



# **Diversity & Inclusion Review**

## **Final Report**

**Caroline Millar**

**January 2025**

# **Diversity and Inclusion Review: Final Report**

## **Introduction**

I am pleased to enclose my final report setting out a series of recommendations for NFU Scotland on how to further improve diversity and inclusion across the entire organisation. Having spent a number of years within NFU Scotland's regional and Board structures I had first-hand experience of the organisation's practices and culture and was therefore well-placed to gather views from members and non-members on what further steps could be taken by the organisation to help it continue to evolve and modernise. I hope that this report, and the overarching recommendations, provide a helpful platform for the organisation to embrace and show the leadership that they are renowned in many different ways.

## **Background**

Research was undertaken in the spring and summer of 2024 to provide data and to gather ideas to assist NFU Scotland on improving diversity and inclusion within the organisation.

A number of recommendations have been made for NFU Scotland to start a process of improving diversity and inclusion.

This initial research project is a starting point for ongoing work in the areas of diversity and inclusion and a baseline for NFU Scotland to build upon. It should also be noted that there are many forms of diversity, and some will require specific specialist knowledge and future focus not covered in this initial work.

## **Context**

The context for this work is a number of areas which NFU Scotland wishes to address including

1. A more diverse board and structure for representation
2. Ensuring that NFU Scotland is not breaching any legislation
3. Improving lobbying strength with elected officials, civil servants and other industry bodies by demonstrating that the range of people within Scotland's agriculture sector are represented across NFU Scotland

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## Executive Summary and Recommendations

Focusing on ensuring that a wide and diverse range of people are active members of NFU Scotland and making them feel valued and included, not only demonstrates that NFU Scotland is a professional and progressive organisation, but in turn will drive up membership retention and membership recruitment.

This report outlines a number of recommendations to improve diversity and inclusion which will assist in the main board and committee structures to be more representative of the wide range of people involved in and connected to member businesses. As well as driving membership retention and the financial position of the organisation, increasing and monitoring engagement can also make NFU Scotland a stronger lobbying voice with key stakeholders.

Number	Recommendation
1	Demonstrate Leadership and embed this culture across the business
2	Implement new Communications Strategy
3	Develop a policy and strategy for language (ending certain words/phrases)
4	Leadership and Skills Development Programme for current and future Board members
5	Leadership and development through the Board, including undertaking a skills matrix
6	Establish a new Working Group/Committee to focus on diversity and inclusion
7	Identify a dedicated staff & Board member 'champion' to lead the charge
8	Establish a 'Talent Pipeline' Development programme, initially focused on young people and women
9	Greater transparency – publication of job descriptions of Presidential team and Board members
10	Reform the family membership, replacing it with a Business Membership + 6 whom become individual members
11	Engagement – review our member engagement strategies and practice with a view to reforming to make it more inclusive
12	Review Events strategy, ensuring greater consideration of the specific needs of attendees
13	Review Code of Conduct and extend include social media tools including Whatsapp
14	Increased training for 'champions' and senior staff to ensure knowledge of 'specialist' diversity and inclusion issues

## **Recommendations with commentary**

The detailed recommendations from this research are as follows:

### **1. Leadership in diversity and inclusion**

Continue to show leadership in the area of diversity and inclusion, be bold, have a consistent approach, do not waste momentum from this work. The presidential team, future presidential team, board and staff team need to grasp this, see it as essential and core and talk about it publicly.

The staff team and NFU Mutual group secretaries who often represent NFU Scotland require to see this as part of their core work and to be “energised” to use this to bring new people into the organisation and also increase new members.

### **2. Effective Communications – Implement new communications strategy**

Communications to members and non-members about NFU Scotland activity and policy impacts requires to reflect the needs of a wider range of people.

Short, sharp and succinct key messages – “less is more.” Use of video, podcasts, e-news with two lines then link to website for detail, better use of wider forms of social media to engage with new audiences e.g. You Tube, Tik Tok. Use an e-news system which records opens, click throughs and measures engagement.

A strategy for central communications content management and guidelines and training for policy and regional personnel which is consistent with national communications.

Accessible communications e.g. for example people who have dyslexia and struggle with written reports, looking for alternatives such as podcasts and short messages.

A strategy which actively promotes diversity and inclusion. For example, with one form of diversity, gender, a strategy to showcase different genders e.g. in a panel, speaking at a conference, in the media undertaking interviews.

In general, showcase the talent in the organisation both in membership and in the staff team with a wider range of people representing the organisation in interviews and in digital communications. Showcase the breadth of talent of people representing NFU Scotland and not just the presidential team.

### **3. Language – Develop a policy and strategy for embedding**

Other organisations have specifically identified key words which they have asked committee members and chairs to stop using e.g. housewife, identifying the farmer as “he”, use of inappropriate language, language which reinforces stereotypes – NFU Scotland ought to do similar.

### **4. Training - Leadership and skills development programme for current and future Board members**

Invest in a leadership and skills development programme, possibly delivered externally in “modules” that people can undertake which are transferable skills for the benefit of

the industry as a whole and for the benefit of those individuals, but which ultimately will engage people and develop a pipeline of individuals who can deliver a high level of professionalism at a senior level in the organisation.

You cannot have a place on the main board unless you have undertaken this programme, ahead of being elected. Annual refresher training for main board and Vice Chairs coming behind.

