



One-to-one Farm Advisory Service

2022/23 Business Plan for Scottish Government

Customer:**Scottish Government****Customer reference:**

Farm Advisory Service

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Executive summary

This document presents the plans for the delivery of the One-to-one Farm Advisory Service (FAS) from 4th April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The plan provides businesses with the stability of a familiar FAS structure supporting farmers through a period of significant uncertainty and change, whilst innovating and continuing to evolve the service to address future challenges, in particular the Scottish Government target for net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2045, and reduction of 75% by 2030.

The One-to-One contract facilitates access to high quality one-to-one consultancy support. This includes advice to: improve biodiversity; increase awareness of habitat and carbon sequestration benefits of woodland planting; promote climate change adaptation and mitigation opportunities; improve business management and efficiency; encourage inclusivity by supporting new entrants and women in agriculture; and helping to support the industry and Scottish government to evolve to meet future challenges.

Under this new FAS contract the service continues to evolve to ensure the support provided best meets the needs of the industry and government. Key elements changing in FAS delivery as of 4th April 2022 are:

Specialist advice funding will be available without the need for prior ILMP

Access to specialist advice support no longer requires applicants to apply for, or have completed, an ILMP, prior to accessing funding. Farming and crofting businesses can now apply directly for up to £1000 of funding for specialist advice on a range of topics, including new areas covering:

- Carbon audit action implementation planning – follow up support for businesses who have received a carbon audit and need further advice and support to implement their action plan.
- Crofter's plan – a thorough and impartial review of businesses by an experienced crofting adviser, resulting in a flexible, tailored advice plan specific to the needs of the crofting business. A crofter's plan may cover the following elements:
 - Environmental sustainability; opportunities, and risks
 - Business finances
 - Identification of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the crofting business
 - Croft legislative status

Free ILMPs for new entrants

As part of the changes to funding, new entrants (businesses operating for 5 years or less), can now apply for up to £1,200 of government funding to cover the full costs of an ILMP. The participating business will only need to pay the VAT element.

Reset of applications window

Restrictions on the number of ILMPs and specialist advice reports a single business can undertake will reset. This means farming and crofting businesses who have already completed an ILMP and 2 follow on specialist advice reports, can now apply for the same level of support for a second time round. i.e. apply for a new ILMP and up to a maximum of 2 specialist advice reports.

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1 Introduction

1.1.1. Purpose of the service

This document presents the plans for the delivery of the One-to-one Farm Advisory Service (FAS) from 4th April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The plan provides businesses with the stability of a familiar FAS structure supporting farmers through a period of significant uncertainty and change, whilst innovating and continuing to evolve the service to address future challenges, in particular the Scottish Government target for net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2045, and reduction of 75% by 2030.

The One-to-One contract facilitates access to high quality one-to-one consultancy support. This includes advice to: improve biodiversity; increase awareness of habitat and carbon sequestration benefits of woodland planting; promote climate change adaptation and mitigation opportunities; improve business management and efficiency; encourage inclusivity by supporting new entrants and women in agriculture; and helping to support the industry and Scottish government to evolve to meet future challenges.

1.1.2. Scope of the Service

The FAS is founded on the basis of article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. These regulations were brought into UK law on 31 December 2020 under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and amended using the powers contained in that Act to ensure their continued operability following the UK's departure from the EU. The FAS must continue to align with the stated rural development priorities:

- Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture;
- Enhancing the viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture, and promoting innovative farm technologies and sustainable forest management;
- Promoting food chain organisation, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture;
- Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift toward a low-carbon and climate resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors;
- Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry;
- Improving economic and efficiency performance.

In particular the FAS will focus on promoting:

- Low and no cost ideas to help farmers identify, support and improve biodiversity on their land;
- Awareness of the benefits of woodland planting for businesses, carbon sequestration and habitat;
- How businesses can manage carbon on their farm and adapt to a changing climate, making their business more resilient to future changes;
- Resource efficient farming, using data and benchmarking as well as responding to specific challenges including Covid, post-EU exit trading, cattle EID and carbon neutral farming;
- Promoting inclusivity, supporting new entrants to the sector and women in agriculture.
- New Government policies and supporting businesses through challenges or unforeseen issues.

The FAS is delivered through two contracts; the One-to-Many; and One-to-One contract. Delivery is integrated through a FAS advice line and administrative hub, with a shared helpdesk facility and website, so customers engaging with the programme should not perceive any split and be seamlessly directed to the most relevant service to meet their needs.

2 Changes to the one-to-one service in 2022

Under this new FAS contract the service continues to evolve to ensure the support provided best meets the needs of the industry and government. Key elements changing in FAS delivery as of 4th April 2022 are:

