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26 Jul 2019



As the first day of the Border Union Show gets underway the Scottish Conservatives have published a plan to accelerate the growth of the agritourism sector in Scotland.

The plan will harness and develop the dynamism of rural entrepreneurs and, in many cases, their existing assets as well as capitalising on the current trend for eco-tourism.

There is a great opportunity to establish a world-class agritourism industry in Scotland, helping to revitalise rural economies and communities, particularly farmers wishing to diversify, according to the Scottish Conservatives.

Tourism is the backbone of the Scottish economy, however, income from this sector is not evenly distributed with almost three times the number of visitors going to Scottish cities rather than rural areas.

At the same time, Scottish farmers are increasingly struggling and face intense pressure to diversify in order to maximise their income.

The Scottish Conservative plan would:

- Establish a centralised rating and quality control scheme for agritourism businesses
- Encouragement of agritourism business models that promote good environmentalism and tackle climate change.
- Create a rural agritourism start-up fund.
- Develop a tier of agritourism qualifications from modern to graduate apprenticeships.
- Involve agritourism in the final stages of the rollout of R100 programme

Rachael Hamilton, Scottish Conservative shadow tourism secretary said:

“Agritourism forms part of the rural economy in many countries across the world.

“Scotland has massive potential to make a success story of agritourism, with so much to offer from excellent food and drink experiences to our dramatic and captivating landscapes.

“Helping farmers develop their farm business further and in turn boosting the rural economy of Scotland is vitally important.

“Our policy paper sets out key recommendations that the Scottish government and the sector should act upon in order to grow the sector.

“There is already fantastic agritourism businesses out there, let’s help many more to develop and flourish”.