



Foreword *by Lord Seafield*

When campaigning for Brexit, some ministers promised a rosy and prosperous future, free of the onerous burden of administration regulations from the EU, while those who were against Brexit warned against losing the support upon which many farmers relied.

At any rate, over 60 per cent of UK farmers voted to leave the EU. It may be reasonable to assume that most considered paying a price to achieve reduced administration was worth it.

For the last 45 years the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has shaped how UK farms exist. Around 60 per cent of farm incomes come in the form of EU subsidies, and reports indicate that without these subsidies 90 per cent of farms would collapse. Farmers have become dependent on this support and with the advent of the "Great Repeal Bill", many must be wondering if Brexit was a mistake.

However, 'every cloud has a silver lining' and it is vital at times like these that all involved in rural land management be positive and engage with the policy makers to ensure there is a thorough review of our operations at all levels. Government can do much to address overarching issues, including any transition, but the farming industry itself needs to restructure and address inefficiencies of operation, many of which have existed for some time but have been ignored.

At national level, the support structure needs an architecture fit for UK purpose and not a pan-European model addressing landscapes from Scotland to the Mediterranean. Agricultural markets both here and abroad must be secured and provide labour for some of our seasonal and intensive requirements.

NEWS REVIEW



WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

The economic size of farms is important and despite requiring many difficult decisions, it is a subject that needs to be addressed. We have historical examples of government and industry working together to achieve efficiencies and the principle behind granting former amalgamation grants will again require consideration to encourage farmers to move in a more efficient direction. Assistance is inevitably required where the market cannot itself produce the incentive.

While some upland or remote areas will require support just to maintain farming, the Government's wish to expand small scale ownership will also require careful thought both in terms of the location and support mechanisms required for these farms. This will require a link with the wider rural economy that will be required to supply the diversified employment necessary to provide the additional income that cannot be generated from the smaller agricultural units alone.

Whatever support mechanisms are proposed, it is clear that the injection of national funds needs to be justified and targeted on supporting conservation initiatives and other activities producing public goods or social benefits. However, this cannot be done at the flick of a switch. There needs to be a recognition of the position of the farming industry at the moment and for work to be put in place to improve its profitability and productivity in the short to medium term, so that it is better placed to deal with any change in regime. The thorny question of GM crops

needs to be revisited and we must not forget that farmers produce food for the nation and decent remuneration is required to achieve these supplies in the long term.

Necessity is said to be the mother of invention and the successful farmers of the future will be those who embrace the current technological advances. There will still be a need for mud on boots, but in the digital age and with the assistance of smart technology to gather information and target inputs, all our energies need to be focused on efficient farming as never before. This post-EU era could also include a grassroots review of agricultural legislation to allow tenants and landowners to rid ourselves of historical baggage and herald a bright new future based on freedom of contract.

If we are looking for comparisons, the recent drop in oil prices resulted in many companies in that industry having to restructure to survive. It has been a painful process with efficiency programs across the oil-producing companies and the service supply chain. These changes have however meant that there is every indication that the sector has now shaped itself to be equipped for the medium-term under a range of low to medium prices. A radical approach to farming is capable of having the same impact, securing our food and public goods for the future. We may end up with fewer farmers, but if we embrace the opportunities, they will be fit for purpose and competitive internationally with no reduction in standards.

If you have any comment on the content of this news review, or wish to contact Seafield or Strathspey Estates on any relevant issue please telephone or write to our offices:

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NEW HOMES - FOR OSPREYS



In early April, the Estate invited the primary 7 pupils of Carrbridge school to help them rebuild an osprey nest before the birds returned from their migration to South Africa.

The nest was nearly 40 years old and perched on the top of a dead tree which had rotted and become unstable. To protect the nest site, the top of the tree had to be cut out and removed before a new nest could be built.

With the help of RSPB tree climbers with very tall ladders and boot spikes, Head Gamekeeper,

Ewan Archer, professional ornithologist Roy Dennis, nine schoolchildren and their teacher managed to dismantle the precarious nest and pull it down, before specially made steel rings and a new nest platform were bolted to the remaining solid part of the tree.

