. • Addresses the need to de-silo. • Enables newcomers to build networks.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AKIS is currently very disparate and separate and it’s hard to imagine an event that will attract everyone: ecologists hang out somewhere, vets hang out somewhere, etc. • Too many frictions between AKIS participants • Difficult for famers to get off farm, especially where there are few people on farm, even when highly motivated • Distance is a big issue, especially when these events would be most effective in-person. • Oversaturation of events. There are so many shows, events etcetera, and it can be hard to choose which ones to go to.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example was given of discussion groups which then became biannual bus trips. These attracted more young people. • Farm trials are a good KE mechanism; involve switched-on farmers who are keen to pass on the message on; tie these into training. This requires buy-in from the industry in terms of funding. • Build on the EU networking event model: participant was involved in one of these in Italy in 2018 and found it a great opportunity to learn from others throughout Europe. The limitations of Brexit probably prevent this. But there is possible scope for a UK (Wales, NI, Scotland, England) session to be set up to share best practice and ideas. https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/event/eip-agri-seminar-operational-group-to-impact
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of buy-in
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve (a specific objective) and what the benefit to participants would be. We need to think about their worth in terms of whether they are focussed on skill building or a social element; their worth is in peer-to-peer knowledge exchange/transfer.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 33

Option 33	Training for facilitation
Description	Provision of continuing professional development for new and existing advisors in how to facilitate discussions and innovation collaboration. This training would also be useful to others within the sector (e.g. farmers, crofters, supply chain actors).
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finland: ProAgria has set up a network of facilitators to share experiences of leading, managing and facilitating discussion groups and to learn from each other. Interactive innovation supporters need skills in group management and innovation support. In ProAgria, a mentoring approach is used to train and develop new discussion group facilitators. New facilitators take on the role of assistant facilitators at discussion group meetings as part of their training. New facilitators are apprenticed under a mentor to develop their skills in practice at events.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Business Gateway model in terms of facilitation and convening skills – have various online/in-person models that could be looked at. The training is free and comes with no qualifications attached. Via Elevator in Aberdeen, in collaboration with NESAG (North East Scotland Agricultural Advisory Group). LANTRA experience – training for trainers. In general, people in training positions are often those who have been doing work for long time. LANTRA offers very helpful ‘Train the Trainer’ sessions and has an understanding the current circumstances. RISS Meet the facilitators (innovativefarmers.org)
Strengths	<p>Strong recognition of the need for facilitation in meetings, projects and processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training to manage strong personalities in meetings would be very helpful. There are always steamrollers in groups who limit the ability of others to participate meaningfully. There have to be neutral parties, with no bias. Often chairs have their own agendas or axe to grind. Facilitation is essential. Advisors need to be able to park their ‘advice heads’. It is a completely different skill set. If no one takes the lead in a project, there is nothing to deliver and people lose motivation. Agricultural skills working groups in Orkney. Unsustainable number of meetings to just come up with a very rough proposal let alone key outcomes – no structure or guidance and everybody was trying to do everything at once. Nothing was achieved. It needed four or five subgroups and better facilitation. Providing people with skills is really useful as not always going to be able to afford professional facilitator. Facilitators are key to keep hubs rolling. Role is not only for specific events, but whole process. Effective communication so important. Not so much that farmers need it; people talking to farmers need it. It is important to be using their language. Skills in decision-making support, agreement brokering and conflict resolution would be very helpful in these processes. <p>Strengths of a facilitation network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A facilitation network builds coverage, capacity and reassurance. The more people you train, the more coverage you get; build critical mass. It would be