Modules could include diversity and inclusion training, governance, chairing a meeting, chairing a panel, managing poor behaviour, communications and media training.

Make the training attractive, easy to take part in, enjoyable, at a level someone would be proud to put it on their CV. Consider being delivered by an external agency, in a mixture of online modules and in person.

Staff could also undertake these modules as personal development but also to raise awareness of diversity and inclusion and to support the committee Chairs.

## **5. Board leadership and development – Undertake a skills matrix exercise**

The main board is most visible. Not all diversity is visible and there are many different types but start with two of the most prominent areas that need to be addressed – gender and age (age includes under 40's not just Young Farmers). **"You need to see to be"** is a comment made by people met on the focus group research visits.

Currently there are no women on the main board, and this is one of the most stark measures of lack of diversity in leadership in the organisation.

Undertake a skills matrix required for effective governance annually and, if gaps, identify people from a talent pipeline or other areas who can be appointed to the board or encouraged to join the board to meet those gaps. For example, HR, digital communications, inclusion and diversity. "We have a gap on the board in terms of communications skills and we would really ask that you consider standing as Regional Chair/Policy Chair as this is a key area of your expertise." In addition, appoint board members based on skills not sourced from elected position chair and policy positions but who could deliver a particular area of expertise. For example, sourced from trade membership.

Consider encouraging people to stand for three years then step down to get more churn. Make it clear you don't have to be there for five years. Five years should be the maximum across any type i.e. policy and region not 10 years term across both. Undertaking appraisals in order that anyone not delivering as a board member can stand down and can be replaced.

Have a main board meeting once a year when Vice Chairs also come along to give them a flavour of the main board. Encourage Vice Chairs to chair one or more of the regional or policy meetings to develop skills and confidence ready for the Chair role.

## **6. Establish a Committee/Working Group to focus on Diversity & Inclusion**

It's important to ensure focus and momentum and therefore it would be sensible to establish a new committee or working group similar to the Remuneration or Finance

Committees which focuses on tracking progress in diversity and inclusion and a board lead on this area – this could report to the PCM Committee.

### **7. Identify a ‘champion’ within the Board and staff team to lead the charge**

Identifying individuals who are given a degree of responsibility to take some ownership of these issues is a helpful practical measure. In respect of the Board representative, this individual could chair the proposed new committee/working group, and they would work closely with the nominated person in the staff team (and senior team) to take forward activity, track recommendations, report on progress.

Focus support for women to become involved in same way as NFU Scotland has done with young people via next generation.

### **8. Talent Pipeline – Create a new ‘talent development’ programme initially focused on young people and women**

Diversity is much wider than gender and age but these are two of the largest and most visible areas. A pipeline of talented people who would be a valuable addition to the main board should be identified, for example twenty women who are engaged with NFU Scotland or other organisations in the sector. Twenty people showing leadership, communication skills, board skills in other organisation roles at present who would be great addition to NFU Scotland board in future. Twenty people under the age of forty. The pipeline might have sixty people in it but ten will come through.

This pipeline should identify talented people who could contribute to the effective governance and running of the NFU Scotland board including those members not historically represented on the board such as trade members and professional members, as well as employees of member businesses.

A talent identifier with either knowledge, skills, interest in NFU Scotland or the sector (some may have no current involvement with NFU Scotland).

Call them personally, invite them to the National conference. One board member and senior staff members should have two people each they call from time to time, ask for advice from, build a relationship with. Invite to take part in leadership/diversity skills training programme. If good at public speaking, ask to speak a national conference, on panels, at meetings, and/or host a meeting at their business. Build a relationship without sounding desperate.

It is strongly recommended that new people not connected with NFU Scotland at a senior level are NOT immediately approached about taking on a board or committee position. This was highlighted as a key area to put people off immediately.

Host a leadership dinner once a year with the main board and the top twenty pipeline leaders who you would want on the main board and have a discussion after the dinner on the sector, their views of NFU Scotland.

### **9. Greater Transparency – Publication of job descriptions**

Be much clearer and make available publicly, job descriptions for all members of the main board including the Presidential team, expected hours in the role, remuneration and benefits of the role. Do the same for any other roles in the organisation.

Focus on quality of delivery versus hours. Ensuring the focus of the role is a good use of time, and at the level of skills and remuneration of that person. Make the role attractive. Support people to manage expectations of others about what the role is i.e. being contactable 24/7.

Publish holidays and time off. Offer an email to request information about remuneration from a senior member of staff such as the CEO.

#### **10. BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP – Reform the family membership and replace with business and individual membership**

Review the existing definition to focus more on the business as the member. Make up to six individuals (or how many you wish) to be individual members representing that business. The business gets any trade benefit and decides who in the business can benefit from that e.g. new van driven by employee or next generation. Include employees as a member representing a business, as well as family members.

All written communications addressed to the business not one person including Leader Magazine, invitations to events. Could still have named contact for invoice payment but wider communications routinely sent to everyone.

#### **11. ENGAGEMENT – Review member engagement strategies and practice to make it more inclusive and exciting**

Reduce the volume of meetings and make those that are delivered attractive, ensure they run on time and are high quality. Ensure consistency across the country – for example, one region having regular events and another having none. Consider branch meetings in particular.

Use best practice from some regions in varying time of day and type of meeting e.g. 5 meetings in region in the year – 2 x daytime, 2 x night-time, 1 family day.