- **Specialist advice funding available without need for prior ILMP**
Access to specialist advice support no longer requires applicants to apply for, or have completed, an ILMP, prior to accessing funding. Farming and crofting businesses can now apply directly for up to £1000 of funding for specialist advice on a range of topics, including new areas covering:
 - Carbon audit action implementation planning – follow up support for businesses who have received a carbon audit and need further advice and support to implement their action plan.
 - Crofter's plan – a thorough and impartial review of businesses by an experienced crofting adviser, resulting in a flexible, tailored advice plan specific to the needs of the crofting business. A crofter's plan may cover the following elements:
 - Environmental sustainability; opportunities, and risks
 - Business finances
 - Identification of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the crofting business
 - Croft legislative status
- **Free ILMPs for new entrants**
As part of the changes to funding, new entrants (businesses operating for 5 years or less), can now apply for up to £1,200 of government funding to cover the full costs of an ILMP. The participating business will only need to pay the VAT element.
- An ILMP is designed to provide business owners and managers with clear, practical advice on how best to achieve business goals. Independent and confidential, an adviser will work to explore the potential to develop competitive advantage or technical excellence in areas where the business is strong or has growth potential.
- **Reset of applications window**
Restrictions on the number of ILMPs and specialist advice reports a single business can undertake will reset. This means farming and crofting businesses who have already completed an ILMP and 2 follow on specialist advice reports, can now apply for the same level of support for a second time round. i.e. apply for a new ILMP and up to a maximum of 2 follow up specialist advice reports.
- **New procedures for advice line referrals for the one-to-one**
 - The Service Telephone number will route to SAC who manage the advice line, but a caller menu will be introduced including an option for callers to select one-to-one and transfer directly to Ricardo if they wish to discuss an application that is already underway or options under the one-one service.
 - A new email address one2one@ricardo.com will be provided for enquiries or the submission of reports or feedback forms for one-to-one applications that are already underway. This is to ensure the maximum confidentiality for applicants.

3 Key deliverables

Table 1 below summarises the various meetings and the other deliverables, the following sections of this plan clarify the purpose and responsibilities for each deliverable.

	ANNUAL DELIVERABLES	ADDING VALUE
REPORTING AND MEETINGS	Monthly Reports (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committed to providing accurate and transparent management information to support Scottish Government decision making. Proactive in seeking feedback on how we are doing to inform the continued development of the service. We understand that needs change and seek to innovate and ensure we have good foresight and the ability to evolve the service ahead of the curve.
	Annual Report (1)	
	Bimonthly review meetings (x6)	
	Steering Group meetings (x4)	
	Stakeholder Group meetings (x4)	
SERVICE DELIVERY	ILMP's delivered (x300)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our team of professional grant managers are dedicated to ensuring a customer focused delivery. Key to this is providing a friendly and prompt response to applications and enquiries. Experienced team with documented processes for each step. Accurate tracking of data and modelling of uptake to enable us to identify future promotional needs or to provide an early flag to Scottish Government potential areas where demand will exceed targets.
	Specialist Advice (x100)	
	Carbon Audits delivered (x250)	
	Mentoring delivered (x60)	
ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE	Lantra accreditation of 100 advisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer to peer recommendation is highly influential in agriculture and quality speaks for itself. Ricardo are committed to ensuring that all work delivered by the service is to a standard we are proud of. Ricardo will work closely with Lantra to ensure accreditation standards for FBAASS advisers.
	All ILMPs peer reviewed	
	All reports quality reviewed	
	4 Meetings of Quality Review Panel	
PERSONAL AND FINANCIAL DATA MANAGEMENT	12 Adviser pay-runs per annum (4 weekly cycle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ricardo has developed a bespoke customer relationship management system for the FAS. This enables us to track all customer interactions with the programme and to provide prompt and accurate reporting to Scottish Government on all aspects of the programme; grant status; applicant information such as sector; farm size; performance feedback; and metrics on uptake of each service.
	Accurate data on grants applications and progress	
FINANCIAL DATA MANAGEMENT		

	Personal data held securely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government has the reassurance that personal information is held in compliance with Data Protection Regulations in locked-down folders and password protected systems. • Scottish Government has the security of knowing that through payments of funds are managed by a professional finance team with audited systems; verifying the accuracy of data and checking the
MONITORING & EVALUATION	Feedback from advice recipient, analysed and reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We seek to continuously improve the service. The feedback from each user is reviewed and lessons learnt identified which are used to refine our processes and feed into our training programme.
TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT	Presentations and training (x6 topics) Training events (x6) E-newsletter (x4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ricardo uses a range of techniques from training events to update communications to ensure advisers delivering the programme have the information and support they need to deliver to their best. • Ricardo will deliver a flexible training programme to we respond to changing needs of the programme and needs identified through stakeholder engagement and programme evaluation.
COMMUNICATIONS	Web updates (x4) Case studies (x8) Press releases and feature articles (x8) E-tool kit to stakeholder contacts (x4) Social media updates (12) Attendance at stakeholder meetings, and events (x12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ricardo will continue to identify new opportunities to promote the service and optimise customer uptake. The mix of activities proposed have proved to have the most impact and importantly feed into and provide consistency with the One-to-many activities, enabling consistency across the programme. The mix of video, podcast or written content will be reviewed to ensure the most appropriate deliver to target audiences. • Targeting of communications will be informed by our understanding of key priorities for government and a review of current uptake to ensure we are continuing to drive demand where it is needed.

4 Contract Management

4.1 Team Structure

Figure 1 Team Structure



Our governance structure comprises:

- The Service Manager, Caroline Wood, as the single point of accountability for all work delivered under the contract and the first point of contact for all communications with the Scottish Government. We can confirm that Caroline will be available for the duration of the contract.
- The Service Director, Dave Freeman as second point of contact for the Scottish Government and an adviser available to support Caroline should the need arise.
- Technical Advisers Keesje Avis and Neil Wilson, who will provide technical input on Climate Change and Business Resilience to ensure the programme is tailored to needs. Keesje and Neil will be supported by Ricardo's in-house technical team and overseen by Dave Freeman and Caroline Wood, who provide additional technical and policy oversight to deliver effective support to the Scottish Government.

The governance structure provides:

- An experienced team who follow documented internal processes for effective management and consistently high quality delivery to customers.
- Effective stakeholder engagement and integration with work delivered by the one-to-many programme.
- Excellent technical and policy oversight and quality assurance.

4.1.1 Our approach

We focus on key ingredients to deliver an outstanding service.