	easier to get people up to speed, e.g., on biodiversity audits, animal welfare etc.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional facilitators are very expensive. • Internal facilitators can be seen as partisan. • Facilitators can lack practical understanding of the context.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to employ someone from each organisation that is a facilitator. This would be cheaper than bringing in externals, and it would be a standardised cost. Their time could be budgeted and could be made available for specific time periods, e.g., a few days a month. • Facilitation skill training could be made more widely available and integrated into tertiary education. Soft skills should be an essential part of all education. Training might have to be targeted for different backgrounds and contexts – e.g., considering the needs of someone coordinating a monitor farm vs. those of an academic. In a CPD approach, the question would have to be ‘What skills are you missing?’. Conversely, it might make more sense to ensure that everyone is equally skilled and capable to contribute constructively. • Opportunity to create a network of facilitators who have a practical understanding of what they’re doing and an awareness of regional differences. This could be done with the support of farming organisation who are made up of people who know how to speak to their own members and are aware of their needs. • Farmers need training (e.g., in facilitation, soft skills) to be able to pass on their skills to the next generation through informal mentoring. Training will help with succession issues; those wanting to learn will be enabled/skilled up to be able to pass it on.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underestimation and undervaluation of the skillset required. In private sector, over-valued maybe, and those in non-profit/charity sector are not paid enough.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targetted funding and a considered approach.

Option 34

Option 34 Mandatory CPD for farmers and advisors	
Description	Participating in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities is a requirement for accessing subsidies or offering professional advice.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Quality Crops (SQC) require members to undertake annual training, and this has proven effective in delivering good practice advice and raising awareness of changes in regulatory requirements and the relevant environmental and human health issues. • £200 CPD payment available to farms in the National Test Programme phase one to encourage uptake. • Current FAS providers already have CPD programmes for their staff. • Training is available through providers such as LANTRA and SAC. • ‘Planning to Succeed’ for business skills.
Strengths	<p>For all</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well handled, CPD will be supportive and interesting, will give opportunity for informal ideas exchange as well as the more formal input. Could be backed by farm visits which are supportive in nature, not inspectorial. Include aspects of best practice into Vet Med courses. • It could keep people up to date on what’s going on. <p>For land managers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farming is an ever-changing and dynamic industry, and training is a necessity. Those managing the land need to be kept up to date. • An opportunity to professionalise farming and align with other sectors who cannot operate without accreditation. Currently, there aren’t really any professional training requirements for land management positions. If you don’t do enough, there are no consequences for you, except perhaps for your business. Many others in the AKIS (e.g. advisors, sprayers) have to do CPD; how do farmers prove they have the necessary skills? • An opportunity to demonstrate how multi-skilled farmers and other land managers need to be, in terms of public perceptions of the sector. • Public money for public goods. • Might help improve safety standards on farms. • Ticks boxes for farmers on farm assurance and thus good for business. <p>Advisors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would raise standards for advisors. A lot of money is being paid for advice and the standard needs to be raised. The advice that is available in Scotland is not all at the same level: some is excellent; some are advising when they shouldn’t be, because they aren’t qualified and don’t have the appropriate knowledge or skills.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could become a ‘tick box’ exercise. Burdensome, expensive and time consuming. Chasing CPD credits would mean the business suffers. • Could be difficult to access for remote farms. Not being able to get cover on the farm is an issue, fewer people involved in agriculture and on farms, so needs to be hybrid option, throws up connectivity issues.

- Difficult farming years (e.g. because of weather) disincentivise CPD and mandatory CPD would create a real strain.
- While CPD is definitely needed, mandatory CPD is counterproductive and is a 'big stick' mentality. Big sticks are needed in certain area (e.g. relating to compliance issues). CPD should not be linked to general subsidies.
- Relevance – might see no point in doing it if you've been farming for a long time, might struggle to find something that you want to learn.
- The focus on training and CPD undermines the value of experiential learning.
- A huge undertaking with a lot to be aligned.
- Should funding focus on building a network or be focussed on providing training opportunities?
- Reinventing the wheel.
- How could mandatory CPD be enforced and what would the consequence of non-compliance be?
- We shouldn't forget that a lot of land managers already have formal qualifications.
- If people can't access training because of time constraints, it may be made available online; but what if a lack of rural broadband limits who can attend. People could be penalised even if it were impossible for them to attend.
- Farmers already want to learn but poor infrastructure gets in the way of it.

