

# Scottish Farm Advisory Service One-to-Many Programme 2019-2020 Annual Report



Prepared: April 2020

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## 1. Introduction

Building on the success of the previous year, 2019/20 saw the one-to-many component of the Farm Advisory Service reach more of Scotland's farmers and crofters than ever before. That this happened against the backdrop of significant political uncertainty was notable, as was the fact – those full effect is yet to be felt – of COVID-19.

Delivery started relatively slowly in Spring 2019 but from late summer a head of steam was built and sustained right through until March 2020. Experts delivering the service covered subjects old and new, in parts of the country very familiar and in parts very much off the beaten track. Productive dialogue with key stakeholders helped to hone the business plan that underpins delivery, as well as providing routes to promote key messages from the service.

Delivery was via a diverse range of mediums – events, videos, podcasts, online tools (including a mobile phone app), publications, webinars, a website, social media and newspaper advertorials. Delivery was both planned and able to be done ad-hoc – as was most noticeable when the service rose to the challenge (for which it received widespread appreciation) of producing advice to help farmers and crofters through the tumult of the COVID-19 lockdown and its longer-term impacts.

As the service enters its final delivery 'year' (it will, unless extended by Scottish Government, draw to a close at the end of December 2020), this annual report provides an opportunity to take stock and reflect on how, since its inception in 2016, the service has grown into something befitting the original vision for it.

### "FAS in five"

1. 249 events delivered to 4,917 farmers, crofters and others involved in Scotland's agricultural community – more than ever before.
2. 97.9 percent satisfaction with events, with 92.5 percent of attendees planning to act on the information gained.
3. At least 311,742 page views of the website spread across 166,356 sessions – up at least 103 percent and 145 percent respectively from the previous year.
4. 53,487 downloads of publications from the website, 50,508 views of videos on Facebook, and 6,411 listens to podcasts.
5. 2,188 crofters and 287 small farmers benefitting from the Croft and Small Farm Advisory Service, whilst 1,639 farmers and crofters got help from the Advice Line.

## 2. Vision for the Farm Advisory Service

“Scotland’s Farm Advisory Service is a professional, modern advisory service that continues to facilitate step-changes in the economic and environmental performance of farmers and crofters throughout Scotland. It achieves this through provision of advice, collaboration with industry bodies, promotion and communication of the prevailing themes and policies for the relevant year.”

## 3. Outcomes specified in tender

The following outcomes were specified in the FAS one-to-many tender document. They guide the delivery of the service and aim to help achieve the wider priorities of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) as well as supporting the outcomes derived from the Future of Scottish Agriculture initiative:

- Knowledgeable, multi-skilled farmers and crofters capable of delivering business, societal and environmental benefits within a complex legislative and physical operating environment.
- Greater uptake of agricultural practises that deliver increased economic performance whilst mitigating against climate change and enhancing biodiversity status.
- Increasing numbers of dynamic young people successfully entering Scottish agriculture, thereby injecting vigour in the development of thriving farm and rural businesses.
- Easy access to up-to-date and relevant knowledge and information to all farmers and crofters through a network of advisory centres, on-line resources and a telephone advice facility.
- Land managers using key national performance metrics (benchmarks).
- Improved uptake of integrated methods of managing plant and animal health, including the safer use of and reduced reliance on pesticides and antibiotics.
- Improved water quality through a reduction in diffuse pollution and run-off.

## 4. Executive summary

- The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were met or exceeded in 85 percent of reporting periods.
- 249 events were run though 2019-20, with 4,917 attendees and an average attendance of 19.75. Feedback from participants was exceptionally positive, with 97.9 percent saying the events were “excellent” or “very satisfactory”, and 92.5 percent saying they would implement changes to their farm management because of information gained at the event.
- 292 publications, 55 videos, 34 podcasts and four online tools were produced. The FAS newsletter was published monthly and by the end of the year was being distributed monthly to up to 5,061 people – 1,094 more than the same time the previous year.
- At least 311,742 page views of the website spread across 166,356 sessions – up at least 103 percent and 145 percent respectively from the previous year.



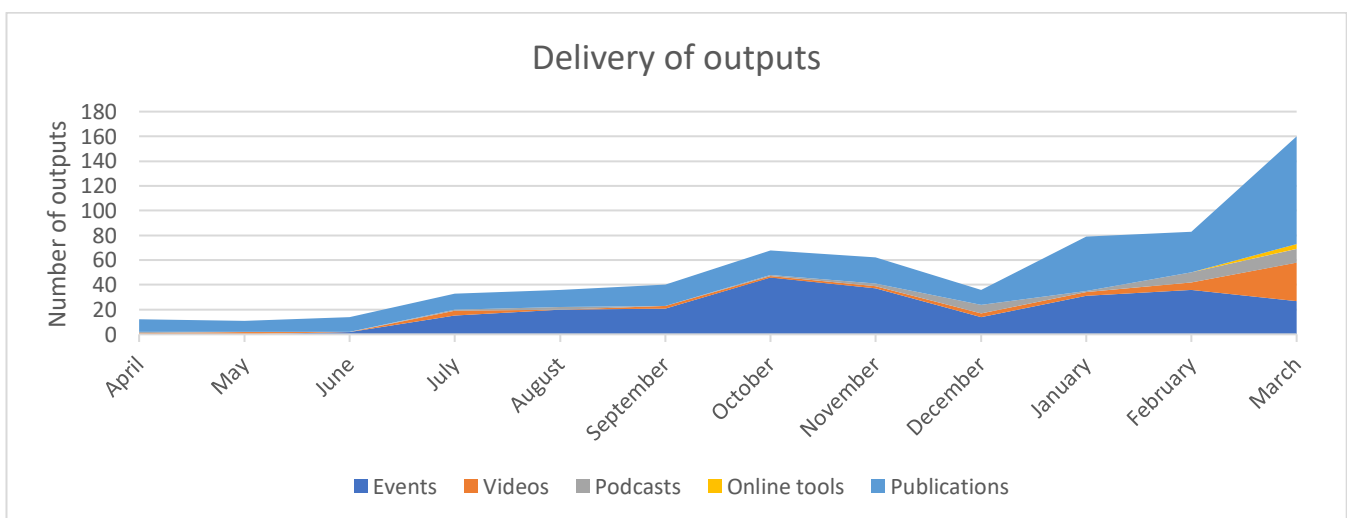
Figure 1 - Attendees at ‘Tackling the Rush Invasion (Isle of Lewis)’

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- Twitter followers grew by 35 percent to 1,597, whilst Facebook followers grew by nine percent to 3,157.
- 2,188 crofters and 287 smallholders subscribed to the Croft and Small Farm Advisory Service.
- There were 1,639 enquiries to the Advice Line (up 16 percent on the previous year), where farmers and crofters received up to 30 minutes of free advice.

Target measure	Target	Actual	Number delivered versus target	Percentage delivered versus target
Events	249	249	0	100%
Event attendees	5,400	4,917	-483	91%
Average attendance	22.5	19.75	-2.75	88%
Publications	199	292	+93	147%
Videos	40	55	+15	138%
Podcasts	43	34	-9	79%
Online tools	3	4	+1	133%
Crofter subscribers	1,900	2,188	+288	115%
Small farm subscribers	235	287	+52	122%



## 5. Key performance indicators (KPIs)

The following were the KPIs for delivery of the one-to-many service in 2019/20:

1. At least 5,400 attendees at 249 events (an average of 22.5 per event).
2. Attendance exceeds 75 percent of the predicted number.
3. More than 93 percent of those completing a post-event feedback form rate the overall quality of the event as “excellent” or “very satisfactory”.
4. More than 90 percent of those completing a post-event feedback form rate the relevance of the event as “excellent” or “very satisfactory”.
5. More than 80 percent of those completing a post-event feedback form say they will implement changes to their farm management because of information gained at the event.
6. The bounce rate (the percentage of people visiting the homepage and then leaving without going to another page on the site) is below 50 percent.
7. The website is available for at least 99 percent of the time.
8. 95 percent of call-backs are done within six working hours.
9. 95 percent of routine queries are responded to within one working day.
10. 90 percent of detailed queries are responded to within two working days.
11. 100 percent of complex queries are responded to within five working days.
12. 100 percent of e-mail enquiries are responded to within one working day.

KPI 1 is measured annually and was partially met. 249 events were held, but the total and average attendances were, at 4,917 and 19.75 respectively, below the KPI values. The remaining KPIs are measured and reported on monthly basis. The table overleaf summarises performance across the year.

KPI	Monthly KPI performance (green = KPI met or exceeded, red = KPI not met, yellow = not applicable data)											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
3	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
4	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
5	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green
6	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green
7	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
8	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
9	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
10	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
11	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
12	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

The above table highlights that of the 124 measures (11 monthly KPIs measured over 12 months, less four measures across two months where it was not applicable to measure as no events were held), SAC Consulting met or exceeded them in 85 percent of reporting periods.

Regretably there have been consistent failures of KPI 11 – in most cases because queries have been answered quickly enough but the relevant member(s) of staff have not completed and returned the necessary paperwork to confirm this. This is a training and monitoring issue that has repeatedly been raised with staff and will continue to be a priority to resolve.