- **Efficient grant management and administration** - Ricardo understands the importance of providing a first class service to safeguard the reputation of the programme. We offer a team with significant experience having previously managed this process for Scottish Government since 2016. We will focus on providing:
 - Clear and professional communications and web information
 - Helpful and engaging customer support
 - Quick processing of applications and communication of next steps.

- **Robust financial management** - Grant monies will be held securely and managed in accordance with stringent procedures. Ricardo has an expert financial team with established processes to deliver this service for Scottish Government.
- **Providing climate change expertise** - Keesje Avis has joined the project team to provide expertise and training in this vital and growing area of support need. In addition, we are supported by the wider agriculture team, offering a comprehensive and integrated package of environmental services related to climate policies and practice, agricultural policy, productivity, soils, water and air and biodiversity. We can further call on the expertise of colleagues across Ricardo working on air quality, energy, net zero, climate change, water and waste.
- **Flexibility in our approach** - Ricardo will maintain regular dialogue with government and stakeholders to identify and agree the changing needs of the sector including identification of capabilities required from advisers.
- **Training of advisers** - Ricardo will use our in-house expertise supplemented by recognised experts to provide training to advisers. This will expect a focus of climate change mitigation and adaptation but will allow flexibility and adaptability as government and sector priorities emerge.
- **Engaging the industry** - Stakeholder engagement is a key to the integration of advice. Ricardo will facilitate this by developing a strong interface with the SG departments, NDPBs and NGOs who operate within the agricultural sector.¹
- **Accreditation and verification of advisers** - To ensure high standards of advice, Lantra will deliver Farm Business Advisor Accreditation Scheme for Scotland (FBAASS) services for ILMPs, business advice and carbon audits. Other specialist areas be will individually assessed based on experience, education and training. We will use a detailed skills matrix to ensure the correct capability within the delivery team.
- **Quality Assurance is a priority for Ricardo** - to provide consistently high quality advice all reports will be reviewed and have to meet our quality standards.

¹ Including the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Division; the Scottish Rural Network; NatureScot; RSPB; Scottish Crofting Federation; Lantra; SEPA; Scottish Forestry and Land Scotland; Historic Scotland; National Parks; the Crofting Commission; National Farmers' Union Scotland; Scottish Land and Estates; Quality Meat Scotland; Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society; Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board; and the Soil Association.

5 Reporting and Communications

3.1.1 Formal communication routes

- **Monthly reports** will detail the milestones achieved, metrics of delivery to date, plans for the next month, highlights and issues. Any issues will be updated on the shared FAS actions and issues log. In addition to the monthly report, Ricardo will provide:
 - a schedule of time bookings and direct costs,
 - a completed EU reporting spreadsheet,
 - details of all applications approved during the month.
- **Annual report** will summarise the types, topics and advice activities conducted over the year, number of participants nationally and regionally, collate feedback from the year and consider any trends. The report will review issues raised and resolved through the year and lessons learnt and their implications on plans for the year ahead will be considered.
 - **Bimonthly Meetings.** Ricardo will attend management meetings to jointly review delivery and performance, scheme uptake, feedback and outcomes achieved. The management group will discuss any issues and agree actions.
 - **Steering Group Meetings.** Ricardo will provide service related input at these meetings.
 - **Stakeholder Group Meetings.** Ricardo will take the lead in delivering 4 quarterly stakeholder group meetings. The meeting is an opportunity to promote understanding of what FAS can offer and to identify means by which stakeholders and FAS can work together to mutually support farmers. Organisations currently included are AHDB, QMS, Soil Association, Women in Agriculture, RSABI, CAAV/SAAVA, Lantra, AIC, NFUS, Scottish Beef Association, Scottish Land and Estates, Scottish Crofting Federation, SAOS, National Sheep Association, Agricultural Champions, RSPB, Dairy Hub, Scottish Tennant Farmers Association, Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs, Forestry and Land Scotland, Land Commission. This group can and will be extended if there are others who have an interest in attending.

We understand that industry and government priorities will change over the lifetime of the project, the purpose of the communication activities detailed above is to ensure that there is ongoing dialogue so Scottish Government and Ricardo can agree and plan any changes to delivery that will be required.

6 Working with Advisers

6.1 Accreditation of Advisers

Advisers delivering ILMPs and Carbon Audits must be FBAASS accredited. Lantra manages this process and reaccrredit advisers on an annual basis. Lantra will ensure a wide coverage of advisers to avoid gaps in capability or geographical coverage. Lantra actively promotes FBAASS accreditation, targeting advisers with a strong reputation.

Lantra work independently to manage this accreditation process and reaccrredit advisers on an annual basis. In reaccrrediting Lantra will take into account evidence of ILMP reports that they have reviewed during the previous delivery year. If an adviser is new to the programme or has not delivered an ILMP within the year then they will be required to provide further examples of their work for resubmission.

In addition to evidence of work, Lantra also stipulate that each adviser must demonstrate continued learning and gain 20 CPD points during the year.

Lantra are tasked with ensuring the advisor panel is sufficiently robust with approximately 90 advisers and an appropriate ratio of advisers from SAC to other organisations. Lantra actively promote FBAASS accreditation to advisers and specifically target advisers who have a reputation for delivering high quality services. Word of mouth/adviser recommendation is an important marketing tool for the programme, it is important that we do not disadvantage farmers in certain geographies simply by having insufficient advisers in the region. Should reviews identify a need to recruit more advisers Ricardo and Lantra will work to fill the gap.

6.1.1.1 Quality Assurance

Ricardo provides a fully trained team supported by thorough quality control mechanisms. The service manager is responsible for ensuring that the QA procedures are adhered to.

