

## CAP Reform - Opportunities for Crofting Communities?

Implementation of CAP reform is set for 1 January 2005. The reform lays down that support must be decoupled from production, and paid through a Single Payment Scheme. Within this there is scope for individual member states to implement options, such as partial recoupling and national envelopes. Compulsory modulation will be introduced (the movement of funds from direct support payments in Pillar 1 to rural development payments in Pillar 2). A discussion paper was circulated to all SCF members from HQ towards the end 2003, and consultation meetings were held across the crofting areas. The SCF response was submitted on January 6 this year.

Our response stated that the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the flexibility of implementation available under the reform package provides Scotland with one of the best opportunities for decades to develop a funding package which recognises and supports multi-functional agriculture. The main tenets were that this reform must provide:

- Thriving crofting agriculture
- Support for multi-functional agriculture - payment for non-market goods
- Support for high nature-value farming systems
- Support and encouragement for mixed farming and crofting systems

- Recognition of the rural development importance of small-scale agriculture
- Recognition of the important role of agriculture in remote and fragile areas
- Increased market orientation and quality production
- A support system which is capable of public scrutiny and deserving of public support

The SCF recognises that there is no long-term future for agriculture which does not provide goods that the market wants, but that support should address the market demand for agricultural commodities and the demand for environmentally sustainable agriculture, thriving rural communities and a well-managed countryside which can be enjoyed by all.

Direct support payments are currently very unevenly distributed, with the more intensive systems in receipt of the largest support payments, while the more extensive receive less, bearing no relation to the delivery of public goods. The SCF believes that the British public does not want to see and contribute to a countryside dominated by a handful of large, intensive, industrial units of agricultural production. Scottish agriculture currently

NFUS has stood out against CAP reform, an admission of how well larger farmers' have profited from the current system, which they would prefer to retain. In an article headed *Time for NFU to pull its head out of the sand* Fordey Maxwell, Rural Affairs Editor for The Scotsman, recently commented "It is farmers' good fortune that for half a century the dullness of the subject, in spite of the sums involved, has kept public interest to a minimum."

The NFUS response was the only one among 280 that did not accept that CAP is now about the countryside as a whole.

receives more than £700 million pounds a year, from direct and market support payments. Over 45% of Scotland's agricultural holdings are found in the Highlands and Islands. Agriculture provides nearly 5% of the area's GDP and supports 11000 FTEs. Crofting is essential to maintaining some of the most valued managed and semi-natural habitats in Europe, with crofting areas supporting a large proportion of sites designated as SSSI, SACs and SPAs. These types of public goods are currently delivered to the public for only

£24/Ha on average in Shetland, an average of £15/Hectare in the Highlands and £9/Hectare on average in the Western Isles.

**Decoupling** brings the potential to eliminate much of the regulatory and administrative burden of the current subsidy regime and removes the imperative to maximise gains from a subsidy regime, through support for the enhancement of sustainable farming systems. Crofting agriculture produces extensively-reared, quality livestock, which, regional disadvantages aside, has a good future in the market.

Analysis has shown that decoupling and market rationalisation could have severe impacts in the Highlands and Islands. A fully decoupled system by itself could lead to losses of livestock production of up to 30%. Loss of essential services such as vets, hauliers, marts and merchants would follow. Decoupling must be combined with mechanisms to properly recognise the effects of rurality, sparsity, climatic, land quality and economic disadvantages.

**Recoupling.** Although economic analysis has suggested that decoupling may lead to drift of

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## Report from the Chair

**2004! It hardly seems like yesterday since I wrote 1950 on my school jotter.**

Hasn't crofting changed since then? Some of you will remember jobs like taking in the water, taking in the peats, milking the cows, feeding the calves, making the butter and cheese, making the "marags". Cleaning the byre, putting dung and seaweed on the land using horse and cart transport, ploughing, planting seed by hand, planting potatoes, lifting stones off the ploughed field, harrowing. Harvest time was my own favourite except when there were thistles in the corn. So much activity but so many able-bodied people around, including the children. Now it is mechanical but not any easier. Less people and more need for money to pay phones, fuel, electricity, water charges, machinery maintenance - and I could go on.

Of course the most disliked and dreaded job is the paperwork. Rules, regulations, deadlines, tags, passports, meetings. How nice it would be to be able to relax in the evening. We have to accept changes but let's tell the young ones what it was like and do get them more involved.