The kids, who were treated to a picnic lunch and an exciting ride in an argocat on the day, particularly enjoyed their part in the tug-of-war to pull down the old debris from the tree. They also managed to see 24 different species of birds.



This nest, and another which was rebuilt last year for similar reasons, became home to two pairs of ospreys who were incubating their eggs. Happily two eggs were hatched (late May), and two young female chicks stayed in the nests for a couple of months, during which time the Carrbridge kids came back to see the chicks as they were weighed, measured and had identification rings put on their legs before the birds ventured out into the world.

Ewan Archer says that the population of ospreys is growing and that they co-exist happily with the eagles who are also nesting on the Estate.

THE ESTATE HELPS CELEBRATE THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

The sun shone brightly for our special off-road tour, which the Estate laid on as part of the Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend in May, making the day even more enjoyable for those who were lucky enough to get tickets for this popular event.

According to the Cairngorms National Park Authority, the BIG weekend is all about bringing the family together in the outdoors to experience the wonders of nature; our habitats, wildlife and of course all the amazingly fun things you can do in the great outdoors. The event happens over two days with 50 events for all ages.

The morning's off-road tour and walk on Kinveachy Estate gave the guests the opportunity to look at the integration of game, wildlife management and habitat restoration on farmland, ancient Caledonian Pine Forest and moorland.

This is the second year we have done this and CNPA's organiser has said "The Kinveachy Estate tour was, once again, one of the most popular parts of the programme, selling out within days of being advertised. Thank you once again for being such a strong supporter of the BIG weekend."

Some of the other quotes from people who attended our off-road tour included:

"Excellent insight into management of the estate, very many thanks."

"Fab time, lots of life."

"I found it very interesting having worked on the land. Very informative. Brilliant trip and perfect weather too."

"Excellent tour. Very informative and very well organised. Lovely people."

"Great morning - wish it could have been longer. Can you make it a day next year? Thanks so much. Good to hear balanced views and we saw eagles."





ACCESS ALL AREAS?

We are fortunate in Scotland to have unrestricted access to most land, which was formalised in the Land Reform Act of 2003 and is based on the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC). The code is a well balanced document and is founded on three principles: respect the interests of other people, care for the environment and take responsibility for your own actions. While the Code covers most situations, it is open to interpretation of what can be considered respect and responsibility.

The land managed by the Estate produces a crop, whether that is game, livestock, grain or trees; and it is a workplace the same as a factory or building site, and carries similar risks while work is taking place. When operations are planned, we assess the level of access and provide information when appropriate. Sometimes we have to place restrictions on access and that is generally for people's own safety, but also for the safety of our staff and contractors.

One of the most common areas where questions are raised is in timber operations. Because trees take a long time to grow, it can be a decade between operations in a woodland and people who use it often don't see why they

should change their routine if they regularly walk or cycle there. That's understandable, but is it responsible?

Tree felling can be dangerous as it involves large machinery cutting down tall trees. If people come too close there is the possibility they could be struck by the machines or the timber. We have had instances of dog walkers in dark clothing walking within 10 meters of trees that are being felled at 7.30am on a winter morning and cyclists riding under suspended loads of timber being stacked at the roadside! We can also have potential conflicts with conservation management when we have an obligation to protect sensitive species and where access for recreation can put this at risk.

Many users of the countryside are considerate and knowledgeable, but sometimes don't fully understand the impacts of our actions or operations, and that is where communication plays a vital role. We need to tell people why certain restrictions or changes in access are required and, similarly, we rely on people with specialist knowledge bringing matters to our attention so we can make allowance for these in planning our operations.

An example of this has been with mountain bikers who built jumps and ramps by nailing material to trees. What they didn't understand was that years after their construction will have gone, the nails will still be there and can lead to



significant costs and safety issues if these find their way into a sawmill and damage the saws.