With a pool of advisers delivering the service, it is important that each report meets our quality standards. Ricardo implements the following process:

Figure 2: Report submission process



All ILMPs are peer reviewed by a panel of experts, all other reports are reviewed in-house by Ricardo. Ricardo works to a review turnaround of <10 days. The reviewers provide a comprehensive report. If revisions are required, the adviser has two weeks to update the reports and re-submit. Details of issues, and corrective actions agreed are recorded.

If any adviser's reports are consistently below standard (Score <5) and in agreement with the Scottish Government, then the adviser will not receive FBAASS accreditation the following year.

Figure 3: Scoring criteria

Technical Score	Description
10	Technical advice provided appears to fully meet client requirements
9	Technical advice provided appears to substantially meet client requirements
8	Minor omission in terms of technical advice which does not substantively affect the business.
7	Minor omission in terms of technical advice which affects the business and should have been identified and explored within the report.
6	Significant omission in terms of technical advice which affects the business and should have been identified and explored within the report.
5	Major omissions in technical advice in one part of the report which could have a significant effect on the business.
4	Inappropriate advice in one part or throughout the report which is clearly identifiable from the evidence presented in the report.
3	Serious technical errors in most of the report
2	Serious technical errors in all areas of the report
1	Insufficient technical information in to allow any assessment (report generic not tailored to the client)

6.2 Adviser Training

FAS provides training to ensure advisers have the skills to meets the needs of current and future agricultural government policy/targets. Ricardo has a reputation for delivering quality, relevant training to advisers and we will continue to work with advisers and stakeholders to identify training to meet the needs of Scottish agriculture. We propose to deliver remotely, this mode of delivery has enabled a more flexible and efficient means of engaging advisers and has received excellent feedback. 6 sessions will be planned with subjects flexible to respond as needs crystallise. This will be important in this year of flux, when we anticipate that the Climate Change Plan and sector-led approaches will shape the programme.

6.2.1 Training delivery

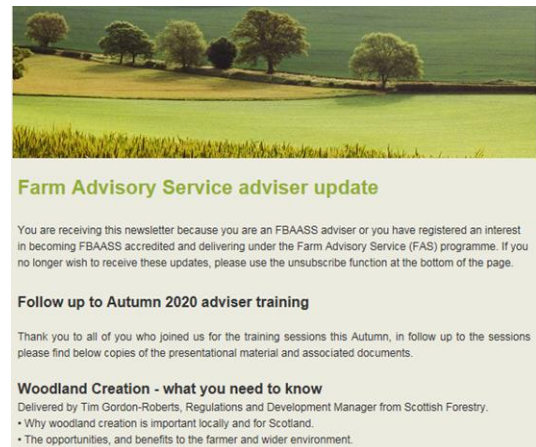
Ricardo will continue to seek feedback on where training is required, this will include looking to:

- a) Feedback from advisers on where they feel they need further information
- b) Feedback from the peer review of reports
- c) Feedback from Scottish Government, the Steering Group and stakeholders on areas in which they require advisers to be better informed.

6.3 Adviser Communications

Ricardo will deliver a bi-monthly e-newsletter providing advisers with news, and information on any changes in policy or guidance. Stakeholders and policy leads are encouraged to use this newsletter as a communications channel to share information with the advisers.

Figure 4: Image of sample newsletter



7 Communications

Ricardo will use a range of methods including social media, press articles, advertorial and speakers at events to generate awareness of the service. Communications will focus on increasing uptake. This will be achieved by meeting the farmer/crofter's demands and increasing their economic and environmental return. This in turn will be made possible through efficient targeting techniques. We will work closely with the one-to-many service to identify opportunities to promote the one-to-one service utilising all channels possible including newsletters, event feedback forms and wider joint promotional activity.

7.1 Website

The hosting and development of the website sits within the one-to-many contract. Ricardo will develop the content for the one-to-one contract but is not able to control the visualisation of this content or website functionality. Ricardo will continue to work closely with the one-to-many contractor to provide new and updated web content and will conduct a full review of all one-to-one content on a quarterly basis.

7.2 Case studies

Case studies are highly effective in demonstrating the value of the service to farmers as readers identify that the support was beneficial to a business like their own.

Ricardo will identify businesses which would provide a good focus for a case study. Typically, businesses which are particularly high profile or those who have achieved significant benefits through their engagement with the one-to-one service.

Figure 5: Example FAS Case study



Ricardo will produce 8 case studies through the year and seek to promote case studies of:

- adapting to increase resilience to future change
- the role of women in agriculture
- carbon auditing; how to benefit the business
- crofters and small farms
- enhancing biodiversity
- reduce climate impacts.

In identifying case studies, we will look for a range of experienced farmers and new entrants to try to provide cross section that represents the sector.

7.2.1 Format and content

Covid-19 has created a real step change in farmers and land managers confidence and willingness to engage with digital content. Social media and the website are now the key component of the FAS communications and engagement. To appeal to on-line audiences FAS must deliver first class video and podcast content. Ricardo will work closely with the one-to-many contractor to ensure content fits seamlessly into the website, newsletter and social media schedules.

We work with professional film makers alongside case study businesses to deliver engaging and impactful video content. Written case studies are drafted by Ricardo's in-house marketing and editorial team and reviewed by a professional copy editor.

7.3 Press releases and feature articles

Ricardo will work with agricultural and national press to promote the inclusion of our press articles. We will provide articles to publications such as: Farmers Weekly (ABC Audited Circulation 59,328); Scottish Farmer (ABC Audited Circulation 16,633), Farmers Guardian (ABC Audited Circulation 38,501). Press releases will be sent to a list of wider industry publications.