To maximise attendance and engagement at main events such as the National conference and the Autumn conference, the programme and tickets should be live at least four months, if not six months out from the event.

A monthly consistent national webinar, consistent in terms of time that month e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> week but varying between lunchtime one month and evening another with a programme of high-quality speakers on a relevant policy topic. Dates published 12 months in advance, topics published 3 months out. Non-members pay £20 to join the webinar but can deduct up to 3 months webinar costs against membership joining fee in that year.

Make all meetings accessible, allowing people to join online. Particularly the national AGM and conference and Autumn conference.



Build a picture of engagement by a synchronised system measuring and recording engagement across all areas using a CRM system such as SHEEP or another system, one which links to event software such as Eventbrite and comms software such as Mailchimp.

Ensure engagement is recorded across all types of events and interactions with members and potential members. Measure baseline activity and progress

## **12. Review Events Strategy to cater for attendees**

Ask in advance or during the registration process if there are any ways that someone requires support to attend an event. For example, a quiet room requested by an autistic member, hearing loop support for people who have poor hearing. Ensure the venue has good accessibility. Always asking for any dietary requirements and ensuring that all types of diet are catered for. Embed this practice.

## **13. Review the Code of Conduct**

Expand the code of conduct to include WhatsApp communication, ensuring this is policed accordingly. WhatsApp should be a professional communications tool not a vehicle for moaning, be abusive or gossip.

Develop, publish and widely share a code of conduct for meetings and being a member. This should be widely communicated not hidden.

Don't harass people to take on elected roles when they have only just started being involved with the organisation or do not want to be taking on committee roles. Make the elected role attractive enough that people want to do this, rather than sounding desperate and putting people off coming back to a meeting.

Bullies or people not behaving professionally in part of the organisation need to be asked to stand down. Strong, decisive and consistent leadership in this area. Other organisations said this helped curb bullying from other people by making one or two an example. Cope with the loss of membership income and show many others that behaviour will not be tolerated. The customer relationship management system should note instances of negative or bullying behaviour. Staff and chairs should be trained how to spot this and report it and deal with it.

Training for NFU Scotland staff team in diversity and inclusion, words and terminology, managing difficult people, and how to support chairs, as they are the consistent person.

Staff team should record all engagement with individual members and individual non-members on a customer relationship management (CRM) system or until that is in place, a manual system. People attending events and meetings, either online or in person should register either on Zoom register for online or on Eventbrite. Ongoing recording and reporting of diversity and of wider engagement by staff teams to measure progress.

#### **14. Specialist training to enhance knowledge**

Diversity is much wider than age and gender and specialist advice and training should be sought for all types of diversity so that the organisation has a better understanding of the range of issues relating to diversity and inclusion in their broadest sense.

## INTRODUCTION

Diversity and inclusion are two separate concepts, but they are related.

What is Diversity?

“The practice or quality of including or involving a range of different people” (Oxford Dictionary)

Diversity of thought and diversity of perspective is widely recognised to bring considerable value to businesses and organisations, not only to boards but to all areas of an organisation.

What is Inclusion?

Making all feel valued, wanted, welcome. “Inclusion is about how well the contributions, presence, and perspectives of different groups of people are valued and integrated into the environment.” (Inclusion.me.uk)

So, diversity can be thought of ensuring that a wide range of people are engaged. Inclusion is how you make those people feel valued and how you help engage them.

This research work by NFU Scotland sits within a context where some people may feel threatened by any attempt by an organisation to become more diverse and inclusive. For example, if there are a fixed number of opportunities to have a place on a board or committee, widening the pool to which NFU Scotland can draw people and supporting people to become involved will have negative implications for some who will have to step down or move on to make way for new people.

Diversity and inclusion work can therefore make some people feel anxious. Farming is also still quite a traditional sector and, in many ways, could be viewed as an industry where change is viewed with caution and in many ways NFU Scotland reflects the wider industry. Diversity and inclusion can be viewed as being trendy or pushing change for change's sake. “Being woke.” This view is generally from people who feel threatened by change. Some people for example who feel they have worked very hard to get on to a committee, took brave steps to walk through a door, do not want an easy ride for others, may wish for others to have to go through the same experience as them, instead of thinking how could we make it less difficult for new people to get involved?

This work should also be seen in the context that there are many people in society including in agriculture who have sexist, homophobic and racist views and it is important to bear in mind that people with some of these views and perspectives may currently be members of NFU Scotland and be represented in elected structures.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This initial piece of work was designed as a starting point to understand barriers and solutions to diversity and inclusion and included these areas

1. Analyse the opportunities for engagement by region and policy area across NFU Scotland via recent data on meetings
2. Research practices in diversity and inclusion in other organisations
3. Design and undertake a survey
4. Undertake focus group discussion across Scotland and speak to others one to one online who could not make focus group dates

The delivery of the initial draft report and recommendations were presented to the main board, staff team and NFU Mutual group secretaries in three separate meetings and feedback incorporated into this final report.

## **SETTING THE CONTEXT**

Recognising that diversity and inclusion is a difficult subject for some people, the discussions that have taken place were set in the context below, with this scene setting content being provided ahead of focus group meetings.

NFU Scotland is a lobbying organisation specialising in the agriculture industry in Scotland.

NFU Scotland supports and promotes members to achieve a sustainable and profitable future for Scottish agriculture.

One of the ways that lobbying organisations can demonstrate to those they are lobbying to, is that they represent a large number of views, a large % of individual voices in that sector.