## 6. Events

Knowledge transfer (KT) events continued to be a very significant element of the delivery in 2019/20, with 249 held between June and March. The total predicted attendance at the events was 5,038 (an average of 20.2 per event) and the total actual attendance was 4,917 (an average of 19.7 per event) – 98 percent of the predicted). 43.8 percent of events met or exceeded their predicted attendance.

As can be seen from the map, the coverage of events was excellent – an essential characteristic of a truly national advisory service. Although more events were held in areas where farming is a larger part of the local economy (e.g. North East Scotland), many events were held in busy crofting areas (e.g. Skye and the Outer Hebrides) and more remote crofting areas (e.g. Assynt).

Promotion of events to ensure good awareness, attendances and value for money was an ongoing task. The ways in which attendees said they heard about events was as follows: 36 percent by direct mail; 25 percent by Facebook; 22 percent via local SAC Consulting offices; 12 percent via the website; three percent via newspaper adverts; and one percent via twitter.

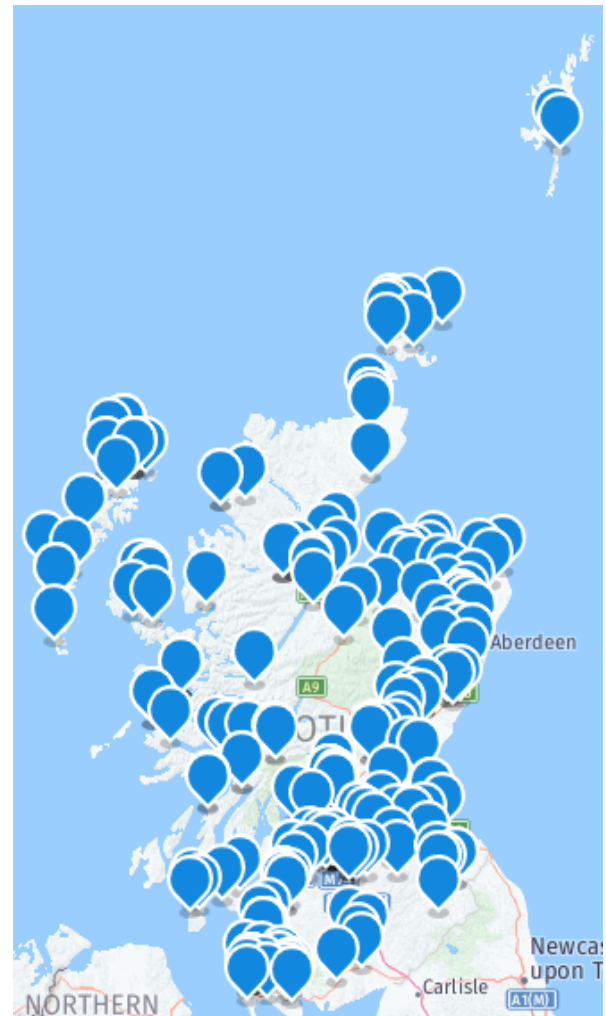


Figure 2 - Location of face-to-face events

### Event highlights – Sheep health pre-lambing

The final face-to-face event of the year, run in partnership with the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscapes Partnership, was held in Elphin, Assynt just before COVID-19 restrictions came into force. 18 attendees heard from a consultant and a vet about the latest research on lamb vigour, essential nutrition, tips on keeping your flock healthy (including treating liver fluke), and how to reduce the risk of antibiotic resistance. Both experienced and novice sheep keepers attended and were able to benefit from practical demonstrations on handling, injecting and checking condition.

### Event highlights – New Entrants Gathering

One of the highlights of the annual FAS events calendar, the New Entrants Gathering, took place in late February. 120 people came to Perth Racecourse to hear from a wide range of inspiring and informative speakers on subjects ranging from ‘Making the best of what you have’ to ‘Financing your future’. There was also a range of exhibitors (e.g. Scottish Land Matching Service, FAS one-to-one) for attendees to get advice from Feedback and press coverage was superb, with many remarking it was the best New Entrants Gathering yet.

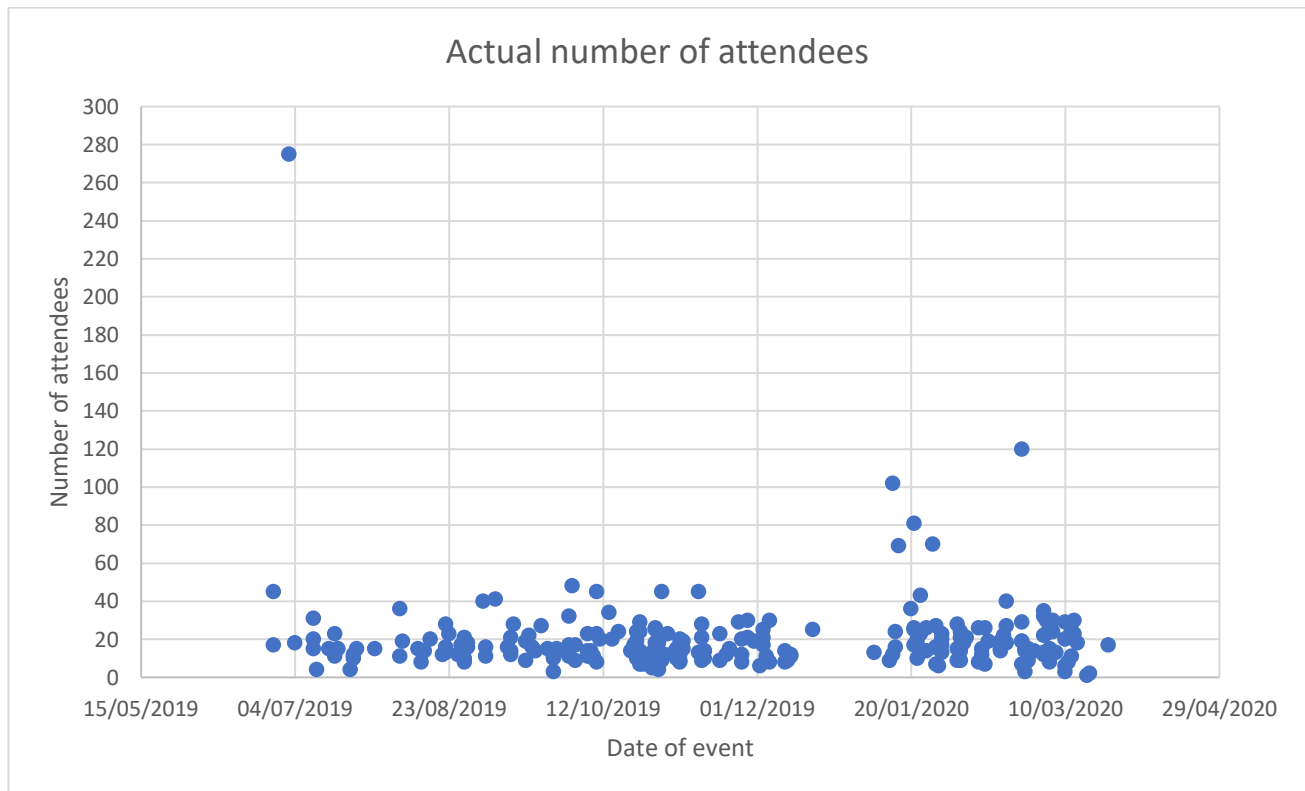


Figure 3 - Attendees at the New Entrants Gathering

Whilst the average attendance (19.5) was reasonable, it was lower than in the previous year (22.6). It is difficult to ascertain the exact reasons why, but anecdotally it has been suggested that because of political and policy uncertainty, some farmers and crofters were less enthusiastic about attending meetings in general, not just those run by FAS. It should be noted that in some cases (e.g. island and remote mainland locations) whilst the attendances might be low in absolute terms, they represented a significant proportion of the local working agricultural population.

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#### Event highlights – Caulshiel Trials site open evening

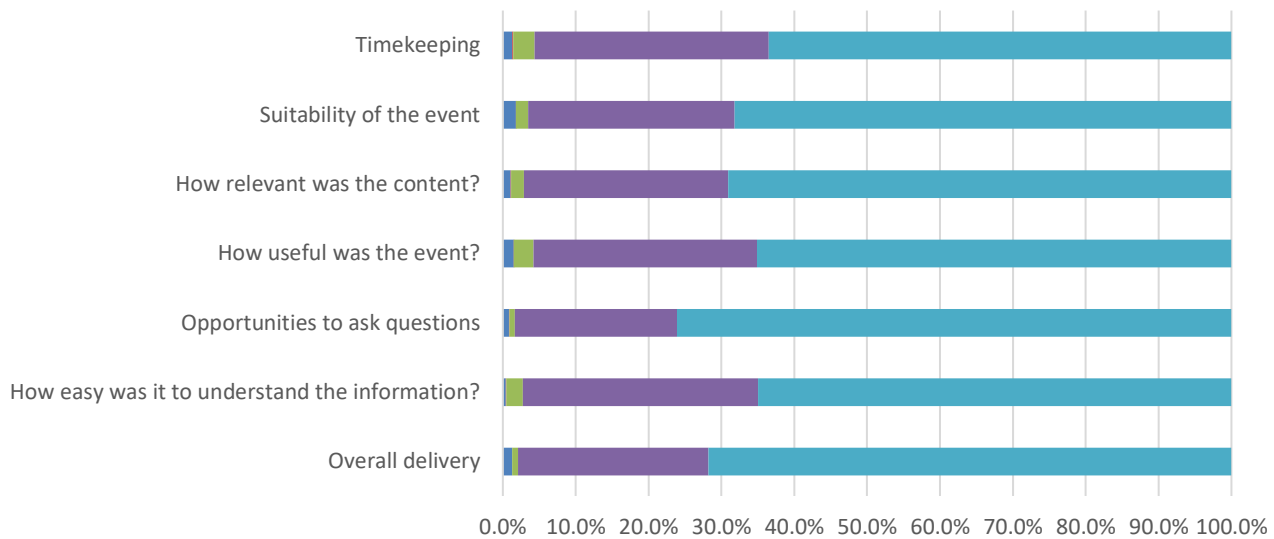
The Caulshiel Trials site open evening is a long-standing crop health event focussed on crop trails plots in East Lothian. In June 2019, 45 attendees heard from a range of speakers about such subjects as disease management following the withdrawal of some types of fungicides and insecticides, grain market updates, variety choices for arable farmers, and the benefits of integrated crop management. Feedback from participants was exceptionally positive, with 100 percent saying the events were “excellent” or “very satisfactory”, and 93.3 percent saying they would implement changes to their farm management because of information gained at the event.