7.4 Quarterly stakeholder pack

The stakeholder pack has proved a popular and effective way of ensuring that other organisations who engage with farmers, landowners and crofters in Scotland are well briefed on the services available through the FAS. The pack is currently received by 228 individuals. It provides a timely update on FAS activities and links to articles, photos and social media content in a format to enable stakeholders to pick up and include the content in their own communications.

Figure 6: Example stakeholder pack



The image shows two overlapping document pages from the Farm Advisory Service (FAS). The top page is titled "Farming business support in challenging times" and includes a welcome message for the November 2020 edition. The bottom page is titled "2. Text for your newsletter: (FAS programme information)" and features a section titled "Apply for an ILMP to identify growth opportunities and cost savings for your farming business". This section provides detailed information about the Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) process, including a list of assessment criteria and contact details for applying.

Farming business support in challenging times

Welcome to the November 2020 edition of the Farm Advisory Service (FAS) stakeholder pack.

Continuing the theme of resilience planning, we wish to highlight the importance of farm business resilience now so they can cope with an uncertain future and potential market changes.

In this issue, we highlight funding support for businesses having an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) and feature details of new podcasts made by entrants 'set up shop' and links to a new, core FAS services.

Please share content with your networks and colleagues

2. Text for your newsletter: (FAS programme information)

Apply for an ILMP to identify growth opportunities and cost savings for your farming business

Through the [Farm Advisory Service \(FAS\)](#), Scottish farmers and crofters can access Government grant support to secure the help of an accredited farm business adviser to develop a professional Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) for their farm or croft.

As part of developing an ILMP, the adviser will carry out a thorough and confidential review of the business – assessing business strengths, weakness and threats as they relate to the business owner's vision for the future or land manager's long-term plans. The review process will encompass the full spectrum of business sustainability – assessing natural resources, physical assets and financial records – with the aim of identifying opportunities to make cost savings. The adviser will work with a participating business to explore the potential to develop competitive advantage or technical excellence in areas where the business is strong or has growth potential.

The ILMP assessment is flexible and may also include:

- a basic habitats, biodiversity and conservation assessment;
- a financial performance analysis;
- a cross compliance assessment to highlight where there may be risk areas for the business.

Assessments can be carried out remotely, face-to-face contact is not essential.

There is a lot that can be achieved by speaking to our experts by phone and/or video calling. Background data can be supplied via email or post; and land information can be collected remotely using mapping software and video calling or can be arranged so there is no social contact.

To apply or for more information about FAS services, explore our website. Alternatively, call 0300 323 0161 or email advice@fas.scot.

270 words

7.5 Social media

Ricardo will work with the one-to-many service to provide cohesive messaging through a monthly schedule of Twitter and Facebook posts themed around topical issues, utilising images and videos to encourage engagement.

7.6 Attendance at shows and events

Ricardo will continue to explore opportunities to provide speakers at shows and conferences and one-to-many events, both online and in person.

8 Providing Added Value

8.1 Stakeholder Engagement

Ricardo will continue to place significant focus on stakeholder engagement and communications activities which have been proved to be instrumental in ensuring the FAS delivery is well established and integrated in wider agricultural support in Scotland. This includes convening and hosting stakeholder meetings, providing speakers to stakeholder events and sharing content via the stakeholder pack.

8.2 Evolving the service

During this delivery year Ricardo will introduce changes to the support offered, these were agreed with Scottish Government during the contract mobilisation phase and will be implemented by the 4th April 2022 (see section 2 for more detail). These changes have been brought in to respond to industry and customer feedback on how the service could better meet needs.

8.2.1 Elements to be discussed further and potentially implemented at a later stage

- Review of Service targets- It was agreed that this could potentially be reviewed when we have greater evidence of the impacts of (April 2022) changes to access to Specialist Advice.
- Amending the reporting/payment structure- Ricardo to develop content on potential alternative structures for SG and the steering group to consider.
- Providing further, more detailed sub-categories of climate change mitigation and adaptation specialist advice- Ricardo to provide SG with more detail on this proposal- this could be addressed through communications and web text rather than any real structural change to the specialist advice categories.

8.3 Providing flexibility

Ricardo will continue to seek feedback from service users, advisers delivering the service, stakeholders and Scottish government to identify how the service could better serve the needs of the sector. Ricardo will be creative and proactive in identifying how the service could flex and evolve to meet these needs. This might be through developing new one-to-one services, removing barriers to uptake or providing more training to advisers. We are committed to ensuring the service provides the best value to our clients.

9 Managing service data

Ricardo tracks all interaction with the service via a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database. This enables Ricardo to provide rapid reporting to Scottish Government on all aspects of service delivery. Ricardo will continue to maintain this database to:

- Track customer information to understand who has engaged, how they have accessed the service and what support they have received.
- Manage the progression of each scheme. The CRM verifies all requirements are complete before payment e.g. claim form received, and value checked.

Our CRM is secure, and password protected, to meet data protection requirements.

9.1 Managing flow-through funds

Ricardo will administer payments on behalf of Scottish Government. We are experienced having managed the disbursement of public funds for many years. Our management of funds has passed all scrutiny and audits by the National Audit Office. Our accounting system Agresso is a top-tier, global accounting system well recognised within industry and is compliant with the requirements of the National Audit Office, HMRC and the London Stock Exchange.

The process provides:

- A dedicated programme account
- Robust triple-checks for accurate payments and transparency
- A simplified approach for the Scottish Government only requiring one monthly payment

The programme account will be subject to audit by our internal and external auditors, and subject to any audit Scottish Government might wish to undertake.