Currently there are around

- 16,000 VAT registered farming and crofting businesses in Scotland
- around 25,000 individual businesses operating one or more land parcels
- many thousands of businesses in the agriculture and food and drink sector in Scotland in the supply chain and professional services
- 8,500 member businesses of NFU Scotland (excludes family members) – around 50% of all farming and crofting business in Scotland

Within each of these enterprises are multiple people

- Many of these businesses are family businesses, both on farm and in the supply chain, with multiple generations
- Many have employees
- Many family businesses have individuals who would like to be a partner or work on the family farm but there is no room in the family farm for them as it is not profitable enough to support multiple people in those businesses. It is not their

fault they cannot farm the family farm, and they still have an interest in the family business and should be included as members if they wish

- Non-family businesses also have multiple employees e.g. corporate farms or organisations who are trade members

All of these people have an interest aligned with that of NFU Scotland – to achieve a sustainable and profitable future for Scottish agriculture.

**NFU Scotland’s voice is louder and more effective the larger number of individuals and businesses it represents.**

### Existing membership

Membership levels % of sector as a member	Number of people within the business feeling valued and part of NFU Scotland	Voice NFU represents Data & views can draw from Also, can draw the best, talented people to be part of committees & boards
8,500	1	8,500
8,500	2	17,000
8,500	3	25,500
8,500	4	34,000
8,500	5	42,500
8,500	6	51,000

### RECORDING ENGAGEMENT

The first element of the research involved asking policy managers and regional managers if they registered meeting attendees, recorded engagement and monitored diversity.

Some of the information which had been outlined for analysis included

- The numbers of people in each member business who engaged with NFU Scotland on an annual basis i.e. is it multiple people or only one? How many members is it none?
- Estimated age range for attendees
- Registrations for board and committee meetings, monitor meetings including registrations and non-attendees
- Recording board members and committee members over the past 10 years i.e. how many businesses and how many people within businesses are bringing their diverse thoughts and views to committee and structures
- Recording of engagement with non-members

Currently there is no consistency in recording attendees who attend either online or in person meetings, download the weekly e-news and other forms of interaction. There is a large variation between regions and policy teams in data recorded. If all staff and NFU Mutual staff team undertook registering for participation and recording “no

shows”, this will assist in building a picture of engagement and identifying new people within current members to be encouraged to get involved with the work of the union.

For the data that is recorded, it shows there is very little churn in the people who are involved in NFU Scotland on committees or are monitors. Accurate data does not currently exist on the % of members who are office bearers but this data should be recorded and monitored. There is value in fresh blood coming into the organisation at all levels and people standing down and moving on.

Recording interactions with non-members would also build up a picture of businesses and people within those businesses who are potential future members. For example, a non-member registering to attend an online meeting and then being contacted afterwards about joining.

The customer relationship management system is not used by NFU Scotland staff as much as it could to gather up-to-date data. Moreover, this system does not link to the system used by NFU Mutual group secretaries, who are responsible for membership recruitment.

### **POTENTIAL IMPACT OF INCREASING ENGAGEMENT**

The table below demonstrates the potential of expanding our reach to foster positive relationships and engaging with multiple people within a business, NFU Scotland could say it represents beyond the potential 51,000 individuals already connected in some way:

Membership levels if all VAT registered farms & crofts in Scotland were members	Number of people within the business feeling valued and part of NFU Scotland	Voice NFU represents Data & views can draw from Also, can draw the best, talented people to be part of committees & boards
16,000	1	16,000
16,000	2	32,000
16,000	3	48,000
16,000	4	64,000
16,000	5	80,000
16,000	6	96,000

This table shows that in theory for NFU Scotland if membership numbers increased and relationships and engagement with individuals within businesses increased, the organisation could represent the views of almost 100,000 people.

Currently the variety of people who NFU Scotland engage with is probably very small i.e. the same people, the same views.

Engagement and relationships with multiple people is critical.

Those potential 51,000 voices from existing members must feel they are valued, they are welcome, their individual views are acknowledged and recorded, their interests are represented, they know what work and wins are being undertaken on their behalf.

Equally important is a strategy to attract new members and making a wider pool of individuals and businesses feel that NFU Scotland is a valuable investment.

In return NFU Scotland has the benefit of more data, more ideas, more case studies and a larger talent pool to draw directors and board members.

## **TWO-WAY ENGAGEMENT**

Any lobbying organisation requires to have two-way engagement.

Views, data, perspectives coming from as wide a range as possible into NFU Scotland, in as efficient a way as possible.

Communications coming out from NFU Scotland to members outlining what they have done with this data, their views to deliver benefit.

The more efficient and effective this is, the more members feel listened to, valued and retain their membership.

## **MARKET SEGMENTATION & FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Those potential 51,000 people are not one homogeneous group. 8,500 people are not one homogenous group. Any business or organisation will recognise that they have multiple market segments which have different needs, which they must address in different ways.

Given that there was no guarantee that we would have engaged with a range of different people on the focus group or open meetings; despite trying to achieve a range of market segmented “types”, an exercise was designed to get people attending thinking about the needs of different groups, even if they did not fall into this group.

Participants were asked to consider different individuals and their current circumstances and their ease at which they could engage with NFU Scotland. What would be their needs? What for example would make them be able to attend a meeting in person? Or find out what NFU Scotland was undertaking on their behalf?