Opportunities

Relevant and incentivised training opportunities (non-mandatory)

- While more upskilling is definitely needed, training should not be mandatory; instead it should be relevant and appropriately incentivised. Need to consider whether training is focussed on building on existing skills or new skills (e.g., biodiversity, carbon-related skills). Can seem more meaningful if the focus is on existing skills.
- To incentivise training or CPD and make it effective, it could be free or vouchers could be offered. You should be eligible for a specified number of vouchers and there could be a voucher 'top-up' system, whereby if your 'balance' gets low, you are offered more vouchers – i.e. the more training you do, the more you are offered, and the more specialised it can be. This could also apply to advice.
- Have competitions to 'win' training opportunities.
- Incentivise the skills that are needed for better farming / a public-good approach.
- Important to ensure there are place-based training courses available rooted in the local economy and communities. Could cover legislation and compliance issues but also good practise on new approaches. Something that is linked to local priorities gives a sense of what is possible in the area and how you could be a part of that. This is especially important for young people.
- There must be parity of esteem with regards to the courses.
- Training must be welcoming to all potential participants – i.e. dispel the perception that they are only for certain groups.
- Training must have a business purpose related to a market opportunity; it should take account of personal beliefs and drivers.

Lifelong, progressive learning processes (non-mandatory)

- An opportunity to create a comprehensive lifelong learning process for farmers and other land managers.
- Learning should be progressive; shouldn't have to start at the 'bottom' every time; relevant learning opportunities at an appropriate level will incentivise more people to get involved. This could be an accreditation system allowing people to come into training at a higher level, i.e., skip a few years.

Start training young

- An opportunity to create systems to get most training done within the tertiary education system.
- Quality learning opportunities could be made available to younger age groups – e.g. school leavers going into apprenticeships.

Hands-on learning opportunities

- More demonstrations rather than training so people can see with their own eyes and see what will work in their contexts. Farmers and crofters don't like being put in a box. But they will take ideas away from any event and adapt them to their situation.
- For example, many may laugh at the concept of regenerative agriculture as it means nothing or sounds like heehaw. However, if you show them what works, you can gain more acceptance.

Opportunities to improve quality and relevance of advice through training

- Ecology/biodiversity modules should be a part of RICS accreditation.
- It is important that advisors include advice on commercial side of farming; example given of a FAS event that did not have any focus on commercial advice.
- Training for advisors on practical farm matters, as well as regional issues.
- Training for advisors on wider issues (financial, other branches of the economy) or specialist advisors in these areas.
- Training to effectively translate agricultural and rural research for land managers.
- Advisors need to be aware of all the options available to farmers in the wider AKIS landscape; this could be achieved through regular training.
- Train up 'general' advisors and 'specialist' advisors.

Threats

- Changes in policy and in government – how is that going to impact this process? Biodiversity and climate change has been a priority for the last year; will that change? Clarity of vision needed.
- Courses often don't run if they don't have enough people registered; low numbers are often related to expense of attending; poor attendance in turn drives costs up. It can become a vicious cycle.
- Disparities in quality of training.
- Would mandatory CPD be a barrier to getting people into the profession?
- Over-bureaucratisation of training and access to advice.
- Free training can be problematic; does it downgrade the standard/make it seem less valuable?

Enablers

- A non-mandatory approach.
- We should build on the models and systems of training already in place by existing providers (for example, LANTRA, SAC) and avoid reinventing the wheel.
- Clear accreditation infrastructure.
- Clear signposting and quality assurance so that farmers know where they need to go for their specific training requirements and be confident in the training they will receive.
- Significant funding.
- A clear distinction between skill building/training for compliance/health and safety, and skill building/training that will meet land managers' needs.
- Targeted and appropriate CPD. Current CPD is specific and disjointed.
- Opportunities for in-person and practical training, as well as distance options. Making training 'close-to-home' to remove attendance barriers.
- Improved rural broadband connectivity.
- Adequate childcare provision, especially in more remote areas.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Option 35