Ricardo is flexible and can make ad hoc payments to reduce the time an advisor (predominantly a small business) has to wait to be paid.

10 Service Offering

Regardless of farm size or business stage, through FAS, new and experienced farmers can access a range of expert consultancy and specialist advice to help them achieve their business aspirations.

One-to-one support services and funding available:

- Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMP) - Up to £1,200 per plan
- Specialist advice - Up to £1,000 funding
- Carbon audits - Up to £500 per audit, available per annum
- Mentoring for new entrants to farming - Up to 4 days one-to-one with a personal mentor

Each business is eligible to receive 1 ILMP, 2 Specialist Advice Reports over the course of the contract; and a Carbon Audit every 12 months.

Figure 7 Diagram to show the potential offering to a typical business



ILMP	£1,200
Specialist advice x 1	£1,000
Specialist Advice x 2	£1,000
Carbon audit	<u>£500</u>
FAS Funding =	£3,600

11 Integrated Land Management Plans

The Scottish Government, through the Farm Advisory Service (FAS), offers funding to help Scottish farmers and crofters access expert consultancy support to develop a professional, Integrated Land Management Plan tailored for their farm or croft.

Why is an ILMP important?

- Provides professional advice to support decision making.
- Reviews the business to make sure it is in the best shape to deal with future uncertainty.
- Provides a clear route map to take the business to the next level.

The purpose of ILMP is to provide a holistic review, incorporating environmental, financial and other public good components into the business advice provided. The ILMP is an integrated plan that is specifically tailored to meet the wide-ranging requirements of the individual farm business or crofts.

The ILMP is structured to ensure that each plan fully integrates all the components of sustainability and provides a balance in focus between **environmental** and **economic** performance and delivering **public good** benefits. But is flexible to cater for the diversity of farms and crofts, the challenges they face and the variance in business size and complexity.

The aim is that the structure of the ILMP provides the template and prompts to ensure advisers are triggered to include all relevant information, there are core elements that should be consistent across all plans, but to avoid being overly prescriptive. Accredited advisors will review the enterprise and consult with the farmer/crofter to develop ILMP's which focus on areas of greatest relevance to the individual business.

The core components of the ILMP are:

- Vision statement for the farm business or croft
- Objectives of the plan

- Summary of actions
- Farm Map
 - Identification of natural assets and environmental features (including soil mapping)
 - Woodland area
- Business and natural resource review
 - Business structure
 - Enterprise information
 - Soil and nutrient management review
 - Biodiversity and conservation review
 - Financial statement
 - Enterprise analysis (GM)
 - Technical performance of enterprises (This could include, health and welfare, crop health and management etc)
 - Cross Compliance and Greening
- SWOT analysis and options appraisal
- Conclusions, actions and implementation plan

Figure 8: Graphic to show the components of an ILMP



ILMPs are delivered by advisors accredited to the Farm Business Adviser Accreditation Scheme Scotland.

Grant assistance towards 80% cost of the ILMP (to a maximum of £1,200) is paid by the Farm Advisory Service direct to the adviser's company on evidence that the work has been completed.

The programme will deliver up to 300 ILMPs per annum, each plan will require on average 2 days of advice. At a cost of £1,200 per advice/plan, budget of £360k per year.

The ILMP will signpost opportunities for the farmers/crofters to gain more in-depth advice via the Specialist Advice.

11.1 Funding ILMPs for New Entrants

This new contract will provide up to £1,200 of government support to cover the full costs of an ILMP for new entrants, the business will not need to pay the additional 20% of costs but will need to pay the VAT element.

This new initiative is to encourage New Entrant's to farming to take advantage of an ILMP. The ILMP enables the business to bring in a professional consultant at the start to help advise through the set up stages of the business.

Why is an ILMP important for new entrants?

- ✓ Provides support tailored to the business
- ✓ Identifies areas for improvement and build on strengths
- ✓ Provides professional advice to support decision making
- ✓ Signposts the business to further sources of information and support

12 Specialist Advice

Specialist advice supports the business to take a deeper look at specific issues of concern or interest.

In addition to an ILMP, a business can benefit from two further specialist advice plans, covering:

- climate change adaptation and mitigation
- soil and nutrient management
- biodiversity, habitat and landscape management
- water pollution, prevention and control
- archaeological and historic site advice
- resilience planning
- Carbon Audit action implementation
- farm business efficiency
- organics
- woodland management and conservation
- animal welfare
- succession planning
- The Crofters Plan

While an Integrated Land Management Plan must be completed by an adviser accredited under the Farm Business Adviser Accreditation Scheme for Scotland (FBAASS), there is more flexibility when selecting the adviser to deliver specialist advice.

A requirement of the scheme is that the specialist adviser is appropriately qualified to deliver this advice. This is defined as the adviser having relevant academic or professional qualifications (for example, membership of relevant chartered association) and at least 4 years of experience delivering advice in this area. To provide evidence of this, a copy of the chosen adviser's curriculum vitae (CV) or a record of appropriate experience gained while working with farmers in the specialist area (including professional accreditation) must be sent to the Farm Advisory Service for approval

Grant assistance towards the cost of the specialist advice is paid by the Farm Advisory Service direct to the adviser's company on evidence that the work has been completed.

12.1 Specialist Advice Grant Rates

There is up to £1,000 government funding towards specialist advice, the business must pay the VAT element (except for businesses that are not registered for VAT and will not reclaim the VAT from HM Customs & Excise, in which case the grant will be based on the total cost including VAT.)

From April 2022 onwards, there is no longer a requirement for an ILMP prior to undertaking Specialist Advice.