Across 2019/20, nine events were delivered online as webinars. These hugely helped expand access to the subject materials as it removes geographical barriers and reduces the barriers for those who would otherwise (e.g. due to caring requirements) be unable to attend events. In light of COVID-19 restrictions, event delivery for much, if not all, of the 2020 delivery year is expected to be in the form of webinars and online meetings.

Not only are FAS events largely well attended, they are also very highly regarded by those who attend. All attendees are asked to complete an evaluation form, and across the year 67 percent (3,289) did so. The tables below and overleaf summarise the results, but the headline message is that those who attend are overwhelmingly very positive in their feedback. Excluding “no answer”, 99 percent of responses are “satisfactory” or better, and 73 percent are “very satisfactory” or better.

Question	Number of responses				
	No answer	Less than satisfactory	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory	Excellent
Overall delivery	43	0	26	858	2,361
How easy was it to understand the information?	14	2	73	1,062	2,137
Opportunities to ask questions	27	2	24	733	2,502
How useful was the event?	49	1	88	1,009	2,141
How relevant was the content?	35	1	58	923	2,270
Suitability of the event	58	2	54	933	2,241
Timekeeping	42	5	96	1,056	2,089
<b>Total (percentage of responses)</b>	<b>268 (1%)</b>	<b>13 (0%)</b>	<b>419 (2%)</b>	<b>6,574 (29%)</b>	<b>15,741 (68%)</b>

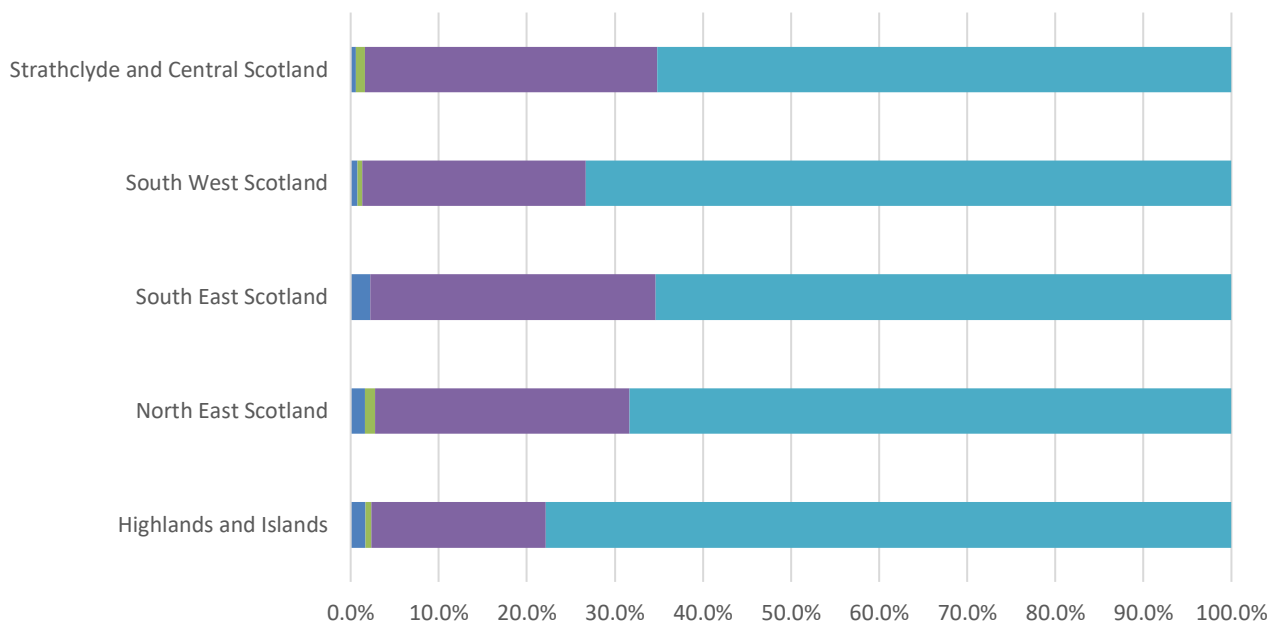
### Event evaluation form responses



	Overall delivery	How easy was it to understand the information?	Opportunities to ask questions	How useful was the event?	How relevant was the content?	Suitability of the event	Timekeeping
■ No answer	1.3%	0.4%	0.8%	1.5%	1.1%	1.8%	1.3%
■ Less than satisfactory	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
■ Satisfactory	0.8%	2.2%	0.7%	2.7%	1.8%	1.6%	2.9%
■ Very satisfactory	26.1%	32.3%	22.3%	30.7%	28.1%	28.4%	32.1%
■ Excellent	71.8%	65.0%	76.1%	65.1%	69.1%	68.2%	63.5%

There is some regional variation in event evaluation (see table overleaf for more details), with attendees of events in the Highlands and Islands and South West Scotland being particularly positive about the overall delivery (78 percent and 73 percent “excellent” respectively). It must be stressed that attendees in Strathclyde and Central Scotland, North East Scotland and South East Scotland were also very positive, with the combined “very satisfactory” and “excellent” values for all regions being in a range from 97.2 percent (North East Scotland) to 98.7 percent (South West Scotland).

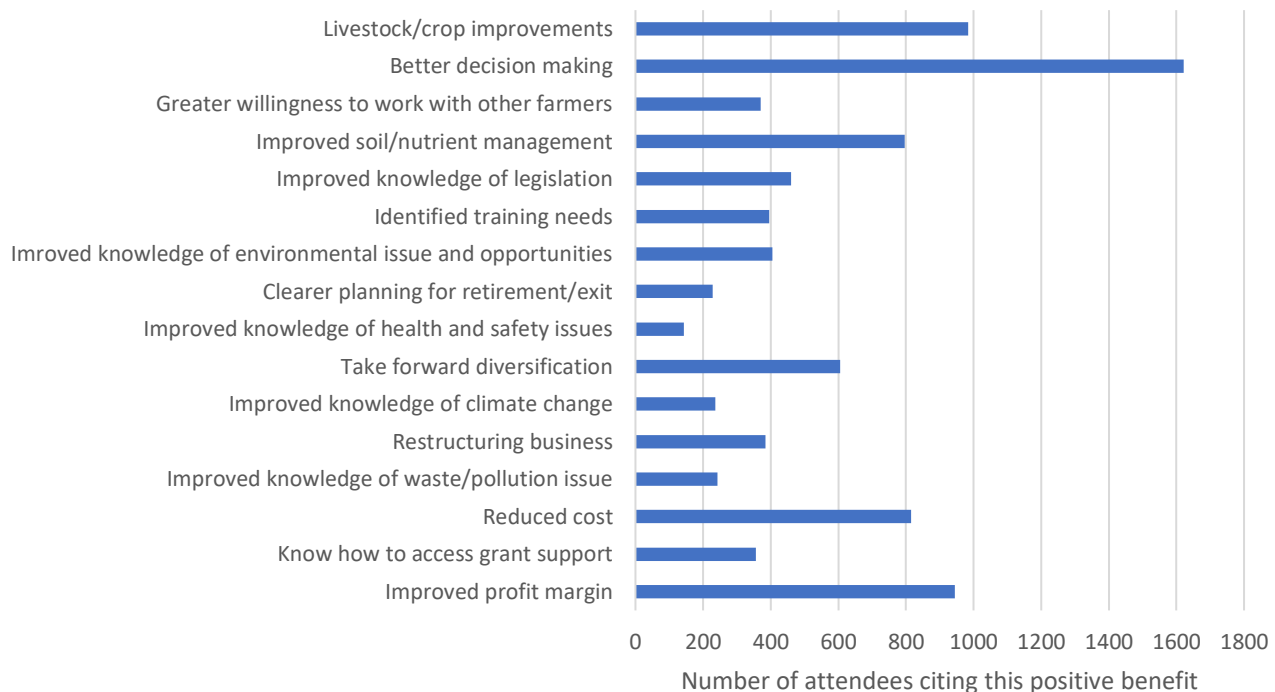
### Overall delivery by region event held in