"Will the CAP put the tin hat on it?" John McMorran came up with this catchphrase! I think since last October Scottish Crofting Foundation Board members, staff, office bearers etc have been so engrossed with so many important issues that they often felt they were wearing a tin hat - and a heavy one at that!

6 January 2004 saw the end of the CAP consultation period. We held many meetings where we tried to explain the workings of the CAP to all our members and non-members. We had

numerous extremely useful telephone working group meetings. Becky Shaw, our Environment Officer made a wonderful job of putting all our thoughts and decisions together and I hope and believe that our final response was wise. The Uist and Barra Area designed a response to persuade the policy-makers to recognise the vital significance of traditional crofting. CAP reform is of crucial importance, and we welcomed it in principle as one of the best opportunities in decades to develop a funding package to provide support for 'multi-functional' agriculture. However, the success of the reformed package depends on ensuring support for environmentally important agricultural systems, small units and producers in remote or upland areas.

The reform aims to break the link between production and support payment and to start paying for the delivery of rural development initiatives of public good. Currently every hectare in Fife receives an average of £181/Ha of direct support, while every hectare in the Highlands only receives £15/Ha. Decoupling of support payments could reduce our bureaucratic burden, encouraging greater market orientation and leading to more environmentally sustainable agriculture. Our response calls for use to be made of national envelopes. It also highlights many concerns with payments being made on a purely historic basis and advocates a move over time towards a more area-based system.

The seriousness of the issue of CAP reform was further emphasised by the joint response from the SCF,



Ena with "Mairi", champion at the South Uist Cattle Show.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Western Isles Council, Shetland Islands Council and the Crofters Commission. This consensus demonstrated the wide support from all these bodies for the over-riding principles of recognising and supporting agriculture's vital input to the economy and environment of the Highlands and Islands, and in sustaining populations in remote communities.

31st December was another response deadline. Sadly, the Livestock Improvement Scheme was changed without any consultations and we have strongly disagreed with the actions taken. The Commission blame their auditors and SEERAD - I don't know what has happened to the Commission's own "power". I am very unhappy and concerned about all the proposed changes and would advise all townships to continue questioning the Commission.

The Foundation response on the review of CBGLS emphasised the importance of retaining and enhancing this vital scheme. The overall budget is not being increased,

but modified. We advocated that loan and grant rates be increased to take account of the 60% rise in construction costs since CBGLS was last raised in 1990. Geographical targeting would compensate for higher construction costs in the remotest areas. Means testing we rejected, but extending eligibility to all crofters -

tenants and owner-occupiers was agreed. The inclusion of water and access road grants into the main scheme was accepted, if the two budgets were combined. Some administrative changes were approved, as was delivery of the scheme from local SEERAD offices.

The Crofting Development Programme proposes to combine CCAGS, LIS and elements of CES and CCDS into a one-stop-shop for crofters and crofting communities. Assistance would be available for marketing and processing croft produce, small business development, public access, conservation and community projects. Availability of land for housing, community use and croft reorganisation would be facilitated, as would training and education in land use and community development. Livestock improvement and development are also to be encouraged. The CDP would support croft entrants and

outgoers and preparation of community plans. Access to the scheme for individuals and groups would be on the basis of a five-year plan. Individual applications should contain at least two of these elements, and a community plan at least three.

One of the reasons for the new scheme is the current under-utilisation of CCAGS; another is the need for support for a wider range of activity. The Foundation believes under-utilisation reflects the depressed agricultural economy and lack of crofter capital to invest. If CCAGS rates were raised, uptake of the scheme would increase proportionally.

Despite our best efforts, we didn't get what we wanted in LFASS for 2004, although a slight rise in the Category A payment and a lower minimum stocking density will help some of you. A full report on the new rates follows inside.

I attended the Goose National Review group meeting in Edinburgh on 12th

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## Croft innovation mentoring pilot scheme gets Carnegie funding

**We have recently been awarded £10,000 by the Carnegie UK Trust for a new scheme which encourages crofters to look at alternatives for income generation from the croft.**

Under the project, crofters who have developed new business initiatives will be encouraged to share their experience with others through a series of training events including open days and visits. Crofters have already initiated a wide variety of schemes to diversify from their traditional practices including the keeping of alternative livestock, vegetable production, growing soft fruits and even electricity generation from wind turbines. There are many interesting enterprises being developed and crofters are the best mentors for other crofters, sharing their ideas and enthusiasm.