1. Individual whose business is under significant financial pressure and is working around the clock as can't afford staff
2. Parent of young children
3. Individual whose business is in growth phase and concentrating on expansion
4. Family member who is a director of the family business but not considered “the named farmer”
5. Gay individual who finds it challenging to work in agriculture sector due to homophobia from some people
6. Family member who wanted to farm but no room for them in the business
7. Individual working in professional services in agriculture sector
8. Individual who is not a member and has no past experience of being a member
9. Employee of a farming business
10. Individual who is neurodiverse, for example autistic
11. Young person attending college or university

This is not a complete list but examples. This exercise helped to think about the needs of other individuals and their needs.

Another example of sub-groups could include

1. Individual who is retired or semi-retired with spare time
2. Individual who has a business which is making enough profits which doesn't need him or her to be there much day to day and has spare time
3. Individual who is bereaved, divorced, lonely and who is looking for company and things to do and has spare time
4. Individual who has never been a member and doesn't know anything about NFU Scotland

**The challenge that NFU Scotland has is to ensure that it can reach out and build relationships with all of these subgroups and not just certain groups.**

The exercise prompted a good discussion about the needs of these groups and how NFU Scotland may make it easier for them to engage.



Subgroup	Needs Ideas for engagement
Young person attending college or university	<p>Digital communications where those young people gain information e.g. Tik Tok, podcasts</p> <p>Other people their age in the room/at meetings</p> <p>Take political and policy debate into heart of City where they are at Uni/college e.g. Edinburgh University farming and food debate and invite students to lead the debate, bring in others from non ag and other members to the City.</p>
Parent of children/young children	<p>May need to pay a babysitter to attend a meeting in person. If child at nursery/school, daytime meetings might be easier than evenings during bathtime/bedtime. If mother is breast feeding can't attend meetings without baby.</p> <p>May have financial challenges with increased family/childcare costs. Only one parent may be able to attend a meeting.</p> <p>Meetings should be focused, start on time, end on time to allow to get back home for childcare.</p> <p>Allow and encourage babies under 1 to attend meetings including national conference and other events.</p> <p>Vary meeting times for regions/policy/branches. Ensure majority of meetings can be joined online from home. Have a family friendly policy-based day every year in each region where children are welcome.</p> <p>Consider providing a creche at National Conference. Bold but a great statement.</p>
Individual who is neurodiverse, one example, autism	<p>May find entering a room with strangers or arriving at an event or being in a large room of people overwhelming.</p> <p>Ensure all events and branch meetings have registration process which asks if anyone requires any additional support to</p>

	<p>attend. Ensure all elected representatives are asked this when elected and that the Chair is aware, and provision made.</p> <p>Large events should have a smaller room available where someone could take time out where video of conference can be streamed. Live streaming of event or meeting to ensure someone can join from home.</p> <p>Ensure that all communications and events allow for accessibility e.g. wheelchair access, but also podcasts or sound for hard of sight, assisted loops for hard of hearing and good quality audio/use of microphones/speakers.</p> <p>Accessibility strategy required and training. Support from organisations who can provide this.</p>
<p>Individual whose business is in growth phase and concentrating on expansion</p>	<p>Policy very important to support growth, expansion, growing profit of business. Does this person feel NFU Scotland supports entrepreneurs rather than people chasing subsidy?</p> <p>May not have time to read weekly e-news or Leader or to attend meetings.</p> <p>Policy and activity updates that can be listened to, short snappy communications. Focused short meetings which don't take up too much time.</p>
<p>Individual whose business is under significant financial pressure and is working around the clock as can't afford staff</p>	<p>This person may need some extra support and signposting to other organisations for help e.g. Whole Farm review, RSABl as well as support from local branch/staff.</p> <p>May drop off from being a member as can't afford membership but may continue to be a member if have support from NFU Scotland in hard time. Unlikely to be able to come to meetings through the day or at all or make time to serve in elected role. May benefit from coming along to a meeting for change of scene – someone offer to pick up/drive.</p>

	<p>May wish to listen to podcast in tractor, communications can undertake while working as no time to read lengthy comms.</p>
Employee of a farming business	<p>Requires feeling valued as part of the agriculture sector and someone with a valued opinion as part of NFU Scotland.</p> <p>A talent pool for board/committees with a different perspective. Ensure employees can be on main board.</p> <p>Business Membership where an employee was an individual member is important. May be an employee benefit if that business is a member.</p> <p>Employer could be encouraged to develop employee by putting them forward for training programme or bringing them with them to meetings.</p> <p>Lunchtime meetings/webinars or evenings important if can't get paid time off work from employer.</p>
Family member who is a director of the family business but not considered "the named farmer"	<p>Essential they feel equally valued as a member and recognised.</p> <p>NFU England and Wales have training for staff in speaking to all member of the business/family equally, use of language, not focusing conversation on one person.</p> <p>Business membership with equal individual membership would assist this person feel valued and may encourage them to get involved.</p>
Family member who wanted to farm but no room for them in the business	<p>Through no fault of their own they are not the "farmer." They may be interested in policies supporting new entrants, employees in agriculture etc.</p> <p>Again, could be very valuable talent pool for board/committees.</p> <p>Business membership with individual members would allow those connected to farming business not but working there every day to receive communications, stand on committees etc.</p>