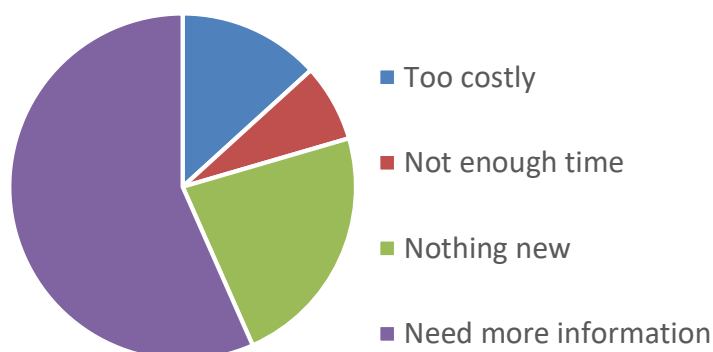
	Highlands and Islands	North East Scotland	South East Scotland	South West Scotland	Strathclyde and Central Scotland
No answer	1.7%	1.6%	2.2%	0.7%	0.6%
Less than satisfactory	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Satisfactory	0.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.6%	1.0%
Very satisfactory	19.8%	28.9%	32.4%	25.4%	33.2%
Excellent	77.9%	68.3%	65.4%	73.3%	65.2%

The objective of FAS is to “facilitate step-changes in the economic and environmental performance of farmers and crofters throughout Scotland”. It is therefore important that event attendees do something positive with the information they have gained. It is therefore very positive that of those who answered the question, 92.5 percent of these said they would implement changes to their farm management because of information gained at the event. The graph overleaf shows the positive changes the attendees thought there were likely to be on their businesses because of the knowledge they had gained at the event. Most of the most frequently cited positive changes are ones that are explored at all meetings (e.g. better decision making (1,621), improving profit margins (944), reducing costs (816)).

## Positive changes attendees intend to make because of information gained at events



## Reasons given for not implementing changes to farm management because of information gained at events



4.6 percent (224) of attendees said that they would not implement changes to their farm management because of information gained at the event. Of those who provided reasons why, 57 percent said it was because they needed more information, 13 percent said it was because to make the necessary changes would be too expensive, seven percent said they did not have enough time, and 23 percent said they had learned nothing new. It is

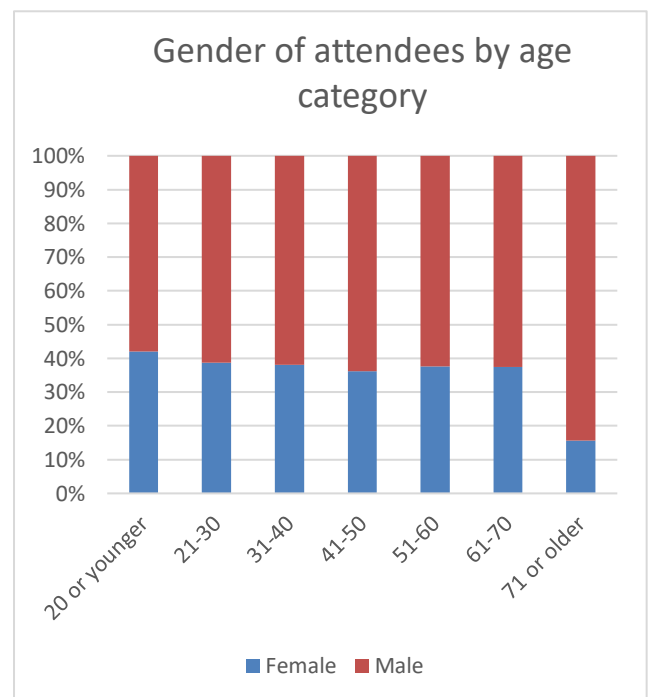
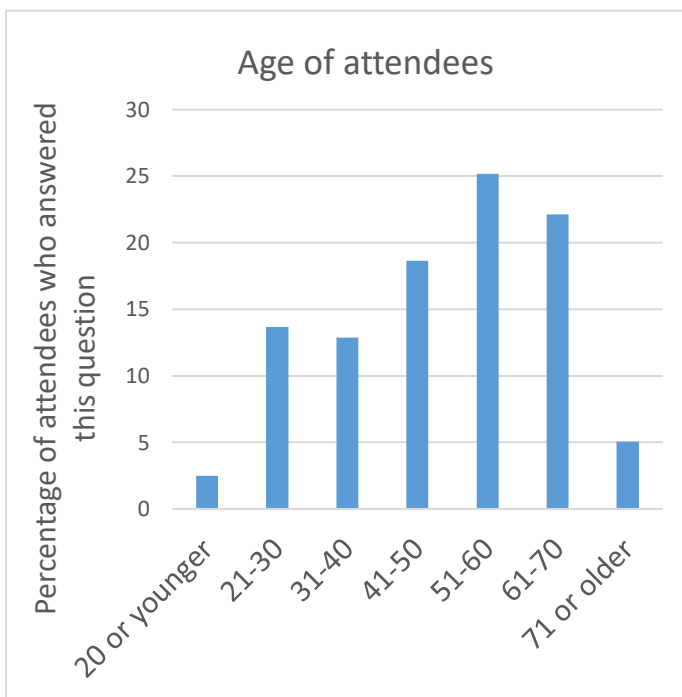
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potentially this last group (numbering only 11 people) that is of concern, but given that it is 19 out of 4,917 (i.e. 0.4 percent), it is a very small group.

Whilst overall the attendees at FAS events are predominately (63 percent) male, this varies greatly between events depending on the topics being covered and is less than the 70 percent of 2018/19.

The age profile of attendees is diverse and outlined in the graphs below.

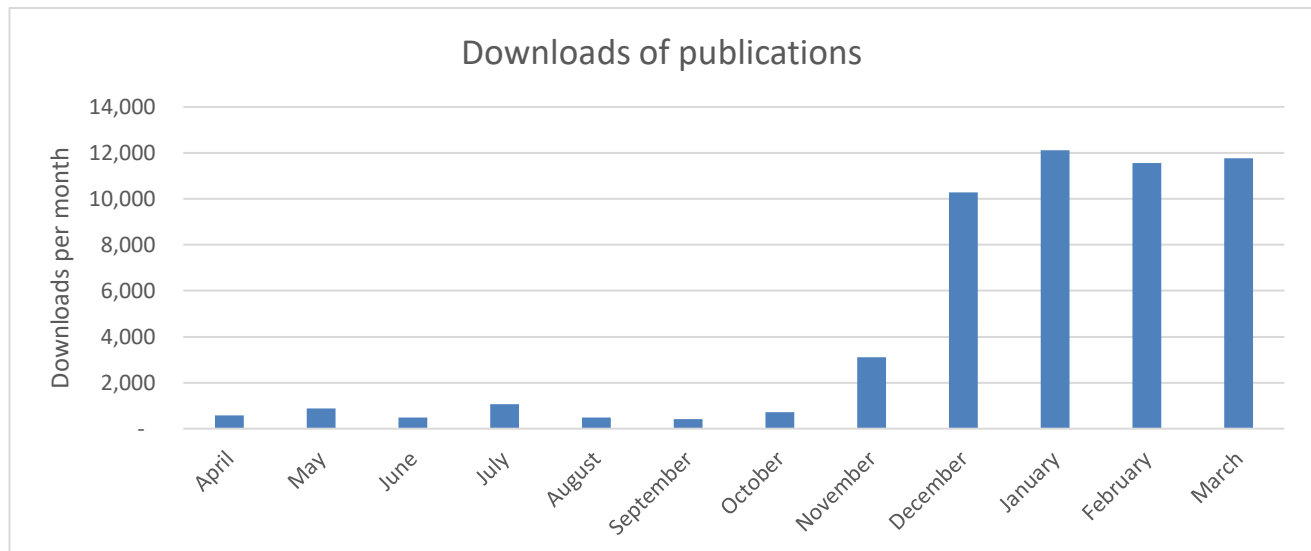


## 7. Publications

As the national advisory service covering a diverse agricultural sector, it is not surprising that a wide range and large number of publications were produced in 2019/20. In total, 292 were produced (147 percent of the planned number) – ranging from large, detailed publications like the Farm Management Handbook and Agribusiness News, to technical notes, through to case studies and advertorials in the farming and mainstream press.



There is a wealth of information on the website – some of it produced in 2019/20 and some prior to that. During 2019/20, publications were downloaded 53,487 times – a 558 percent increase on the recorded value for 2018/19. The graph below shows a massive increase in reported downloads from November onwards. Please see section nine for an explanation why.