Option 35 Fund commercial farm trials of applied research	
Description	Farmers trialling new innovations risk considerable out of pocket expense and loss of income. Subsidising commercial farmers to trial and demonstrate these new innovations is a gap in the current system. At present, the Operational Groups fund the facilitation and costs of organising meetings, but not the cost of the intervention pursued.
Any relationship to current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative Farmers programme. RISS/Soil Association create ‘space to fail’ Meet the facilitators (innovativefarmers.org) People come with ideas or put out calls for ideas. Facilitators. Small-scale. De-risks idea and creates groups of like-minded farmers. • Piloting an outcomes-based approach in Scotland (POBAS) Piloting an Outcomes Based Approach in Scotland (POBAS) project, Phase 1 report NatureScot
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no reason that we couldn’t be funding commercial farm trials of applied research and encouraging innovative farmers. It’s perfectly possible in the context of current legislation; there is just no mechanism for it. <p>Removal of risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages buy-in. • Increases chance of finding suitable sites; risk is removed; support from researchers to do things properly. Encourage more farmers to take part in more innovative trials, instead of perceived safer options. • By taking away risk, encouraging partnership. There is also risk attached to this - would you also be having a partnership split with the profit? Some would want ownership for themselves. <p>Bridging gap between science and practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replication of divergent science. Would mean more varied things being investigated. • Encourages co-design. Practical experience from farmers integrated within scientific insights. Would promote balance and begin to bridge the gap between research and practice. Farmers’ experience would be validated; they have a voice in terms of whether things will work or not. • Connect with researchers who can provide umbrella, good for people who are a bit worried about testing ideas, whether engineers, researchers. They bring it to you and you take it forward.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It relies on people putting themselves forward who aren’t necessarily representative. • If you know the right people and know how to do the applications, you can get involved. If you’re busy, not a chance. It really depends on your network. • Few incentives for applied research. • Data from on-farm trials is difficult to do well – can’t rely on farmers to collect it; may need to be collected outside of office hours.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise opportunities as you would a PhD on findaphd.com across a wide range of topics. Also requires a bottom-up approach, where proposals can be submitted by those on the ground. Or the topics advertised should be

	<p>informed by a bottom-up approach. This could be complimented at the other side by a farmer peer-review process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a plethora of R&D institutions for a country of our size, obviously SEFARI connects many but accessing the tech knowledge in a way that puts farmers or other users at the centre, and ensures they have strong collective leverage when it comes to bigger actors in supply chains (perhaps ‘brokering’) will be critical. • If you are a limited company can claim R&D tax credits which aren’t available to private partnerships. Sometimes it’s not money, it’s just incentive, and sometimes tax system is best way to do it.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happens if trials don’t work? Would funding cover loss of a crop? You have an answer, but the farmer is demoralised – e.g. soy trials Soya growing in Britain Permaculture Association • SG funding would be driven by policy – e.g. research about carbon and biodiversity • What are the parameters of the research; how would it be treated? Peer review? Researchers would have to get their kudos from somewhere. • Persistence of a top-down approach. • Lack of legacy. Often projects come in, do what they want, get what they want, but don’t give anything back. Legacy is important: service thereafter, positive impact that people can feed off for generations. Bring community along with them. If not minimal impact. • Ambiguity/conflict regarding ownership of process and outcomes. • State aid subsidy control – unfair advantages.
Enablers	<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding would need to be as generous as possible to compensate risk, although sometimes a small grants (£500) would be enough for the farmer if it was low risk. Does there need to be buy in from businesses? • Mechanism to allow this to happen; which institutions would be involved? Research institutions working with farming organisations? Staffing. Facilitators. • Incentives for applied research. <p>Buy-in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A targeted recruitment approach to be as inclusive as possible and avoid always involving the same people. • In order to appeal to farmers more widely, would need to be ‘willing to offend’. The fashion is regenerative agriculture, but would require studies on area that are not popular but which are actually beneficial to farmers, e.g. intensification. • Ensuring a farmer-led, bottom-up approach.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

7. Crofting

Many of the options detailed in the first six sets of options are equally applicable to a crofting context. In this section, we draw out general themes which are specific to a crofting context and merit being highlighted in their own right, given the very particular geographical, economic and social parameters of crofting.