<p>Gay individual who finds it challenging to work in agriculture sector due to homophobia from some people</p>	<p>May be worried about attending meetings incase there a homophobic remarks/jokes.</p> <p>NFU Scotland could make a consistent effort to support initiatives such as Agrespect, take part in a Pride march to give a clear message to gay people who may assume NFU Scotland is not for them. Talks by openly gay speakers connected to agriculture or speeches at Conference – same way NFU England and Wales and Nuffield did with Nigel Owens.</p>
<p>Individual working in professional services in agriculture sector</p>	<p>Want to feel they are a valued part of the agriculture sector.</p> <p>Does constitution allow for professional/trade members to stand for the main board or other committees?</p> <p>Important events and meetings through the day are focused and short to be able to attend. Would be interested in speaking in webinars.</p>
<p>Individual who is not a member and has no past experience of being a member</p>	<p>Needs to have a positive experience interacting with NFU Scotland if going to join in the future. A positive taster of the organisation, benefits.</p> <p>Invited to come to certain meetings free or to come to an open meeting. Ability to join webinars and pay a charge and get that charge deducted from membership in that year. Or subscribe to podcast and have that charge deducted.</p> <p>Invited in advance on to stand at Highland Show, made to feel welcome by staff.</p>

## **FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS, ONLINE SURVEY & CALLS WITH RURAL ORGANISATIONS & INDIVIDUALS**

Feedback, ideas and views were gathered from a range of members and non-members of NFU Scotland from around Scotland.

This included

- An online survey with 231 responses
- 2 online meetings
- 9 in person focus group meetings held across every NFU Scotland region in Scotland
- Calls with 30 individuals one to one

All conversations were typed to record accurate quotes from those interviewed.

### **FINDINGS**

#### **1. Discriminatory practices**

There are a few examples, perhaps not widespread but still taking place, where practices undertaken could warrant a discrimination claim against NFU Scotland and could extensively affect the reputation of the Union. This could be even if someone went to the press or took a legal route.

#### **Suggestions to rectify and address**

1	Particular intervention in area where this has been happening including ongoing monitoring and development in that region
2	Sexual discrimination training and other training for board and management team
3	Ensure have robust systems to deal with any future claims. Inclusion on risk register
4	Diversity and inclusion training for everyone on an NFU Scotland committee or board and staff team. Training compulsory to Chair a board/committee before taking up post.
5	On-going Chair training, not just relying on historic training e.g. in Young Farmers

#### **2. Language**

The use of language, not only in meetings, but across all types of interaction and communication was deemed to be one of the three main discussion areas in the focus groups and open meetings and this was brought up at every meeting. Some of the language examples could be used officially as sexual harassment or other forms of harassment.

Other comments about language included that all forms of communication tools used by NFU Scotland should follow same level of language guidelines. WhatsApp for example was brought up several times as being used for gossip, derogatory comments about staff or politicians and this should not be permitted. It also was putting people off using it.

## Examples of language which were deemed to be inappropriate

1. Sexist jokes/comments
2. Homophobic jokes/comments
3. Racist jokes/comments
4. Pub chat – inappropriate for a board meeting but ok for a night out at 10pm on a Friday
5. Re-enforces stereotypes and alienates particular segments e.g. Encouraging men to come to the conference and saying “bring your wife, the shopping is great in Glasgow” or discussing in a meeting “what the housewife wants” which is outdated and doesn’t reflect much of society
6. Doesn’t make people feel welcome e.g. “What are you doing here?” asked when seeing someone in a meeting
7. Derogatory comments about a particular political party or someone within it, with the assumption that everyone in the room votes one particular way
8. Asking someone how many acres they have as an opener in conversation makes people starting out or with a small farm or no farm at all not feel welcome in a meeting/room
9. Gossip. NFU Scotland is a professional organisation and comments about gossip during official meetings or in WhatsApp
10. Some meetings there can be inappropriate comments, for example “Nicola Sturgeon, only good thing about her is her legs” – very offensive, and it wasn’t called out by the Chair.
11. The “farmer” is not a man. It can be a man or a woman or sometimes on a farm. People in leadership positions need to use correct terminology. Don’t use farmer’s wife.

## Suggestions to rectify and address

1	Diversity and inclusion training for everyone on an NFU Scotland committee or board and staff team. Training compulsory to Chair a board/committee before taking up post.
2	On-going Chair training, not just relying on historic training e.g. in Young Farmers
3	Chair dealing effectively with person who has said comment
4	Others in the room speaking up and calling out person who has made inappropriate comment

### 3. Meetings and other opportunities to hear people’s views

Respondents were asked to consider how they might engage with NFU Scotland if they were not currently involved, or they were not currently a member.

Examples of ways members can engage and come into contact with NFU Scotland are

- Joining a national webinar or local webinar online
- Attending a branch meeting in person or online

- Attending an open regional event where they take place
- Coming to the national conference or Autumn conference
- Visiting the stand at the Highland Show or other local shows

There was a lot of discussion about meetings, either in person or online and what was best practice with meetings that made someone want to take part (and therefore drive-up engagement and inclusion) or put someone off taking part (and therefore decreased inclusion).