The same situation arose with disturbance of Capercaillie. However, a meeting with the main contacts for mountain biking in the area led to an understanding that we were not intent on stopping access, only asking people to change how they used the site to take account of the land management issues. In that process we learned much more about how the mountain bikers were using the site and they gained an understanding of the issues we faced. This has developed a positive relationship where the Estate and recreation users understand and respect each other's position and work together to act responsibly in the true spirit of the SOAC.





LAND MATTERS

- TO US ALL

Those who are running an Estate Business can come under a lot of criticism for the way the land is used or how it is managed. Everyone is entitled to an opinion, but how do we determine if these opinions are justified? No matter how much effort, time and care we put into professional and sensitive land management, there will always be those who have an axe to grind or a single issue to focus on; and it is a true saying that you can't please everyone.

There are many reasons for certain sensitive activities in land management, and it is all too easy to take some of these at face value, or to believe what pressure groups might shout through the media, without taking the trouble to understand the complexities involved. Running an Estate Business requires a holistic approach to the many and varied problems and opportunities that face the management team who are trying to balance short, medium and long-term objectives. Such management

always involves compromise, and that means there are seldom any "winners" if one of the parties involved has a particularly entrenched opinion.

A land-based estate is a business like any other, and that means it has to make money to survive. Investing in infrastructure, facilities, equipment, systems and staff is costly but vital to the future success of the business and its people. We acknowledge our role in the community and recognise the part we play in helping support jobs, provide housing and development opportunities. We also have a resource that people use for recreation and that has to be balanced with production of a crop as well as conserving the environment and wildlife for future generations.

Conservation of the environment and protection of wildlife are high on the priority list and there are laws and codes to adhere to. We work with the government and its agencies and follow best practice guidelines. It would

be naïve to suggest there are never cases of poor land management, and we do not profess to be perfect, but where these transgress the law then, quite rightly, those involved should be held to account. While we are not seeking plaudits, some balanced and wider recognition of good practice would not go amiss in the media, who as we know, seem focussed on sensational stories that tar us all with the same brush. What is newsworthy about good, solid management, when there's a protest or outcry to be reported?

We try, through hosting visits and producing publications like this, to give an insight into how an estate business operates. In real terms we can only reach a small number of people, but we hope that you find the News Review of interest and we would encourage you to give this printed copy to others once you have read it, or to link to the electronic version on our website through your own social media.



DID YOU KNOW?

- The Estates have 10,840.82 hectares (41.9 square miles) of woodland certified as sustainability managed through the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.
- Woodland makes up almost 30% of the Estate by area.
- 700 hectares (2.7 square miles) is considered to be "Ancient Woodland" and 4,200 hectares (16.2 square miles) is "Long Established", having been woodland since at least 1860.

NEW LOOK TRAILER

Local Joiner, Kevin Gibb, has restored an old, dilapidated trailer which he bought from a local farmer. The trailer dated back to 1962 and had seen better days. Originally made by Robert A Grant from Quilquox, Methlick, the general purpose trailer had been used by the farmer for transporting

grain, picking up stones and carting dung, turnips etc. But it was showing its age and disintegrating fast, and might have been abandoned forever if it hadn't been for Kevin's skills.

He bought some logs from a larch tree that had been felled in the Old Cullen policy

woodland, had the timber milled and used it to reconstruct and transform the trailer, which will now be used for road runs and agricultural shows.

Kevin is hoping to do the same with another decaying trailer he bought last year and refurbish it to the same standard.



NATIVE PINWOOD MANAGERS' VISIT

Last year, and blessed with excellent weather, the estate welcomed 23 of the Native Pinewood Managers Group to Kinveachy. Comprised of only active managers of sites on the Caledonian Pinewood Inventory, this group looks after some of the most iconic woodland in Scotland, of which Kinveachy is part.

This was their first visit to Kinveachy since the group was formed over 20 years ago and they were given an overview of the history of the management of the site, insofar as it is known, from the 1700s to the present day. They specifically came to look at the work done to encourage natural regeneration of the pinewoods without fencing and through deer control only.