Top 20 downloads	Downloads
<a href="#">Farm Management Handbook 2018/19</a>	4,323
<a href="#">Farm Management Handbook 2019/20</a>	3,649
<a href="#">TN694 Alternative Forages Sheep Fodder Beet</a>	2,080
<a href="#">Beef Cattle Housing</a>	1,967
<a href="#">Farm Management Handbook 2017/18</a>	1,314
<a href="#">TN689 Cattle Housing Ventilation</a>	849
<a href="#">TN691 Plants Planting Methods</a>	839
<a href="#">TN701 Control of Rushes</a>	751
<a href="#">Women in Agriculture Case Study: Kirsteen Mackinnon</a>	684
<a href="#">Women in Agriculture Case Study: Helen McColm</a>	652
<a href="#">SGRPID Area Offices Contact Details</a>	563

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Top 20 downloads	Downloads
<a href="#">TN702 Body Condition Scoring Mature Sheep</a>	550
<a href="#">Bed Breakfast Pigs</a>	549
<a href="#">Introduction To Crofting</a>	481
<a href="#">Lambing Three Times In Two Years</a>	407
<a href="#">Agribusiness News January 2020</a>	404
<a href="#">TN685 Sulphur Recommendations</a>	385
<a href="#">Agribusiness News February 2020</a>	378
<a href="#">Quick Start Guide To Using Agre-Calc</a>	350
<a href="#">Agribusiness News March 2020</a>	334




National Advice Hub  
T: 0300 323 0161  
E: advice@fas.scot  
W: www.fas.scot

**Employing People in agriculture is becoming an increasingly complex situation.** Whilst self – employed contractors are an excellent way of providing valuable extra resources at busy times HMRC are starting to look more closely at the many self-employed contractors working on farms and investigating if it is valid to define them as self-employed.

If HMRC deem a 'self-employed' contractor to have been wrongly categorised and is actually meeting all of the criteria of an employee, then the farmer could receive a significant bill for unpaid tax and national insurance – potentially also with penalties.

To avoid this situation arising, there are a number of ways to assess the employment status of the labour on your farm:

**Control** - a self-employed person tends to decide when and how a task is performed whereas an employee will be more closely supervised and more likely to be given instructions by the employer.

**Obligation** - Do you have an employee who is obliged to turn up each day and the farmer is obliged to find work for them? Or is there no obligation for an employer to find work and no obligation for a worker to accept all offers, fitting much more with a self-employed contractor?

**Payment** - Employees would tend to be paid at fixed intervals whereas a self-employed person is entirely responsible for raising invoices for work completed in order to instigate payment.

**Equipment** - Are most of the major pieces of equipment to perform their job being provided by the worker, meeting the criteria of self-employed contractors or is the employee just bringing themselves and using the equipment that is already on farm?

**Substitution** - If the worker could send a suitably qualified replacement to do the work then this indicates much more towards a self-employed contractor.

If the above has made you realise that you have a worker that should be going through the books then below are a few handy tips for getting started.

1. You can register as an employer online using your existing Government Gateway ID.
  2. Employers' liability insurance should be set up as soon as you become an employer. It must cover at least £5 million for compensation for injury and illness related to work they carry out for you. This applies even if your labour is a family friend, neighbour or even a family member in some cases.
  3. It is vital for the sake of both the employer and employee, that employment contracts are in place within 2 months of an employee starting working with you. There are key things that this should include such as rate of pay, hours of work, holiday entitlement and notice period.
- A huge number of resources on this topic can be found on our website including
- practical step by step guides on various topics
  - videos on the key steps to employing people and wages & benefits
  - templates for employment contracts, timesheets and more
  - links to numerous handy web pages and electronic documents

We've got more information about employing people in agriculture on our website. We've also got two webinars coming up that you can watch and ask questions from the comfort of your own home. For details of these webinars or any of our employing people tools, visit: [www.fas.scot/rural-business/business-tools/employing-people](http://www.fas.scot/rural-business/business-tools/employing-people)

Date	Webinar subject
10th March, 12-1pm	Employing People: Who should be employed and how to employ them
17th March, 12-1pm	Employing People: The essentials for employers

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) which is co-funded by the EU and Scottish Government, providing information and resources aimed at increasing the profitability and sustainability of farms and crofts. Grant support, a full programme of events, a subscription service for crofts and small farms, and a range of articles and publications form the core of this service which is designed to provide integrated advice for farmers and crofters across Scotland.

If you need more advice on employing people or on any other topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

**Advice line**

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on 0300 323 0161 or email [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot). The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

**Bespoke Advice and Grants**

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £1,200. The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

**Online**

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot)

Figure 4 - Employing People advertorial in The Scottish Farmer

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### Publication highlights – response to COVID-19

As COVID-19 engulfed Scotland, the Farm Advisory Service swung into action to rapidly create a new section on the website and populate it with a range of new resources including emergency plan templates and sector guidance. A full-page advertorial was quickly taken out in the Scottish Farmer to promote these resources and share the main emergency plan template with its readership. Alongside this, FAS engaged with RSABI and other key stakeholders to ensure joined up delivery and promotion of each other’s services. Positive feedback on this effort was received from many stakeholders.

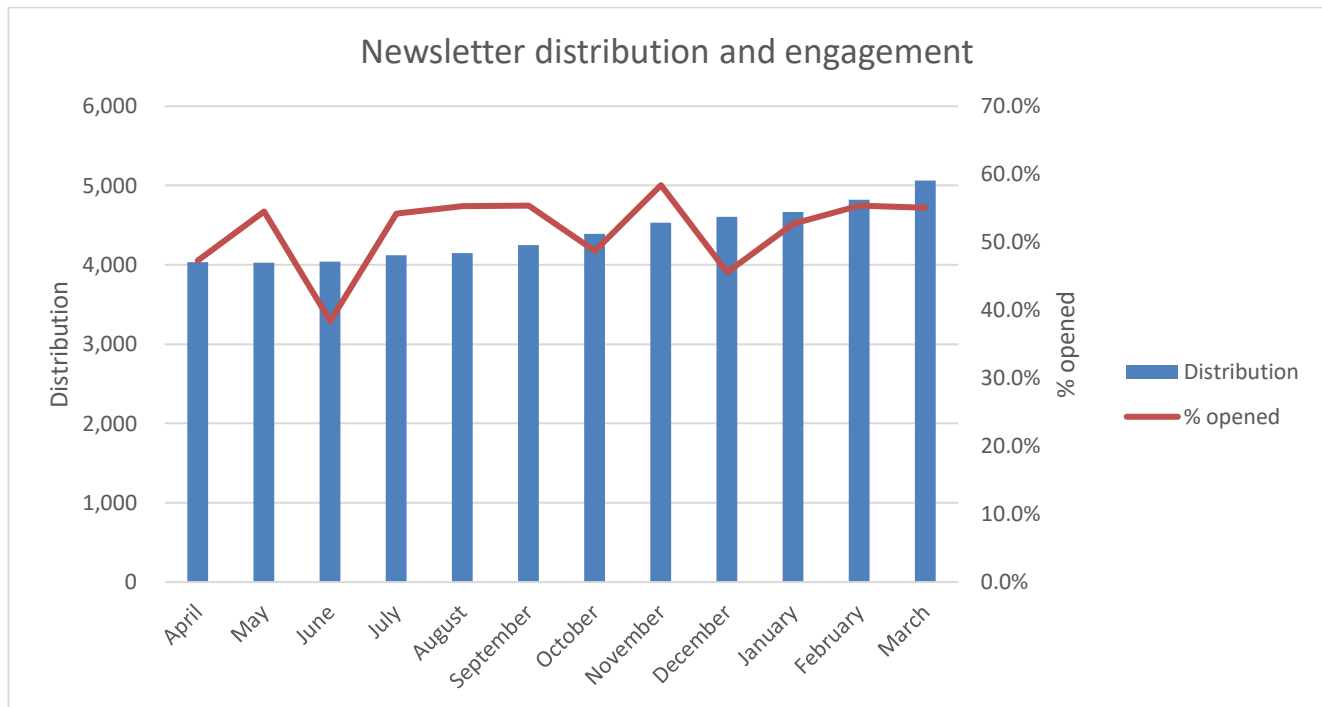


### COVID-19 (Coronavirus) sector advice



Figure 5 - FAS COVID-19 information

In addition to documents that are downloaded, there are also documents such as the monthly newsletter that are pro-actively sent to those who are registered to receive them. By March 2020 the distribution list for the newsletter had grown to 5,061. As the graph overleaf shows, the distribution of the newsletter has grown (by 28 percent) through the year. The percentage of recipients who open it (an average of 52 percent) is far ahead of the benchmark figure (16 percent) for similar publications.



## 8. Videos, podcasts and online tools

Videos are a popular aspect of FAS output and, as with publications, cover a wide range of subjects. 55 videos were produced and posted online – on both YouTube and Facebook – during 2019/20. Videos designed to inspire and inform the next generation into agriculture are noticeably more popular than others – perhaps an indication of both how hungry this generation is for guidance and encouragement, and also how comfortable they are with consuming digital content.

### Video highlight – A year on the machair

Produced with the help of Scottish Natural Heritage, RSPB Scotland and local crofters, this video explored best practice in the management of machair to ensure a balance between production of important outputs and the protection of nesting birds and valued plant species. Focussing on key dates and cultivation practices, the video seeks to explain the reasons why these factors matter. It is now being actively promoted to crofters on the Western Isles and Islay.

The FAS YouTube account has seen significant growth in use and time spent watching videos, as outlined in the table below.