	<b>Meeting/Engagement Point</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	Timings of meetings	<p>Meeting consistently at same time of day excludes people who consistently can't do that time i.e. always evening means people with childcare needs can't attend without having a babysitter.</p> <p>Suggested solution to vary times of meetings e.g. 4 branch meetings a year, one full day on a Sunday for family friendly meeting, one afternoon, two evenings.</p>
2	Length of meetings	<p>Poor practice described as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- meeting taking 6 hours when 2 would have delivered same output, quantity over quality</li> <li>- feeling by some have given up day or driven a long way so have to meet the whole day</li> <li>- meetings not starting on time</li> <li>- waiting on someone to arrive when everyone else makes effort to get there on time</li> <li>- taking too long over a meal and not getting started to business on time</li> <li>- meetings not being succinct and punchy</li> <li>- meetings not having a finish time</li> <li>- not having an agenda that has a time next to it, not planning out how long each section will take adequately</li> <li>- poor Chairing in general, not getting through the agenda, moving on</li> <li>- Chair in no rush to get home and only aware of their own needs, not others</li> </ul> <p>Length of meetings was discussed consistently as a key reason people did not attend NFUS meetings and therefore impacted engagement.</p> <p>Suggest solution, Chair training, code of conduct, people know in advance start time and finish time. Good practice was sticking to time then Chair says after main business is finished that please stay on for networking and further discussion, tea and coffee. This allows people who have only time to come for 90 minutes the chance to participate.</p>

		<p>For example, if you have to get a babysitter, are too busy to attend the whole night. The extension of the meeting with networking and further informal discussion helps people who are lonely and who want more interaction.</p> <p>Other good practice is meeting time say 6.30pm for sharp 7pm start – helps people get there, get to bathroom, get a drink and start on time.</p>
3	Type of meeting	<p>Different types of people were interested in different types of meeting. A variation in type in the calendar year was deemed good practice and took place in some regions so could appeal to a range of people.</p> <p>A number of people said would rather have less meetings but more quality speakers/topics.</p> <p>There was good practice in Ayrshire and in Forth and Clyde with a range of types of branch and regional meetings including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family friendly open day on a Sunday on a farm with different “policy” stations and networking (reinforces NFU Scotland is with you for life)</li> <li>- Panel meeting</li> <li>- Listening to one or two excellent speakers with a theme for the meeting</li> <li>- A meeting where you go round the table and check on how people are feeling, what is going on in their business which also benefits mental health</li> </ul> <p>In some other areas there was less variation in meetings and meetings were deemed to be for the purpose of hearing from every committee even if there was nothing new to report and scrutinising policy. This type of meeting was deemed to be “dull” by many who didn’t want to attend.</p> <p>Focus could still be on core NFU Scotland activity i.e. Policy, but “bring it to life.”</p> <p>Some examples of poor content – was highlighted women only meetings doing fashion shows or colour evenings was a complete turn off too many women and did a lot to show NFU Scotland negatively, that women couldn’t be interested in policy.</p>



		There is a vast regional variation in frequency of meetings and type of meetings across Scotland which impacts on engagement across the areas.
4	Lead in time	Participants said that many events and meetings had a very short lead in time which meant it could be difficult to plan to attend. Some negative comments about lead in time to national conference.
5	Chairing of meetings	Excellent chairing of meetings is essential. Trained and confident Chair. Warm welcome. Introducing people (depending on numbers) Warm welcome at the door. Knowing who is coming in advance. Using Eventbrite or other booking system to register. Might speak to people in advance who are nervous, who have additional needs, are coming for the first time. Preparation of agenda with timings in advance, asking people for items for agenda when agenda is created, allocating enough time to each agenda item, taking into account number of people in the room (2-hour meeting with 12 items and 20 people won't work). Ensuring quiet people get chance to speak but knowing room so people who are anxious in advance might not get put on spot. Controlling people who dominate. Saying things like "Thank you for your contribution, I am keen to hear from everyone here today, let's go to." "I acknowledge your point but we are currently talking about x and so we are not discussing y at this meeting." Finishing on time. Finding out in advance if there are AOB, managing expectations. What is the expected outcome of the meeting? What would a good outcome look like? Give Vice Chair a go at Chairing main meeting from time to time for their development, or a role.
6	Language at meetings – Chair role and other elected members	Covered previously but important to Stand up to bullies Call out inappropriate language including body language
7	Online meetings	Ensure National AGM and conference, Autumn conference and hustings are streamed online to make these key events accessible to members.  Feedback strategy needed for online meetings.

		<p>When is this a webinar? Could we have a list of dates once a month for a webinar nationally with great speakers?</p> <p>This is different to a normal in person meeting where someone can join with an “owl.” Feeling that the Chair needs to be trained to remember online meeting to include all participants. Request for consistency in use of owl and training how to use it.</p> <p>Use of owl important for people who might be unwell and can’t join or can’t get childcare.</p> <p>When should branches and regions use online meetings in the mix? Should there be a consistent strategy across the country as it varies considerably at present.</p>
8	Other meeting feedback	<p>What constitutes a branch meeting? Are there key things a branch meeting is meant to involve?</p> <p>Panel meeting is deemed a good way for quieter people to have their say if a good Chair can spot them or encourage them.</p> <p>Some areas you can attend other branches, or move to other regions, others you can only attend your branch. More engagement if you can travel to a meeting, you are interested in.</p> <p>Some regional managers we met with asked for more guidance on meeting frequencies, topics, sharing of good practice.</p> <p>Request for all events and meetings to be listed on the website.</p>
9	Competition for general meeting attendance	<p>A lot noted there are more meetings than ever, both within NFU Scotland and outwith. People have a choice what do to with their time. Which meeting to go to, or to spend time with family, friends or a hobby instead of attending a meeting. “Competition” from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FAS Meetings</li> <li>- Monitor Farm meeting</li> <li>- Discussion groups</li> <li>- Farmstrong walks</li> <li>- Other organisations</li> </ul> <p>Feeling that NFU Scotland meetings should be policy based and not stray into training, what is our USP?</p>

		Good practice in some areas with collaboration with other organisations e.g. In Orkney with discussion groups.
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Poor meeting experience including no agenda, “old people moaning for three hours”, no content, going over same ground, poor chairing.