A long term project, this is now in its 14th season with deer numbers having been

reduced from some 40 per square kilometre in 2003 to 5 per square kilometre in 2007, and maintained at that level since. Monitoring of progress has been through measurement of marked seedlings and periodic sampling of regeneration. Over the period the browsing damage has halved, and over 87% of the Scots pine seedlings are showing positive height growth. This has resulted in the first area being submitted for a regeneration establishment grant this year, with 35 hectares meeting the stocking requirements for new woodland with over 2,000 trees per hectare on average. A survey of over 1,200 hectares in 2011 showed that the average stocking density was 544 trees per hectare. This survey is being repeated and it is expected that this will have increased significantly in the past six or seven years.

The group also took the opportunity to discuss the future of the site and how the successful regeneration secured to date could be expanded into areas where there is currently little regeneration, and what methods could be used to achieve that.



Photography: Andy Turnbull



Photography: Andy Turnbull

DID YOU KNOW?

- Timber production averages 20,000 tonnes per annum or 830 lorry loads.
- At Cullen, 40% of the trees are spruce, 28% pine, 12% broadleaves, 10% other conifers and 10% open ground habitat within the woodland.



SPOTLIGHT ON MIKE SHAND, MANAGER AT OLD CULLEN FARMS

Q. Age?
A. 50

Q. Marital status and details of family?
A. I live with my partner Nicky who is a Postwoman. Nicky has a 20-year old son.

Q. What is your role/job?
A. Farm Manager.

Q. How much land do you manage?
A. 4910 acres.

Q. How many staff do you have?
A. Myself and 3 tractor drivers – Willie Reid, Donnie Ness and David McGregor.

Q. What kind of farming do you do and what crops do you grow/harvest? And how much?
A. **Arable.**

Crop	Acres	Variety
Winter Barley	542 acres	Bazooka/ Sunningdale
Oilseed Rape	536 acres	Alizze/ Anastasia
Winter Wheat	893 acres	Leeds/Zulu
Spring Barley	2082 acres	Concerto/ Laureate
Potatoes	81 acres	
Carrots	84 acres	
Grass	412 acres	
Fallow & EFA	280 acres	

The potato and carrot ground is let, as is the grass

Q. Who buys the crops?
A. Winter Barley is sold to WN Lindsay and Frontier for animal feed. Winter Wheat is sold to WN Lindsay and Frontier for animal feed or distilling. Oilseed Rape is sold to Frontier for crushing and processing into vegetable oil. Main crop is Spring Barley and is all sold through the Banff and Moray Grain Group for malting to supply Glenlivet Distillery.

Q. How much machinery do you have?
A.

Tractors
Massey Ferguson 8735
Massey Ferguson 7624 x 2
Massey Ferguson 6495
John Deere 6215R
John Deere 6250R

Combines
Claas Lexion 780
Claas Lexion 750

Loaders
JCB 541.70 x 2
JCB 4CX

Trailers
Stewarts 18T x 3
Stewarts 15T x 3

Sprayers/Spreaders
Berthoud Tenor 36m x 2
KRM Fert Spreader
Bunning 150 Low Lander

Drills/Ploughs
Lemken Solitair 9 6m
Lemken Solitair 9 4m
Amazon Power Harrow 4m
Kverneland 6 Furrow Plough x 3
Kverneland 5 Furrow

Q. Is the farm self-funding? Do you rely on subsidies?
A. Yes, but like most farmers, subsidies are important to help us reinvest.

Q. Describe a typical day.
A. Never two days the same. Weather-related, season-related, planning daily work and also planning the next job (the sprayer operations can't go and spray if the chemicals are not in the store), liaising with our Agronomist and grain merchants, planning crop rotations.

Q. How do you see the future of your farm? Or farming in Scotland generally?

A. Difficult. We will have to adopt new technologies and techniques to become more efficient. It is not always the strongest that survive, it is those who are willing to adapt and change.

Q. Has the political situation worried you? (Brexit, threat of Scottish Independence)

A. Yes. Businesses and especially farmers don't like uncertainty. It makes it very difficult to plan or invest for the future.