12.2 RSABI Hardship Process

It has been identified that in a few cases specialist Hardship support from FAS would help provide support quickly and allow access to Scottish Government funding for the most vulnerable in the sector.

To provide timely and appropriate support to farmers in this situation it has been agreed that farmers identified by RSABI as requiring hardship support may receive specialist advice on business efficiency or animal welfare. This support is 100% funded at £1,200, the applicant is required to cover the VAT.

12.2.1 Eligibility:

As well as requiring the farmer or crofter to have a BRN number, an assessment from RSABI is required to confirm hardship. RSABI, conduct a visit and complete an internal application form to refer the farmers to FAS. The completed form is submitted to one2one@ricardo.com however RSABI will also alert the Ricardo team, who will keep RSABI informed on progress and support in finding an adviser if required.

The applicant is, as with the current scheme, able to choose their own FBAASS accredited adviser to deliver the specialist support, however if time is an urgency, Ricardo can intervene and put a call out to

all FBAASS advisers to identify which advisers have availability and can deliver within a set timeframe (as indicated by RSABI).

The applicant is still be eligible for the remaining grant assistance that is available as per the current scheme guidelines.

13 Carbon Audits

Carbon Audits are undertaken using the Agricultural Resource Efficiency Calculator (AgRE Calc). FAS carbon audits provide businesses with a comprehensive report detailing the carbon footprint for the business, and a comparison of how the business is performing against other similar businesses. Importantly the report details where emissions are arising and through review of this and discussion of current management practice the adviser develops a bespoke action plan to help the business to reduce emissions in the future.

FAS have a target to deliver 250 carbon audits this year. The carbon audits provide value to both the beneficiary and Scottish Government. The beneficiary will benefit from a resource efficiency audit that will lead to economic savings and environmental benefits at a farm level. It will also provide an evidence base for Scottish Government, providing quantified GHG emissions reduction potential for farms that can inform how future policy can be shaped to meet GHG reductions commitment.

All FBAASS advisers have received training on how to use the Carbon Calculator and guidance and templates for the delivery of the report and for advisers new to the process there is extensive training available on the adviser training portal <http://sfas.ricardo-aea.com/>

If businesses need further support to help implement their carbon audit action plan, there is further support now available through the FAS specialist advice category.

14 Mentoring for new entrants

The average age of farmers is increasing, and insufficient opportunities exist to attract the numbers of new entrant farmers that the industry needs. This is a problem across Europe. It is a clear priority for SG to support generational renewal in agriculture in Scotland. Scottish farming needs to attract a steady flow of new entrant young farmers with drive, innovation and entrepreneurial skills.

In September 2012 the Scottish Government set up a New Entrants Advisory Panel. The Panel advises Government on the future role of support for new entrants. There has been active engagement with the Panel to explore what further or different articles could be introduced in the SRDP to remove barriers to entry and /or incentivise new entrant young farmers into the industry. a range of interventions were suggested by Panel one of which was mentoring.

It is widely recognised that all professionals, wherever they are in their career, can benefit from having a mentor. However, there are more significant benefits for new entrants to receive mentoring support during their first few years after qualification/entry to the industry, having taken on land or a tenancy or when receiving grant support. Therefore, another advisory component for FAS one-to-one advice programme will be mentoring for new entrants.

Mentoring support helps new entrants establish profitable and sustainable businesses. New entrants benefit from being paired with an experienced farmer in their sector, who can provide tailored support and advice on how to manage set up and grow the new farm or business. Typical skills that mentors offer include experience of running a farm business, traditional skills (e.g. stone walling and hedge laying), and food and drink industry experience.

The programme will seek to support 60 mentees per year.

14.1 Process for recruitment of mentors

Mentors are recruited through stakeholders and the recommendations of our adviser network who between them have contact with a substantial proportion of the farmers, crofters and land managers in Scotland and an excellent knowledge of who the leading farmers are. It is these personal contacts that are most potent in encouraging an experienced farmer to get involved and share their knowledge.

We also work in collaboration with Lantra who bring the experience of delivering the 'Get Mentoring' service and mentors working with the Get Mentoring service. There is not a single approach to recruiting mentors, the recruitment will usually involve personal engagement and introduction.

Ricardo ask interested mentors to complete a data collection form which gathers information to enable us to create a profile and to match their skills with mentees.

Mentors come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experience, but key attributes include.

- A sound knowledge /experience of agriculture at a grass root level.
- A master of traditional skills eg stone walling, hedge laying etc.
- Land based educational/skills background.
- Food and drink industry.
- Finance/business planning.
- Surveying/planning.
- Knowledge of conservation and biodiversity
- Forestry or woodland skills

Mentors are paid an honorarium of £250 per day. No mentor is able to exceed more than £2K per annum (i.e. a maximum of 2 mentees.).

14.2 Process for recruitment of mentees

Ricardo will continue to work closely with the New Entrants to Farming Programme and Scottish Government's FONE group to ensure all new entrants who engage with this group or receive support via the Government are informed of the mentoring service.

The mentoring support will also be promoted through communications with stakeholders, the development of case studies promoting the value of the service and the circulation of these case studies and promotional articles with agricultural press and stakeholders.

15 Quality Assurance

To ensure quality of service, a number of key performance indicators relating to service will be monitored and reported on.

Analysis of the feedback provided by farmers to date testifies that the quality assurance process is working and the support is high quality and well received:

15.1 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Quality of advice: at least 85%, of feedback by advice recipients is classed as good or better (assessed from answers to relevant questions in feedback form (Land Manager Evaluation Form)).
- Relevance of advice: over 85% of advice recipients thought the advice given was relevant to their business (assessed from answers to relevant questions in the feedback form).