Good practice consistently having interesting speakers including experts in policy not involved in NFU Scotland, other UK, international to attract new people.

One of the key feedback areas was around strategy for engaging with non-members. Some areas welcomed non-members to events and branch meetings to get them engaged and then join, others did not do any of this and didn’t want them to get a free benefit.

How else will non-members feel they want to be part of the network? Example from Highland Show where a member was chased off the stand as not recognised as a member.

Other organisations undertake a charge for joining an online webinar or attending a meeting for non-members and then re-imburse them if they join afterwards.

Other types of Diversity which people commented on during the study included those below in the table. The discussions around the county demonstrated that there is a wide range of diversity which needs to be recognised.

Diversity Type	Comment
Regional diversity	Needs of a particular region with their own characteristics being heard and met “Feel a bit forgotten as so far north”
Farm size	Views that NFU Scotland do not represent small farmers, new entrants with small land holdings that have not come from the farming sector
Entrepreneurial/progressive farmers	NFU Scotland focused on subsidies and supporting failing farmers rather than supporting people who want to grow.  Does NFU Scotland support organic/regenerative/diversified farmers and people not interested in subsidies?

#### 4. Communications

Effective communication channels from members and potential members to NFU Scotland and then from NFU Scotland to members and potential members was viewed to be critical and can play a key part in assisting a more diverse and inclusive organisation.

Different types of communication will appeal to different types of people and a variety should be used so that everyone is engaged.

Almost all people met in person did not read the weekly e-news, only a few said they found it useful. Many people said they never read it including staff members and board members.

Feedback on communications included

1. For time poor people lengthy communications needs to be short punchy communications with one or two key sentences with a link should you wish to read more.
2. A number of people said they were dyslexic including some who had held board and branch positions and never asked for specific help with this. They struggled to read board papers or other papers and asked for the content to be short or be able to be listened to.
3. A number of people requested a podcast – even a 10 minute, no longer of what NFU Scotland had been doing that week, or a podcast guide to a certain policy area.
4. There is inconsistency in communications between regions, branches and within policy teams so what format and how you are communicated to depends on the skills of the branch, policy team. What should be centralised and what should be left with policy and regions? Social media is very patchy between regions.
5. Many asking for content on other channels that younger people for example listen to e.g. Tik Tok, You Tube
6. Registrations for meetings and events to track engagement and CRM system to track engagement and to follow up with target members
7. Case studies of different types of people in membership – larger/smaller farms, areas, ages, sexes etc – to profile in communications including case studies of member benefits
8. Good practice in NFU England and Wales with a 3-minute weekly Vlog.
9. Good practice in Ireland with main Presidential team on Tik Tok.

## **COMPETITION FOR NFU SCOTLAND from other BOARDS**

Members should not be thought of having nothing else to do than to engage with NFU Scotland. Competition has increased significantly in recent years in terms of other organisations and the events they run, both in person and webinars, opportunities for development.

People have a choice of which organisation to get involved with.

NFU Scotland needs to make itself attractive to people and also attractive to people who want to be a volunteer for a short time and move on – not “signed up for life.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS WITH SUGGESTED PRIORITISATION AND ESTIMATED RESOURCES REQUIRED

Area	Cost	Priority
Leadership in Diversity and Inclusion	£0 Funds Time resource	1 - Immediate
Revised Communications Strategy	£0 Funds Time resource	2 – In next 6 months
Strategy for Language	£0 Funds Time resource  In place for National Conference in February	1 - Immediate
Leadership and Skills Development Programme for Board	£10,000 per annum Initial year £15,000 Set up online repeatable training resource. Also, elements of delivery in-person	3 – Set up within next 12 months
Board leadership, including a skills matrix exercise	Cost £1000 to set up, then can be repeated at £0 cost Use external HR resource? Good exercise to undertake in January and repeat after new board in place in February	1 – Immediate
Create new Diversity and Inclusion committee/working group	£minimal 1 or 2 days per week of existing staff member. Time resource	2 – Within next 6 months
Identify a dedicated staff & Board Champion	Time resource	1- Immediate
Talent Pipeline Development programme	£tbc Staff resource required to develop, monitor and support	2 – Within next 6 months
Transparency – Publish Job Descriptions	£0 Staff resource to deliver	1 - Immediate
Reform Family Membership	£0 Staff resource to deliver Some IT changes required?	2 – Within next 6 months
Engagement strategy	CRM System £10k installation £700 per month on-going 3 months of staff resource to manage implementation	3 – Within next 12 months

Events – Needs of Attendees	£0 Staff resource to deliver Use registration system, ask needs questions	1 – Immediate For AGM
Revise Code of Conduct	£0 Staff resource to deliver	2 – Within next 6 months
Specialist Diversity training	£2,000	3 – Within next 12 months

## ENDS

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