Q. What are your biggest day to day problems? And/or long-term headaches/obstacles?

A. Weather and unreliable machinery. Planning work becomes more difficult when this happens.

Q. What happens in extreme weather? Does this happen often?

A. Crop lodging and brackling is caused by wet weather resulting in more disease. Poorer yields and quality. High winds at harvest causes dear losses. Appears to be happening more frequently.

Q. What would be a successful year?
A. Good weather, good yields and good prices all make for a stress-free season.

Q. Is there anything new or different happening in the world of arable farming? Do others do it differently? Will technology change/help?

A. Driverless tractors are not quite here yet but they are on the horizon. Sprayers able to identify and target specific weeds to avoid blanket spraying. Different techniques depend on location, climate and soil in whichever area you are farming in.

Q. Do you have any advice to those thinking of starting in farming?

A. Go for it. It is great to be doing something you enjoy as a career. The world's population is growing and will always need feeding.

Q. What do you do to relax?

A. I like nothing better than going for a drive round the countryside looking at other farmer's ideas and techniques.

Q. Any hobbies?

A. Like most farmers my job is also my hobby.

Q. Favourite food or favourite meal?

A. Homemade lasagne.

Q. Favourite music?

A. Any rock music from the 80's (Bon Jovi, Guns & Roses).

Q. Favourite holiday or ideal holiday?

A. Always promised my brother who lives in Perth, Australia with his wife and two daughters that I will go over and visit one day.

Q. Any message you would like to give to the government?

A. Just let us farm the land with less interference and red tape.

STAFF CHANGES

The past couple of years have seen a number of changes in staff with some long-term employees retiring and, sadly, the death of our Clerk of Works at Cullen.

Allister Smith, who had been with us since January 2013, succumbed to cancer very suddenly after being diagnosed and died in November 2016. A huge shock to his family and to his colleagues, who lost a well liked and respected member of the team. Our new Clerk of Works, Darrell Skinner, joined us in February 2017. Having a background as a trained joiner and carrying out a number of his own property developments, he has settled in well to the role.

After 31 years with the Estate, Andrew Norval decided to take early retirement and left in December 2016. His steady, calm approach in dealing with complex matters was well recognised by all and his detailed knowledge of the Estate was hard to replace. As expected, he gave a very good and comprehensive handover to his successor, David Greer, who joined us in September 2016 and took over as Property Director in December 2016. Having worked for Atholl Estates and Stair Estates he has proven to be the ideal replacement for such a varied and challenging role.



We said goodbye to Anna Beadle, our Estate Accountant, who also left us in December 2016 after two years to return to self-employment to allow her to concentrate more on her family. Lesley Cowie joined us in January 2017, and with a background in accountancy for local industrial and land-based businesses, has been able to pick up the varied nature of our operations quickly.

Another long time employee, Sporting Supervisor Frank Law, also took early retirement in January 2017. With nearly 42 years' service he had considerable knowledge of the Strathspey Estates, recognised not only by the Family and Trustees, but also the many professional contacts and guests. Again, we have been fortunate to recruit a suitable successor to the post, Ewan Archer. Ewan trained with the Estate as an under keeper and in recent years has carried out seasonal predator control and other contract work for

the Estate. He brings with him considerable experience gained in employment for other estates and in the running of his own business.

In the admin staff, Rachel Saunders left in February 2018 and, after 9 years with us, Joyce Henderson decided to retire in March 2018. Carol Patterson and Laura Wilson have joined us to fill these posts.



From left to right are Lisa Law, Frank Law and Lord Seafield

SEAFIELD AND STRATHSPEY TALKS

When the opportunity arises we organise evening talks for farming tenants. As well as providing current information, these talks were also a good opportunity for all to chat in an informal and sociable way.

In Grantown, we welcomed Uel Morton, then Chief Executive of Quality Meat Scotland (QMS),

who gave an engaging presentation on the work of QMS and its role both at home and in the export market. Uel also provided a useful commentary on Brexit and its significance for stock farms in particular.