Supporting peer-to-peer learning and crofter collaboration	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing structures/institutions upon which to build (e.g., the Scottish Crofting Federation and Crofting Commission).
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crofter confidence. Lack of sufficient tailored support to build local capacity for effective peer-to-peer learning.
Opportunities	<p>Mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't have as much traction as it could. Especially relevant as many are considering more diversified smallholdings. A lot of excellent candidates but they don't have the confidence. Currently being done on an ad hoc basis. Find a way to boost confidence and unleash crofting knowledge. Opportunity to raise more awareness of mentoring services, for those already in crofting, and especially for new entrants. Crofting Commission Assessors could better signpost mentoring services and diffuse information; currently 30 being recruited. SAC/FAS often highlight mentoring in communications however not everybody receives these communications – requires a farm ID. Opportunity to improve mentoring recruitment and retention by making it a more streamlined process. Currently, those wanting to be mentors have to seek out opportunities, apply for these, and pay for their own training. There is no follow up or CPD. Actively seek out candidates for mentoring and create a database of local trainers for mentoring. Opportunity to improve understanding of what mentoring involves. Ensure that there is an understanding that mentoring does not have to be for life. Consider a less formal title. <p>Other forms of peer-to-peer learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor crofts are definitely worth investigating. Have to be careful that it doesn't become the 'model' of what a croft is; there is a lot of diversity in the sector. Would also need to be a limited time commitment. Ambassador crofts are a potential but need to be able to engage less confident crofters; can be alienating if not done well. Important not to overload ambassadors – they are in high demand e.g. Dom McSweeney. Don't overload with too many queries. You'd need a lot of ambassadors to manage the demand. At least two would be needed in Kyle of Lochalsh alone. In terms of recruiting ambassadors, important to enough prep work to ensure that people are coming forward from diverse backgrounds, as well as those that are introverted, not just the usual suspects. Cross visits: Supported visit to shows/farms/crofts – successful visit to Royal Welsh supported by EU.

Threats	<p>Lack of private sector support compared to other areas (e.g., for on-farm demos, monitor farm partnerships)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More limited private sector use in the crofting counties. • There is nothing in crofting for industry – it is too small scale and crofting isn't profitable. They have to travel far for very little return; better to go to a 'normal farm'. <p>Lack of clarity around SG policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particular concern around carbon and what that means in a crofting context.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government support for on farm demonstrations and monitor farms; need to absorb the risk.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Specialisation within crofting

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appetite for diversification and sustainable practices. • NGO partnerships have been successful in the past. • Allows getting crofts into AEC schemes.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistrust of environmental charities or departments who might be promoting opportunities or training for specialisations, e.g. an event organised by a non-departmental public body had zero attendance.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More support for environmental/biodiversity clusters. Skye corncrake partnership was successful, build on that. More funding to get biodiversity experts up would be useful. Appetite for projects around grasslands. • Expand KTIF: FAS Connect Skye (year 1); Need some avenue to pay compulsory courses for low-earning crofts. • National Knowledge Hubs: Good MT Argyll trips through lamb finishing chain.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of regional differences when bringing groups together, and issues of confidence in speaking out in unfamiliar settings. Subgroups are often needed to encourage constructive dialogues. • Importance of making the event feel like somewhere the crofters can come to. Be aware of where the invitations are coming from: Important that it comes from FAS/SAC and not from a particular charity or environmental body.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Promote diversity and generational renewal in crofting	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a lot of skills needed locally that are currently being imported; with the right approach, young people could be learning these skills and gaining jobs locally.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of land and opportunities to have your own croft.
Opportunities	<p>New entrants and young crofters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an easier gateway into crofting. Create different routes into crofting at different stages of life. Crofting can be a very closed shop until you get to know people. • Find innovative ways to create access to land. Crofting Commission, land competition, lack of control over who gets the land. Land matching is seen as a ‘farm thing’ – awareness raising around this. • Create a forum for young crofters that fits with their lifestyles; it tends to only be older family members that will attend evening policy meets. • Facilitate a space for different age groups to come together physically; great for KE, skill development and mental health, as many isolated. A great way to pass on skills and knowledge to the younger generation; a mechanism for this doesn’t currently exist. • Ensure inclusive approaches which don’t replicate a classroom environment, which will be very off-putting for many. <p>Women</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare provision to prevent barriers for parents, especially women; Childcare facilities can be very patchy in certain areas and efforts will need to be targeted. • Network support essential for women and important to reduce boundaries in mixed meetings. This is more important than training specifically for women. <p>Connecting to schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed rural skills in the educational system. Example of Plockton School – rural skills course offered – school leavers were interested and went into crofting. Legacy funding was used; new sources of funding would be needed. • Video links to crofters, like LEAF project. • Raise awareness of the different rural jobs and career paths available to them. There are many skills lacking in the landscape, for example, they could make a good amount of money becoming a fencer, or a digger driver in the context of peat. Currently people are travelling in to do these jobs.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural skills courses could become the default course for those struggling at school.
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crofting Commission could be given a role beyond a regulatory role.