Measure	2019/20	2018/19	% difference 2019/20 versus 2018/19
Minutes watched on YouTube	57,120	15,900	+259%
Sessions on YouTube	26,763	8,000	+235%
Average minutes per session on YouTube	2.13	1.98	+8%

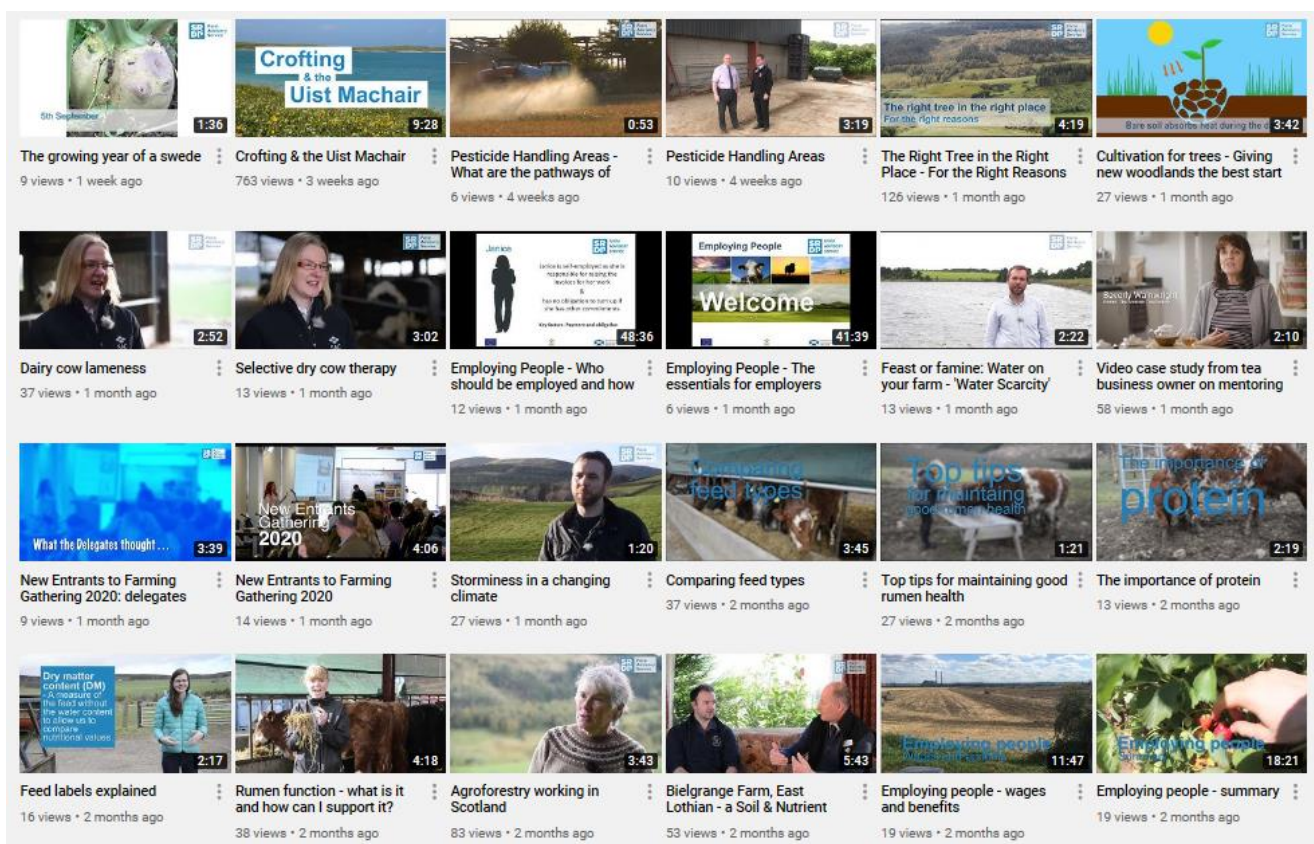
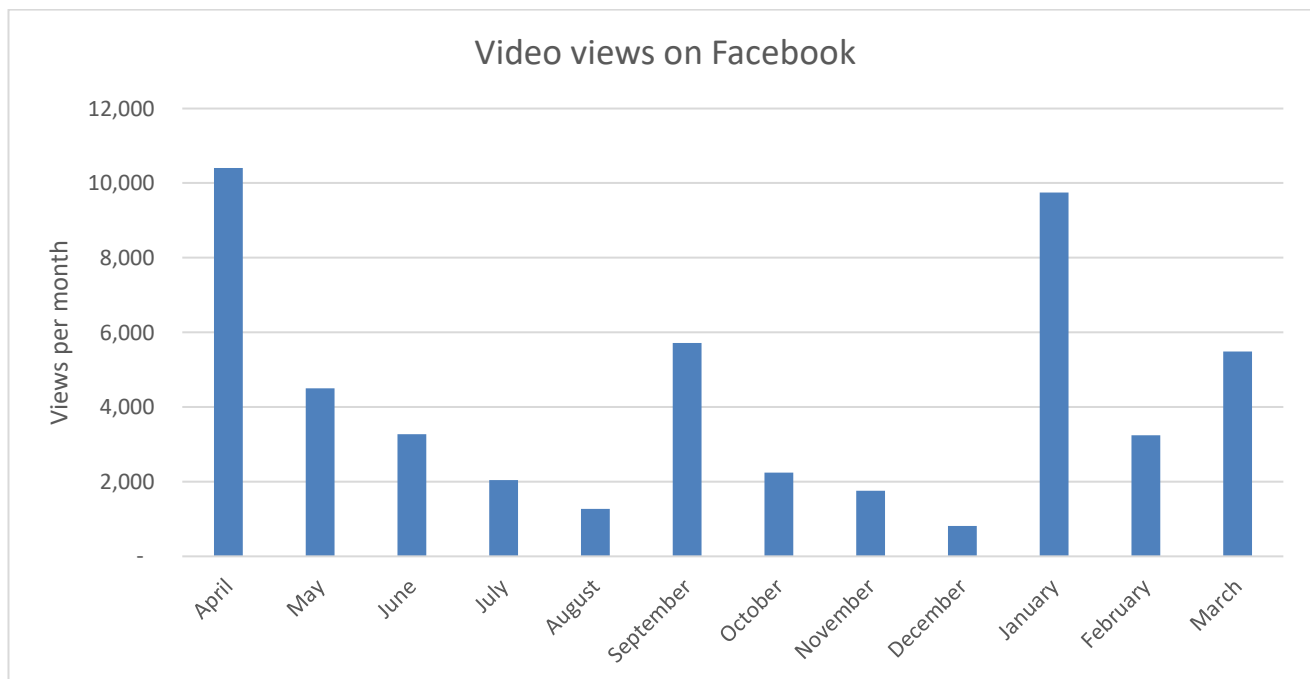


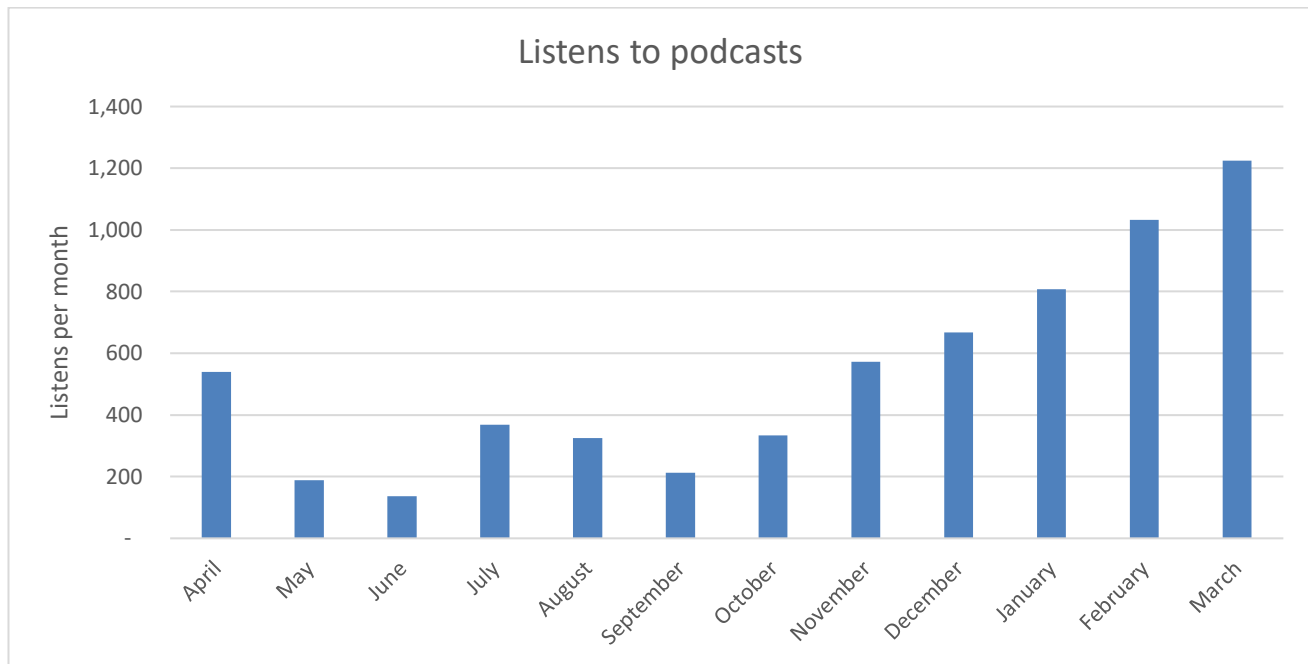
Figure 6 - FAS videos on YouTube

During the year, FAS videos were viewed 50,508 times on Facebook during the year (down 28 percent from the previous year).