**If you are doing something different and would be happy to share your experience, please let us know.**

The Carnegie UK Trust, set up in 1913 by Andrew Carnegie the Scottish philanthropist, recently announced a new £4 million initiative to promote community development in villages and rural areas through a new Carnegie Rural Development Commission. This will map current policies and strategies throughout the UK and will identify ways in which they could become more responsive to community needs. It will reinforce this by funding innovative grass roots projects and encouraging the sharing of effective solutions between communities.

# SCF responds to Crofting Development Programme

As reported in the last issue of *The Crofter*, in September the Crofters Commission issued a consultation document on a proposal to create a one-stop-shop scheme for crofting support, encompassing CCAGS, LIS, CES and CCDS. The Foundation circulated all members with details of the proposals, and our response has been developed through wide discussion and consultation with SCF members. Discussion and consensus was developed at Branch and Area meetings, and a response recommended by the full Board and Area Committee was circulated to Branches for final comment. A summary of the response follows.

- The Scottish Crofting Foundation believes that the appropriate use and development of the Commission's unique regulatory role will enhance the crofting system and ensure it continues to make an important contribution to the sustainable rural development of the crofting area
- Crofters, their families, enterprises and communities are mainstream clients of SEERAD, the Enterprise Network, SNH and

other bodies, and the Foundation believes that the proposed delivery of all support to crofting through a single scheme with a small budget is not beneficial and risks marginalising crofting, crofters and their families.

- The SCF does not believe that justification for the major changes suggested to important grant schemes has been made and advocates that the development of a Crofting Development Programme should focus on the niche occupied by CCAGS and the Livestock Improvement Scheme, retaining the strengths of these effective schemes, but tweaking both mechanisms to ensure that they stimulate land-based activity on croft land, are state-aid compliant, effective and fully utilised across the crofting area.
- The Foundation believes that the support available through the Livestock Improvement Scheme is of fundamental importance to retaining livestock in the crofting areas - important for environmental, social and economic reasons - and urges the Commission to modify and retain the central features of this scheme in the CDP. We believe that the

position vis-à-vis state aid should be thoroughly examined.

- Foundation members are concerned about the need for and nature of any development plan, which it is felt would be likely to discourage use of the scheme. We advocate that no development plan should be required.
- We support the view that the scheme should be open to owner-occupiers without being subject to means-testing, the scheme being aimed at croft support. We suggest that the 'like-economic-status' test should remain in place for those on non-croft land seeking to access the scheme.
- We suggest that by constraining the CDP to the role fulfilled by CCAGS and the LIS with modifications, but increasing grant availability to townships and increasing standard costs to realistic levels, by allowing free access to the scheme by all owner-occupiers and promoting the scheme to those 38% of crofters who are currently unaware of it, the issue of underspend of CCAGS funding will disappear. The budget for LIS should clearly be included in the overall CDP pot.

Members' consensus was that the existing CCAGS and LIS were well suited to their needs, easily accessible and specifically targeted. They were reluctant to see too much emphasis placed on wider community access to the benefits of these schemes, believing the scheme's strengths to be more in the individual than the group. Assistance to community groups is already available through other measures, and duplication should be avoided. Access for community groups should be based on crofting land use.

The organisation was concerned that any new scheme be set in the wider context of CAP reform, Rural Development measures and the potential introduction of Land Management Contracts. The Foundation would have expected prior discussions with the Commission on the nature of the proposed changes, and strongly advocates public availability of all responses. The SCF looks forward to working closely with the Crofters Commission in the further detailed development of the CDP.

You can see the full response on [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org)

## Donald Linton joins the SCF Board at the AGM

Donald has been Argyll Area President of the SCU since the early days, and set up the Argyll Mainland Branch. He combines running his croft in Glencruitten near Oban with a caravan site, and runs 60 swaledale ewes and gimmers on the 39-acre holding. Formerly Donald was in the haulage business, and his experience with marts and transport led to very useful practical input on animal transport issues.

Well known throughout the Argyll area and beyond, Donald brought his enthusiasm and determination to the SCU from the outset, in

an area formerly dominated by the NFU. Never a man to say "no" to, many new members were encouraged to support the SCU. During a visit to SCU HQ in Broadford, Donald made a promise to Jim Hunter and Fiona Mandeville that his new Argyll Mainland Branch would have 100 members within a short period of time. This personal challenge to himself was met in record time, and beaten.

Donald's experience and determination will be a welcome addition to the SCF Board.