Click [here](#) to jump back to the contents page.

Capacity building for crofters

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a requirement for lots of specialised skills in the crofting counties. • FAS website is great but too big to navigate easily. • Apprenticeships could lead to older crofters feeling better about passing the croft on into good hands.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of crofting makes it difficult to find the time or funds to attend training or participate in CPD, especially those run during the day. Often, there are not many people on a croft, so difficult to find cover. Crofters are often part-time and self-employed, working multiple jobs. Those working full-time in crofting will be working in multiple units and have very little time, often with family commitments too. It's only when something goes wrong that people might consider seeking help or specific CPD. Additionally, there aren't as many crofters on the ground as there used to be; contractors are required for specialised tasks and to make the system work. • At the moment, opportunities and information only reaching more educated crofters. • In terms of skills, there is no match up between supply and demand. • A lot of training available through land-based training centres is not relevant. • Training is often not available locally and incurs travel costs – either to get a trainer up, or to travel to training – for example, sheep shearing in Ireland. There could be locally available trainers, but they are not listed in a centralised database so it's hard to know. • Costs and logistics can get in the way of mandatory training going ahead, leaving crofters exposed, e.g. dipping certification, herbicide spraying. • It takes a lot of work to corral and coordinate groups. • The LANTRA fund for women, an online course, wasn't easy to access. Had to make a special request to get on it, had to push. It wasn't encouraged. • SkillSeeder is what is used to advertise training opportunities. It is poor. Before, the Crofting Commission would have provided this information. • Apprenticeships could be quite expensive in terms of college site fees, transport etc. An online model would be cheaper but could be difficult to access. • SG's objectives regarding carbon mean very little in a crofting context and training is not crofting specific.
Opportunities	<p>CPD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's practical training fund – why did it close? It really took off. It could be widened. • Offer opportunities for 'rural upland tickets' – multiple skills and a job for life. • Train local trainers/advisors. It's not enough to have someone with the skills but they also need to be properly trained in how to deliver a course. It's also important that local and inherited knowledge and skills can be passed on, especially for new entrants. • Butchery training or better access to abattoirs needed for crofters around Kyle of Lochalsh – if fees too high or too far away, have to do the job themselves. Previously an abattoir on Portree but now have to go to Dingwall. Could look to Mull abattoir model whereby slaughtermen have other council jobs in the off-season. Butchery courses were previously run where you could bring your own meat. However, trainers had to come from Yorkshire, which was expensive.

- Carbon-related training and capacity building to be framed in a regional and relevant context – a ‘crofter carbon package’. Peatland Action meet throughout the crofting counties to work out what is relevant; could build on this.
- Important to include scope for mandatory qualifications in any CPD, e.g. spraying, dipping, tractor driving, to ensure subsidies provision crofting.