Top five videos on Facebook 2019/20 (50,508 views)	Views
<a href="#">New Entrants Case Study: Stephen Withers and Neil Sandilands</a>	6,880
<a href="#">New Entrant Case Study: John Warnock and Iain Baillie</a>	4,794
<a href="#">Calf scour prevention</a>	2,010
<a href="#">Resilience workshops</a>	1,172
<a href="#">Intra Peritoneal injections to treat hypothermia in lambs</a>	1,157

During 2019/20, 34 podcasts were produced, covering a wide range of subjects. These were then put online on five podcast streaming services (Apple podcasts, Spotify, Google podcasts, Deezer, and RadioPublic). During the year, all FAS podcasts were listened to a total of 6,411 – an increase of 178 percent on the previous year.



Top five podcasts 2019/20 (6,411 total listens)	Listens
<a href="#"><u>Women in Agriculture: Baddingsgill Farm, West Linton</u></a>	337
<a href="#"><u>Women in Agriculture: Lynbreck Croft, Grantown-on-Spey</u></a>	324
<a href="#"><u>Grant funding for woodland creation</u></a>	276
<a href="#"><u>Women in Agriculture: Primrose Beaton of Lawrie &amp; Symington</u></a>	256
<a href="#"><u>Woodland Creation &amp; Management - Frequently Asked Questions</u></a>	240

During 2019/20, four online tools were produced. These tools covered such subjects soil liming, farm business benchmarking, women in agriculture and resilience. Also launched during the year was the first FAS app – for Apple and Android mobile phones – focussed on soil nutrient advice. This app will continue to be developed and added to ensure it is as useful and popular as possible.



It's often said that soil is the most important asset of a farm or croft. The Farm Advisory Service Soil Nutrient Guide gives you easy access to all the Technical Notes we have produced relating to soil nutrient management. Wherever you are, with this app, you can access the expert opinion that will help you to make the right decision on fertilisers, organic manures and nutrient management to boost the sustainability and profitability of your business.

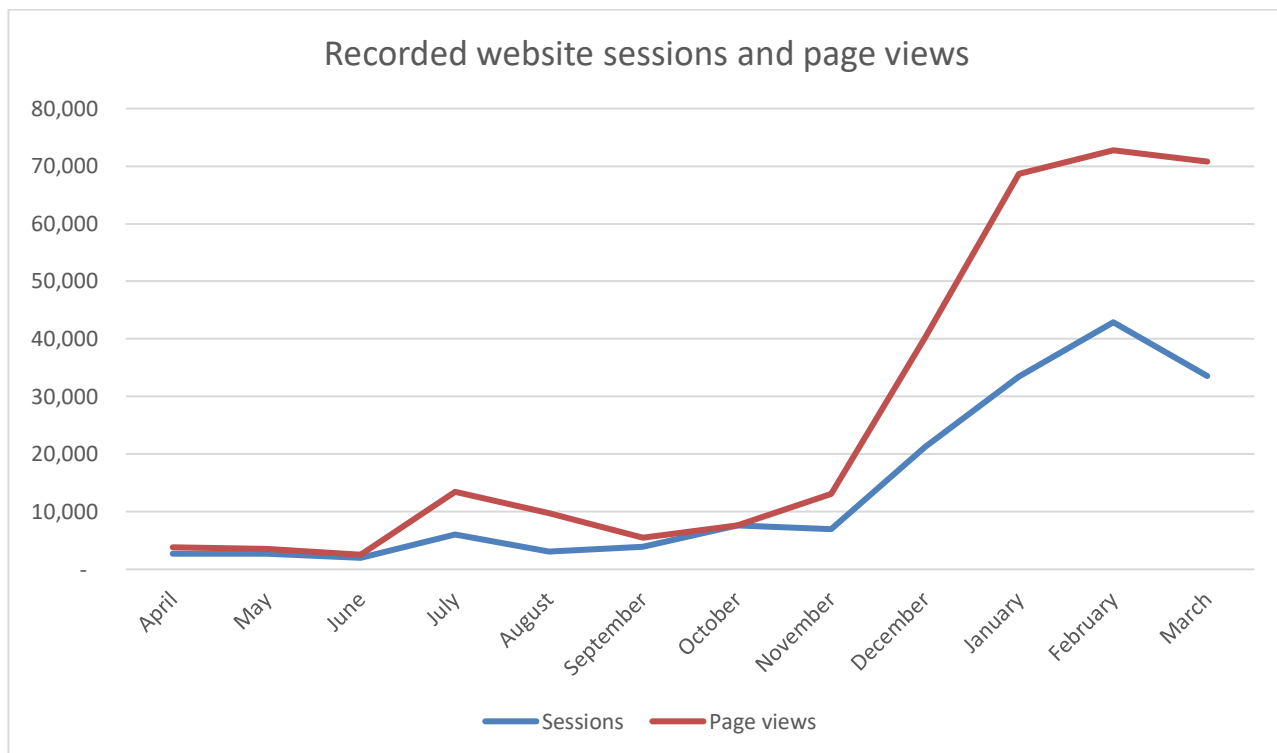
Figure 7 - FAS soil nutrient app for Android (and Apple)

## 9. Website and social media

During 2019/20, one of the most significant changes to the FAS website was entirely invisible to users. During 2019 it became apparent that changes brought about by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) meant the website analytical tool in use at the time was unable to provide accurate data about website traffic.

After extensive enquiries into potential solutions that would provide accurate data whilst also being GDPR compliant, it was decided that reverting to a traditional log analytics approach was the best way forward. Having implemented this on 22 November, the impact on website analytics was immediate and significant, as illustrated in the graph overleaf.





The table below outlines some of the key statistics about use of the website. The new log analytics system, whilst better in most respects, cannot provide us with the ability to identify individual users, hence this data is not reported for 2019/20.

Measure	2019/20	Percentage change 2019/20 versus 2018/19	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Sessions	166,356	+145%	67,899	49,775	19,149
Users			38,587	25,543	9,828
New users			36,714	25,053	9,828
Page views	311,742	+103%	153,737	133,053	72,818
Average page views per session	1.87	-17%	2.26	2.67	3.8

Whilst the data above shows a sustained year on year growth in website traffic, log analytics cannot be run retrospectively, meaning that the total reported traffic is a significant underestimate of

actual website traffic. Indeed, the underestimating is likely to stretch back to when GDPR came into force in May 2018. Extrapolating the average December to March website traffic back the start of the year would give a total of 393,543 sessions and 757,125 page views – respectively a 480 percent and 392 percent increase on 2018/19.

There are several ways that users to website find their way to it, outlined in the table below.

Route to website	Audience (%)	
	2019/20	2018/19
Organic search (using a search engine to find us)	36,247 (22.1%)	13,096 (31.9%)
Social (accessing the FAS website via link from social media)	19,901 (12.2%)	10,028 (24.4%)
Direct (direct links to access specific pages)	95,115 (58.1%)	11,146 (27.1%)
Referral (links to FAS from other sites)	5,876 (3.6%)	3,841 (9.4%)
Email (links to FAS embedded within e-newsletter emails)	6,512 (4.0%)	2,951 (7.2%)

During 2019/20 there was a sustained effort to ensure existing website content was refreshed, any gaps in content plugged, and some entirely new subject areas were added. This effort will continue throughout 2020 to ensure that as the FAS comes towards its conclusion there is a website that can continue to serve as a comprehensive resource for Scottish farmers and crofters.

## 10. Social media

Both the Facebook and twitter accounts of the one-to-many service have seen growth in followers – by 35 percent and nine percent respectively. Beyond that, the picture is more complicated.

Twitter is a useful tool for informing people (particularly other stakeholders) about what FAS is doing – especially on policy relevant issues – but it is less effective in stimulating dialogue or engagement with technical subjects. Likes and engagement with FAS on twitter are up 54 percent and 77 percent respectively on 2018/19. Retweets – the mechanism by which FAS tweets are shared more widely by others – are down by 21 percent despite the number of tweets being up 14 percent. The question of how useful the FAS twitter account is a subject of active discussion, with some consideration being given to moving the equivalent effort to Instagram which may be more effective in reaching younger audiences.

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Twitter measures	2019/20	2018/19	Change 2019/20 versus 2018/19	Percentage change 2019/20 versus 2018/19
Followers	1,597	1,181	+416	+35%
Tweets	813	712	+101	+14%
Link clicks	2,798	2,059	+739	+36%
Retweets	1,158	1,465	-307	-21%
Likes	1,775	1,153	+622	+54%
Impressions	711,708	525,091	+186,617	+36%
Engagements	16,283	9,178	+7,105	+77%

Top five tweets	Retweets	Likes	Impressions
<a href="#">Hannah Jackson at New Entrants Gathering</a>	18	132	33,439
<a href="#">Employing people promo</a>	4	8	13,068
<a href="#">New Entrants Gathering promo</a>	9	15	9,670
<a href="#">Forage crops video promo</a>	12	20	4,598
<a href="#">Internet security promo</a>	7	6	4,362

Historically Facebook has been the most effective social media platform for the one-to-many service to engage with farmers and crofters. Whilst this remains the case, changes to the way in which Facebook operates means that free services such as FAS find it harder to reach users and be visible. This, as well as a desire to boost engagement, means that FAS has had to make more use of paid Facebook advertising in 2019/20. Although this comes at a cost, when used to promote events it is cheaper than traditional print media.

