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cc Keith McWhinnie, Kirsten Beddows

6th December 2017

Dear Ian

Firstly we would like to welcome you in your new position as Chair of the Agriculture and Climate Change Strategy Group. It was heartening to hear you give your backing for the group at the meeting on 14th November, and appreciate you being open and listening to members on how the group can evolve and add value.

We gratefully received the letter, dated 24th October, from Mr Ewing, addressed to Pete Ritchie, stating his firm view of the need for 'positive involvement of farmers, crofter and land managers' to achieve a 'cultural shift' 'in agriculture through the work of the Climate Change Plan' towards 'low carbon farming practices'. He also encouraged our continual involvement in the ACCSG as the place to develop Climate Change Plan measures.

Scottish Environment LINK and Soil Association Scotland (also a member of LINK) value membership of the ACCSG and feel that it is important that this Group continues to meet as often as it currently does (3-4 times per year), as was raised in the recent meeting. In addition, we believe that its role could be enhanced and focussed in order to support the objective that Mr Ewing outlined in his letter. With the publication of the Climate Change Plan early next year, the ACCSG remit to scrutinise Government policy and challenge Government where appropriate, acting as a critical friend, will become more vital and valuable.

The draft Climate Change Plan outlined a broad package of measures which we welcomed. However, we were critical that many policies it contained are currently undeveloped. At least nine policies or development milestones state that Government will consult, explore with, or work with the Industry in developing the policies. With this development need already stated we believe that the ACCSG is the ideal forum to not only openly discuss these Plan measures but also to have oversight of the Industry consultation process and actively support Government in the policy development.

The ACCSG has a renewed opportunity and responsibility to use its expertise and wide representation to support your team in developing and delivering the package of policies and proposals within the Climate Change Plan. We propose that Government uses the ACCSG as an active working or advisory group, specifically tasked to oversee development of the package of policies, to make recommendations, to follow progress on policy development and support policy roll out to farmers. We think this will benefit policy design and adoption of measures.

As the draft Plan indicates, all farmers need to understand emissions from farming practice and move towards reducing these. All need to engage with a movement towards climate-friendly farming, good for the planet and their own businesses. Using the ACCSG forum as working group could result in more buy-in and engagement from Industry members with benefits for the implementation and roll out of the policies.

I would welcome your thoughts on this proposal to move the ACCSG forward and for it to have a useful role with developing the Climate Change Plan package of measures. I am happy to discuss this idea further with you, as appropriate.

Kind regards



Jim Densham
Senior Land Use Policy Officer
RSPB Scotland



Lyn White
Farming and Land Use Manager
Soil Association Scotland