In Cullen, we welcomed Peter Cook, Director of Food, Drink and Agriculture at Opportunity

North East ('ONE'), the private sector body which aims to build on the regional strengths in these economic sectors. Peter talked about the aims of ONE and how it provides match-funding for grants and investment. He also illustrated the changes in agriculture in the area over the past 15 years, while Brexit, likewise, got a mention.

BIN HILL BIRTHDAY VISIT

The estate were contacted in February to see if it would be possible to take a vehicle with a rather special passenger to the top of the Bin Hill. Alec Wilson, whose family have been farming in the area since 1860, wanted to see the view from the top to celebrate his 90th birthday.

We were pleased to take Mr Wilson, his wife Margaret and their friend, Linda Gentry, who arranged the visit for them, to the summit on a clear but cold day. Mr Wilson farms nearby at Walkerdale which they purchased in 1968. Despite his age, he is still actively farming and carries out his own ploughing. We look forward to taking him to the top again to celebrate his 100th!



CASTLE HILL OPENING

The sun shone for an estimated crowd of 250 people on the formal opening of the Castle Hill project, the culmination of many hours of hard work by the Cullen Past and Present Volunteer Group and the local Community.

Along with stalls and battle re-enactments, and aided by the Portsoy and District Pipe Band, the official raising of the Burgh flag was carried out by Mrs Claire Russell, Lord Lieutenant of Banffshire who also read out a message from the Queen who sent "warm good wishes" to all involved in the project and the people of Cullen. This facility has caught the imagination of locals and visitors alike and is now a well used part of the local walking routes in and around Cullen.



WHITEHILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL VISIT

Whitehills Primary use a small area of woodland near the village for their Forest School project and the Estate suggested that they visit one of the larger blocks of woodland to look at mechanised timber harvesting and the wider woodland management on the Estate.

All 20 pupils were given the opportunity to see a timber harvester in action, courtesy of CT Harvesting and James Jones & Sons Ltd. They were able to ask questions of the operator and to get an idea of how many trees could be cut in a day, what the timber was used for, and how the estate worked to make its woodlands sustainable - both in timber production and for the environment. We were pleased to receive a fantastic set of letters which showed the enthusiasm the whole group displayed on the visit and hope we have encouraged some of them to consider a career in forestry!



DID YOU KNOW?

- At Strathspey 3% of the trees are spruce, 72% pine, 5% broadleaves, 4% other conifers and 16% open ground habitat within the woodland.
- There are approximately 59 miles of roads within the forests with 105 main entrances. Of these, 33% meet a Trunk or A classification road, 12% meet a B classification road, 27% a C classification road and 25% a U classification road.
- The Cullen Estate is 12,882 hectares and the Strathspey Estate is 23,338 hectares: or 49 and 90 square miles respectively. The area of Scotland is 30,414 square miles and the estates are 0.005% of Scotland.

MOBILE PHONE MASTS

There are major changes taking place in the world of mobile telecommunications, including the well-publicised roll-out of 4G coverage and the lesser known consolidation of site operators. These have a significant impact on the Estates, both at Grantown and Cullen.

The Estates have leased separate mobile phone mast sites for the past 10/15 years to all the major operators. These include Vodafone and Telefonica/02 who a few years ago formed a new company, Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Ltd (CTIL), to run their mast sites which they now share. Likewise EE (a merger of Orange and T-Mobile, now taken over by BT) have joined forces for site management with H3G under the banner of Mobile Broadband Network Ltd (MBNL).

New 10-year leases have recently been drawn up with these consolidated tenants and, while it might have been expected that many mast sites would have been given up as surplus as a result of site sharing, we have seen relatively little of this, as the new companies have sought to retain as many sites as required to improve their coverage.

In addition, we have seen many of these masts undergo major upgrades of equipment, including some completely new masts, as part of the roll out of 4G coverage.

A new Electronic Communication Code came into effect in December 2017; it appears that this may strengthen the position of the operators in dealings with site owners.

It will be interesting to see what the telecoms mast landscape looks like 10 years from now.