## Thanks to our Associate Members

The Foundation relies on support not only from individual members, but also from a range of organisations and companies committed to crofting. We would like to take this opportunity to thank these Associate Members for their continuing support:

The Highland Fund  
West Highland Housing Association Ltd, Oban  
Comunn na Gaidhlig, Inverness  
Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Isle of Skye RSPB  
John Muir Trust  
Shetlands Citizens Advice Bureau  
West Side Agricultural Society, Isle of Lewis  
Uig Community Council, Isle of Lewis  
Lochcarron Community Council  
Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
National Trust for Scotland  
Carnegie UK Trust  
Borve Lodge Estates, Isle of Lewis  
Nevis Estates Ltd, Mallaig  
Harris Tweed Authority  
Lewis Crofters Ltd  
West Highland Publishing Company, Isle of Skye  
Anderson MacArthur & Co, Stornoway  
Stevenson Kennedy & Co, Oban  
Kinloch Damph Ltd, Strathcarron  
Anderson Shaw and Gilbert, Inverness  
Highland Council  
Reay Forest Estate  
Argyll Hotel, Isle of Iona  
SNH  
NFU Mutual

## Flying cows!

*Ena MacNeil's granddaughter finds a new use for cattle passports.*

Every time my son Angus and his wife Michelle and their children go to the mainland they are either delivering cattle or visiting a farm producing cattle. To get away from it all, last Christmas they booked a holiday in Portugal. The children were all excited, especially when the passports they had heard so much about arrived in November.

The date for applying for suckler cow premium and LFAS was also near and Angus was getting ready all the cow and heifer passports required to be checked at the local SEERAD office in Benbecula. Sarah, at seven years the youngest daughter, was watching her dad. "What are you doing, Dad?" "I'm checking all the cow passports," he answered. He had over 100 in his hands.

Sarah was quiet for a minute and then piped up "Dad, are we taking all the cows with us?" I guess Sarah thought the cows had passports just to go abroad! After school that evening I asked her "Sarah, did you think all the cows would be going with you to Portugal?" "Yes, Granny, but I would rather take the horses!"

I never thought cattle passports could provide such a good laugh. Maybe Sarah will lead the way in opening the live export market of breeding cattle to Europe.



## CROFTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (CCDS)

### FINAL PHASE 2004 - 2006

The CCDS provides incentive payments to encourage community-based management of diverse projects.

Community groups in crofting areas with ideas for projects should contact the scheme staff for more information:

Arthur Macdonald or Mark Brennan  
CCDS, 18 Upper Leachkin  
Inverness IV3 8PN  
Tel / Fax 01463 709821  
Mobiles 07760 168750 / 723  
Email: [ccds@crofting.co.uk](mailto:ccds@crofting.co.uk)

Lewis & Harris: John Smith, Tel: 01851-707324  
Uists & Barra: Joan Ferguson, Tel: 01876-580327

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# LACK OF REAL COMMITMENT TO REMOTE AND DISADVANTAGED AREAS

The pre-Christmas Brussels agreement over the shape of the Less Favoured Area Support Scheme for 2004 has a sting in the tail. For while the agreement moves towards a more logical position by reducing support to those on the best land, the freed-up money appears to have been lost from the scheme, rather than being used to properly recognise those working the poorest land in the most peripheral areas.

The agreement is the result of negotiations in Europe following the submission of revised proposals by the Scottish Executive in September. However, according to SCF Vice-Chair Ewen MacKinnon, for those on the most disadvantaged land in the most remote areas the agreement represents no change from the proposals that went forward in September. Those proposals, although recognised as a small step in the right direction, could not be accepted by the SCF, as they did not represent a significant improvement in favour of the most disadvantaged areas.

Ewen MacKinnon explains "The Minister's welcome words about the vital importance of supporting producers in our more remote and disadvantaged areas ring hollow. LFASS is the very mechanism designed to compensate for disadvantage and to ensure continued agricultural land use in remote and peripheral areas. This was his opportunity to put his words into action. He has failed - as he has continually failed over the last 3 year - to grasp that opportunity, and we are disappointed. It seems apparent that the opportunity to re-direct support, scaled back from the most intensive producers towards the most disadvantaged has been overlooked.

"As it stood and indeed as it now remains, the balance of the scheme is in favour of producers on the better ground, who are able to stock at higher densities. This fails to recognise the

importance and indeed the fragility of extensive agriculture in remote areas, which sustains unique high nature value farming systems and supports rural communities. While the agreement reached in Brussels reflects our view that there is little justification for high levels of LFA payment to a unit capable of carrying two cows to the hectare - while we in the north and west talk of a sustainable carrying capacity of many hectares to the cow - we are bitterly disappointed that the Executive appear to have failed to use this opportunity to ensure that the LFASS actually reflects the disadvantage faced by producers in remote and fragile areas. Agriculture in the Highlands and Islands delivers significant public benefit far more cheaply than the country deserves. We are not prepared to stand aside and watch it disappear."

