

Changes needed for tenant farmers to hit green potential

NEW APPROACHES are needed to support farmers to plant trees and back Scotland on its net zero journey says the Tenant Farming Commissioner.



A new briefing paper issued by Scotland's Tenant Farming Commissioner, Bob McIntosh, has highlighted vital next steps in addressing issues that currently discourage tenant farmers from becoming involved in tree planting.

With the government's Agricultural Bill around the corner, the paper reflects discussions with landlords and tenants, working together with the Scottish Government to remove barriers to tree planting for tenant farmers.

Aside from the traditional benefits of tree planting on farms, such as provision of shelter, amenity, biodiversity and timber, there is now the opportunity for farmers to acquire carbon credits which can be sold or used to offset carbon greenhouse gas emissions from the farming business. However, tenant farmers are at a particular disadvantage due to uncertainty over the implications of current legislation governing compensation arrangements at the end of the tenancy.



Bob McIntosh, Tenant Farming Commissioner, who authored the paper, said: "Woodland expansion and tree planting initiatives need to be made more accessible and attractive to tenant farmers. They need to be able to access current and future support measures and be subject to compensation arrangements which are fair to both landlord and tenant."

The report also highlights the need for better guidance on the creation of tree planting agreements between landlords and tenants and greater clarity on the status and treatment within the legislation of agroforestry (mixing trees and agricultural production on the same piece of land).

Bob McIntosh continued: “The current circumstances mean that tenant farmers are left with no real tree planting incentives, something that, if changed, could have significant benefits in the push for net zero. With all parties engaged in shaping proposed changes, I am confident these issues can be addressed. In the meantime though, it is clear that both landlords and tenants will need to work together to enable tree planting on tenanted holdings.”



The [Scottish Land Commission](https://www.scottishlandcommission.gov.uk/) provides advice and recommendations for law and policy as well as leadership for change in culture and practice and works to create a Scotland where everybody can benefit from the ownership and use of the nation's land and buildings.