

News Release
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CAUTIOUS WELCOME FOR LANDOWNERS' INITIATIVE

The Scottish Tenant Farmers Association welcomes yesterday's announcement of the joint initiative by SL&E, NFUS, the Forestry Commission and the Crown Estate to encourage new people into agricultural and land based industries as a much needed positive step forward. For some time now STFA has been calling for opportunities for new entrants into agriculture and it is heartening to see that the land-owning organisations are at last getting together to assist a new generation of farmers into the industry.

Commenting on the news STFA chairman Angus McCall said: "We are fully behind any moves to encourage new entrants into farming and have already had discussions with the Forestry Commission regarding their plans to create starter units utilising land and buildings from farms they have bought for tree planting. In fact, I believe that the first three units, two livestock and one arable, will be available by next Spring. I also felt optimistic following meeting recently on the Fochabers estate with Crown Estates representatives where we discussed new entrant opportunities and I was assured that the Crown Estates would be playing their part whenever suitable land became available.

"This is all very encouraging, but news to me. I am surprised that this announcement has been made without any forewarning or discussion with other stakeholders or members of the TFF. STFA has been at the forefront of calls for more lands to be let and opportunities for new entrants and therefore disappointed not to be kept in the picture. I am naturally suspicious of deals done behind closed doors and I hope this is not another attempt to resurrect SL&E's aspiration to deregulate agricultural tenancies by blurring the distinction between commercial and agricultural leases, a proposal mooted a few years ago in the TFF. I would hope also that NFUS does not now share this aspiration. STFA would certainly oppose such a move.

"However, we would be enthusiastic in supporting a genuine initiative to help create new opportunities for the next generation and look forward to hearing the proposals in more detail."

Note: Detail on this initiative can be found on the website of Scottish Lands and Estates:

http://www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=811:groundbreaking-collaboration-to-focus-on-attracting-new-entrants-to-rural-businesses&catid=71:national&Itemid=107