Facilitation

- Training for facilitation: Skills training for new Crofting Commission Assessors.
- Need actors who can draw out information and learning from different groups and weave it together – i.e. facilitators.

Access to advice

- Localised aspect of advice very important, for example, most bee-keeping advice of no use in the area.
- New entrants perhaps find it easier to access advice; crofters who are flat out might not engage at all.
- There are things that are unique and specialised to crofting – e.g. common grazings – that are important not to lose. But there are lots of relevant lessons to be learned from broader context, for example, English hill farms, in terms of challenges related to scale. Important not to ghettoise.
- Nothing better than having a one-to-one conversation. Information offered from FAS great, but human contact important.
- Need access to locally-relevant advice on biodiversity and carbon.

On-farm trials

- Crofters / small-scale farms not contacted about research in terms of land management.
- Rather than having a scheme where people have to join a group to get started, trial over 1 or 2 years and allow people to cluster around it. If exists as a group, something that can be built on. At the moment, missing bottom layer of people getting involved. To bring people together: WhatsApp, email, events, continuity funding. The more you do, the more involved you will become.
- Requires a bottom-up approach and crofters need to be engaged at the early stages. The direction of travel should be informed by local interests and needs, The process can be extractive – some have said they’ll never speak to a PhD student again. PhD students can be quite young and inexperienced, which may contribute to this. Researchers need resources / support to make it a truly two-way process.
- Needs a simple application: I would like to trial X on my croft and apply for a small amount. Lower the bar and make the process less intimidating. If you get on well in the initial stages, you can then be signposted onto something else.
- Suspicion of industry trials. Recent virtual fence trial – they had no feedback from the company. They just wanted access to the market.
- Need to be aware of event fatigue. It’s a journey and will need time to process. Too much going on all at once. Need headspace for these processes and that’s often lacking.

	<p>Training for young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumbria apprentice model. Focus on not losing hill-farming skills. Has business funding. Apprenticeships split between a number of businesses or a cluster. Something that could maybe work for crofting. A more resilient model is needed. • The Highland Council scheme is worth looking into; one or two years. • Children of crofts often work as yardsmen and similar; very needed; crofting could be serving them very badly; they give a lot of labour but we need to give back to them: tickets, accreditation, recognition of their skills. Any course would need to support them in gaining essential skills – i.e. skills they need to be compliant.
<p>Threats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of regional public transport a barrier to participating in training and other events. There are cases where there has been no bus and people have had to hitchhike to Portree because the training was very important – a certification they needed to do the job. • Huge problems generally finding childcare regionally. SG provision assumes that there are actually providers. Not particularly easy to organise. Proper liability issues. Have tried. How many kids will turn up? A lot of uncertainty. Crofters will drop non-essential activities (i.e. crofting) because of lack of childcare. Without childcare, it's always the husband that goes to events and meetings. • By creating apprenticeships, would have to be careful of not raising expectations that there are jobs when in fact there are not enough. • Lower engagement from crofters than other populations. More of an issue going forward as things change rapidly and there are compliance issues. Up to 20%. Big issue if they want to stay in crofting.
<p>Enablers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should always be a transport option for training and events. • Resources and funding to train trainers locally or bring people in. Also, to cover opportunity costs on a training day; not just expenses. Subsidise the cost of training, as in Shetland. Lewis Endorsement Fund worked well – just a small amount of money needed. • Access to appropriate funding for trials/innovation: needs to be small-medium scale - £2000 to £50,000. • Courses are either oversubscribed or there is nobody. Needs there to be slack and adaptability. • A childcare organisation you could call upon– a rota of people. SG could foster. National childcare for ad hoc meets. Or individuals – there was previously some in KoL who did this. Childcare offerings could be themed around the event they are catering for; this would start the engagement process young. • Create inclusive opportunities; beware of making people they feel like they don't belong by using obscure language, e.g. AKIS. • Rural broadband. Though it should be noted that not everything can be delivered digitally and there is a need for people on the ground.

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