Setting aside this challenge – which is reflected in many of the measures in the table overleaf being down on 2018/19 – it remains the case that there is value in the efforts directed towards Facebook and there is no plan to move off this platform. Instead – alongside paid advertising and asking for reposting from key stakeholders and SAC Consulting’s own offices accounts – there will be a renewed focus on facilitating productive and engaging discussions on Facebook. This approach has worked well for the FAS Women in Agriculture Facebook page (which has grown rapidly since it was

started a year ago). Although labour intensive, this approach delivers results and is particularly relevant given the potential risks of social isolation due to COVID-19.

Facebook measures	2019/20	2018/19	Change 2019/20 versus 2018/19	Percentage change 2019/20 versus 2018/19
Followers	3,157	2,898	+259	+9%
Posts	840	782	+58	+7%
Post likes	8,040	2,601	+5,439	+209%
Post shares	2,068	1,094	+974	+89%
Comments	633	9,438	-8,805	-93%
Link clicks	5,010	4,390	+620	+14%
Other clicks	23,500	32,855	-9,355	-28%
Photo views	1,330	5,856	-4,526	-77%
Video views	8,671	70,497	-61,826	-88%
Total reach	1,072,767	1,149,664	-76,897	-7%
Total impressions	1,370,467	1,811,516	-441,049	-24%

Top 5 posts	People reached	Impressions	Likes	Shares	Comments
<a href="#">Employing people promo</a>	12,393	21,598	20	8	2
<a href="#">Resilience promo</a>	7,921	18,396	44	18	6
<a href="#">Month of resilience promo</a>	8,875	16,595	41	6	2
<a href="#">Stephen Withers &amp; Neil Sandilands</a>	14,680	15,901	22	3	0
<a href="#">Calving equipment</a>	8,062	13,343	23	5	1

## 11. Croft and Small Farm Advisory Service

The Croft and Small Farm Advisory Service offers both a subsidised subscription to eligible (typically very small scale) businesses so that they can receive up to two hours of remotely delivered advice from SAC Consulting plus a dedicated magazine, and a subsidised consultancy service that provides up to two hours of face-to-face advice.

The subscription service is very popular, with 2,188 croft businesses and 287 small farm businesses taking advantage of it during 2019/20. In August 2019, SAC Consulting undertook a survey of all the croft and small farm subscribers. The purpose was to:

- Determine what crofters and smallholders felt about the service
- Inform SAC Consulting’s efforts to improve the service
- Provide feedback to Scottish Government on the value of the service.

A postal questionnaire was sent to all current subscribers, accompanied by reply-paid envelope. Some subscribers are elderly and it was felt many of them would be unlikely to respond to an online survey, therefore a postal survey with a reply-paid envelope was seen as the best way to secure the highest possible response rate.

247 responses were received, which equates to an 11 percent response rate – average for such types of surveys. The locations of the 200 respondees who provided a postcode are shown to the right.



Figure 8 - Location of respondees

The results of the survey can be summarised as:

- 12 percent of subscribers are in contact with their local SAC Consulting staff as much 10-12 times a year, 51 percent are contact more than four times per year, and 39 percent are in contact two or three times a year. Only 12 percent are in contact once or not at all. The responses to this

question would indicate a high level of contact between subscribers and local SAC Consulting staff.

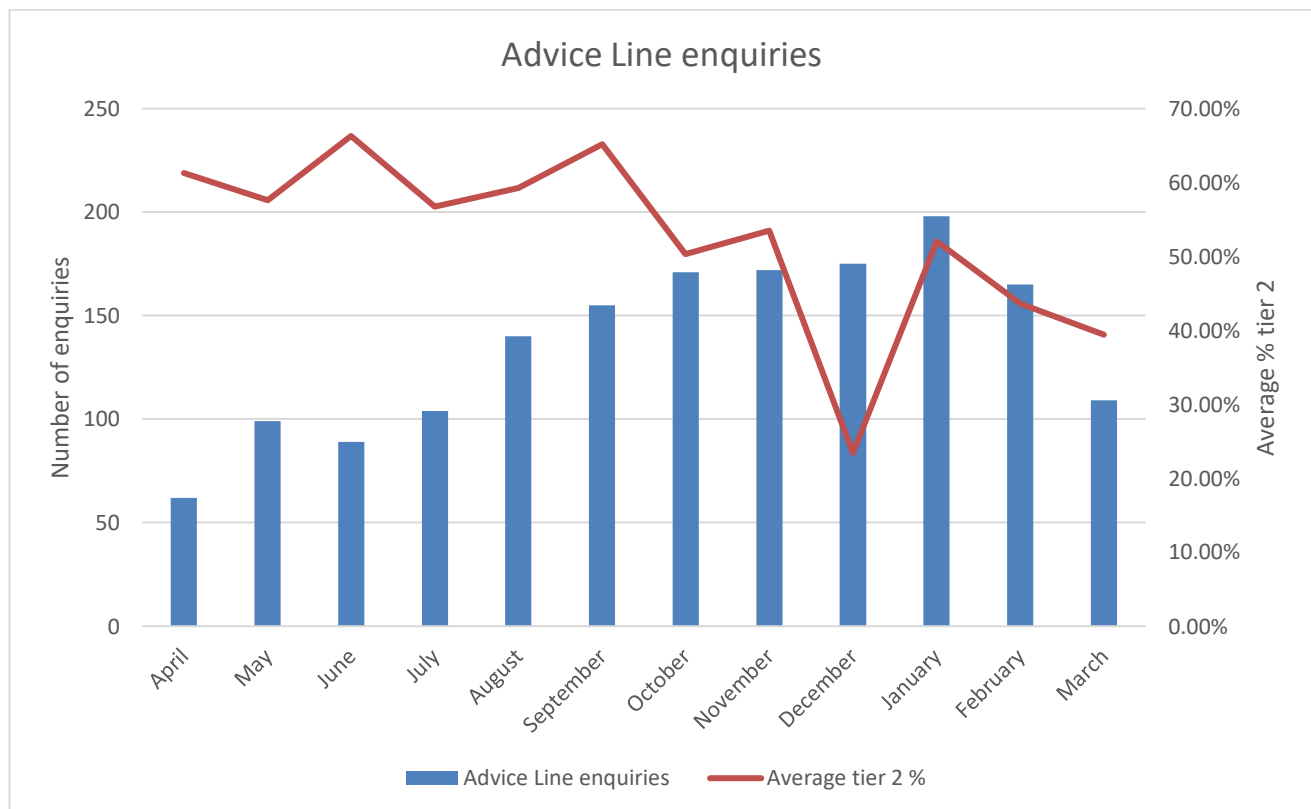
- The most valued element of the subscription was the 'Presence of a local office', with 54 percent of respondees giving this as their top choice. The second most valued element was the 'Local knowledge of adviser' (22 percent) and third was the 'Relationship with local adviser' (18 percent). These responses highlight that the local element to the service is what is most valued by subscribers.
- Respondees value advice about livestock and grass (40 percent), grants (29 percent), and crofting regulations (21 percent) most. Business and diversification (six percent), crops (two percent) and conservation and woodlands (two percent) were less highly valued.
- Subscriber' preferences for receiving advice were face-to-face at the local SAC Consulting office (45 percent), by electronic or written means (28 percent), face-to-face on farm/croft (20 percent) by phone (five percent) or group meetings (two percent). The low preference for group meetings may reflect the fact that crofters might typically have to travel further to group meetings and fit them in alongside other employment.
- 87 percent of respondees rated the subscription as 'Very Good' or 'Good', 11 percent rated it 'Average', and two percent (six respondents out of 247) rated it 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'. Those who rated it badly all cited the cost but only one of them also said their business had not benefitted from the subscription.

SAC Consulting believes that the results of the survey indicate that the subscription is a hugely valued resource for the most remote and/or small-scale agricultural businesses in Scotland. SAC Consulting believes that the subscription is a unique product that significantly addresses the barriers to getting advice (e.g. remoteness, other (work or personal) commitments, cost, and scale of business) that crofters and smallholders often face

In addition to the subscription service, it is worth noting that in 2019/20 there were 18 events, eight videos, two podcasts, and one publication specifically produced to support crofters and small farmers.

## 12. Advice Line

The FAS Advice Line offers eligible businesses up to 30 minutes of free advice. This can range from advice about upcoming events to more complex regulatory or technical questions. During 2019/20, 1,639 enquiries were received – an increase of 16 percent on 2018/19. 934 (52 percent) of these were of a more technical nature (referred to as “Tier 2”). The graph below shows the total number of enquiries per month and the average percentage of those that were tier 2.



Since the Advice Line was first established in September 2016, its use by farmers and crofters has grown significantly. In 2019/20 it received an average of 135 enquiries a month – 17 more than 2018/19. Given that it is only open during office working hours, this equates to approximately one call every 78 minutes the service is available.