- Impact of advice: over 70% of advice recipients state they will use the advice provided to change their management practices (assessed from answers to relevant questions in the feedback form).
- Behavioural change: over 70% of recipients of advice stated that they have taken action as a result of the advice provided (assessed at ILMP review visit and potentially via SG evaluation survey).

15.2 Complaints Process

The complaints process is detailed in the rules and procedure document sent with every offer letter.

The service manager (Caroline Wood) will be informed of all complaints and will log details of the action taken and lessons learnt on a complaint register. Following each complaint, Caroline and Dave Freeman will review whether there is a need to provide further training or to modify procedures. Each complaint will be taken very seriously, we receive few complaints, but when they do occur we ensure they are resolved swiftly and learning are reviewed to support service improvement. If a complaint concerns an FBAASS registered advisor, we will discuss the matter with Lantra seeking the earliest possible resolution. Should a complaint be substantive Caroline will immediately inform Jack Dalziel (Scottish Government) and will discuss Ricardo's proposed resolution. In the case of a severe misdemeanour this may involve removing an adviser's accreditation. Such a step would never be taken without the agreement of Scottish Government.

16 Managing Adviser Payments

1 Approach to managing flow-through funds

Ricardo have extensive experience of managing grant programmes and handling government funds and operate a variety of models depending on customer requirements. Ricardo will administer the payments directly to recipients on the Scottish Government's behalf. To ensure Ricardo is 'acting on behalf of the Scottish Government who are awarding the grant, Ricardo operate a separate bank account with funds being drawn down into the dedicated bank account in accordance with financial profiling and follow the procedures outlined below.

We have developed this process to ensure the following:

- No monies are awarded without evidence of the work being completed or support being provided (evidence saved onto the CRM)
- All monies to be paid in arrears
- The monies are ring-fenced and separated from Ricardo's own accounts

9.1.1 Overview of the Financial Management Process

We have established a ring-fenced client bank account at Lloyds Bank in the Service's name to facilitate the flow of funds directly to advisors from the Scottish Government.

This programme account is discrete from the operational bank accounts of the Ricardo business and the funds that pass through the account will not be accounted or reported as company turnover. The bank account is under the control of a financial manager with payments authorised using established and agreed procedures that include dual consents to release payments by electronic transfer. Interest accumulated on this bank account is the property of the Scottish Government and will be repaid upon request or closure of the bank account.

The service manager is responsible for ensuring the following process is adhered to.

- Only authorise a payment to an advisor once we have received and quality assured both the:
 - visit report and
 - signed feedback and declaration form.

The Finance Manager's role is critical to providing an additional layer of review and oversight to ensure that the process is followed, and any anomalies are identified and investigated.

Control and tracking of each transaction is managed through our CRM system. This in turn has a direct link with our Agresso accounting system. All requests for funding from the Scottish Government are based on a draft **funding schedule** from the CRM system for transactions where the above criteria are met. No requests for funding will be made without review and approval of the Finance Manager and Service Manager.

9.1.2 Batch Funding

All claims that meet the above criteria will be batched into the draft funding schedule. A monthly reconciliation will be conducted by the Finance Manager and the Service Manager cross checking payments against the records in the CRM (visit reports, evaluation forms etc). This cross-checking will be conducted on a sample of payments to ensure that 1) the payment should have been made (reports issued and passed QA), 2) the required evidence was in place to authorise payment.

The funding schedule runs on an established 4 weekly cycle. Once approval is received the funding schedule is deemed final and is automatically uploaded onto the Agresso system for payment. When the agreed funding is received from the Scottish Government, the subsequent payments to the advisors are initiated via a BACS payment.

Electronic copies of programme bank account statements can be provided at such intervals as Scottish Government requires or on request by e-mail. The programme account will be subject to audit by our internal and external auditors, and subject to any audit Scottish Government might wish to undertake.

The accounting system used by Ricardo (Agresso) is a top-tier, global accounting system well recognised within industry, specifically designed to handle large project and programme management funds. Agresso is compliant with the requirements of the National Audit Office, HMRC and the London Stock Exchange in the UK and the control of projects and transactions required by European funding.

This process has been developed and honed over many years with disbursements of public funds through this mechanism approaching £100 million paid out in a single year at the peak of activity. Our management of such bank accounts and funds has passed all scrutiny and audits by the funding Departments and the National Audit Office.

Whilst this process is our suggested approach other models are available. The outcome of this process is:

- A dedicated programme account administered on behalf of the Scottish Government
- Robust double and triple-checks ensuring accurate payments of transparency
- A simplified approach for the Scottish Government only requiring one monthly payment

However, this process does limit our ability to make ad hoc payments to advisors or to expedite the process by making payment runs bi-weekly to reduce the time an advisor (predominantly a small business) has to wait to be paid. This could be nearly 8 weeks if the advisor sends an invoice just after the previous funding schedule has been raised.

17 Monitoring and Evaluation

Feedback from customers will be collected after the delivery of each advice activity via the 'Feedback and Declaration Form'. No advice visit will be closed out for payment until this form is received. Through review of this data we will seek to understand the perceived value of advice and measures farmer/crofter intends to implement. This data will provide valuable insight into where improvements can be made to the service or internal processes, which we will seek to implement to continually improve and enhance our delivery.

Ricardo will formally report on the feedback from each of the four grant schemes on an annual basis. This will include providing a full analytical report of the feedback received but also analytics to identify who is using the service and how they are accessing the advice to help inform future delivery. Whilst formal reporting is conducted on an annual basis, Ricardo will continue to extract data for Scottish Government on an ad hoc basis to respond to queries or help inform policy decisions.



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