The LFASS Industry Stakeholder Working Group met on a regular basis, in confidential discussions in the earlier part of the year, with the SCF seeking significant modifications to the scheme, which actually currently sees the bulk of the funding go to the least disadvantaged areas. The proposals that went forward to Europe in September did not have SCF backing, as the proposed change amounted to little improvement for the most disadvantaged areas.

At that time the proposal was to pay the revised rates of £39, £45 and £47 per adjusted Hectare, which meant that the budget would balance.

The scale-back of funding from the most intensive producers subsequently agreed following European negotiations should mean a significant reduction in expenditure. However, in spite of this, the payment rates remain unchanged from the September proposal. There is no indication of where this money has gone.

The calculation per adjusted Hectare is important to a thorough understanding of the scheme. Hectares are adjusted by reference

to stocking density, with those most lightly stocking having their area reduced by the highest factor, while those with the higher stocking densities have their area reduced the least for the purposes of defining adjusted Hectares on which payment is received.

Category	Stocking density	Weighting
A	Less than 0.2 LU/Ha*	1/6
B	Between 0.2 - 0.4 LU/HA	1/3
C	Between 0.4 - 0.6 LU/Ha	2/3
D	Greater than or equal to 0.6 LU/Ha	4/5

(\*1 Livestock Unit/ Hectare is equivalent to one cow/Hectare)

Under the new agreement with the European Commission, those in category D will now have payments scaled back if the stocking density is between 1.4 LU/Ha and 2 LU/Ha. Currently those at the other end of the scale, with stocking densities below 0.12 LU/Ha are scaled back. The rates of payment are per adjusted Hectare.

Example: a unit in the very fragile area with a stocking density which puts them in category A, would receive £47 x 1/6 = £7.83 per actual Hectare

Example: a unit in standard area with a stocking density that puts them in category D would receive £33.50 x 4/5 = £26.80 per actual Hectare.

The complete version of the SCF's response will be found on [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org)

## Review of the Crofters Etc Building Grants & Loan Scheme (CBGLS)

An upgrade of CBGLS is long overdue, with rates of assistance last increased in 1990. Inflation has led to a 60% erosion in the value of support. The review does not propose to raise the overall CBGLS budget, but suggests ways of retargeting it more effectively to ensure more appropriate use and better uptake.

The SCF response was based on wide consultation with crofters and crofting community members via individual mailing and through the SCF branch and area structure's open meetings, and reflects the majority view.

The first issue was the definite continuing need for a special housing scheme that is available exclusively to crofters. Successive reports and studies have concluded that CBGLS has been a significant factor in retaining population in the Highlands and Islands, and that the scheme achieves high leverage compared to other funding mechanisms for housing. Funding allocated to the scheme supports local communities and guards against absentee or second home ownership. The scheme should therefore be continued with an appropriate increase to the funding level to restore the original benefit.

Existing rates (in brackets) and the proposed "modest increase" are shown below.

	Grant	Loan	Total		Grant	Loan	Total
New Housing	£14,375 (11,500)	£21,875 (17,500)	£36,250 (29,000)	Improvements	£2,500 (2,000)	£13,125 (10,500)	£15,625 (12,500)

Ending new loans and channelling the £1.2 million saved into grants was not seen as advisable, since decrofting to borrow the outstanding beneficiary contribution would still be necessary. Government loans also assist crofters with lower incomes or irregular employment where a commercial lender may be less willing to take the risk.

The answer therefore appears to be to increase the grant to a level consistent with the inflationary rise over the past 13 years, and fund the beneficiary contribution via a top up guarantee. The loan could come from government (but would have to channel receipts back into the scheme to make it viable), or the government could act as guarantor against private mortgages so that de-crofting is not necessary. The latter seems more practical.

The principle of geographic targeting to enable more grant to be paid in the more remote and fragile areas was welcomed, as a single rate does not take account of the tendency of these areas to

have the lowest incomes coupled with building costs which are significantly higher than more accessible areas.

The SCF advocated that house improvement assistance be increased to the same rates as new housing on the basis that to do otherwise could lead to enforced decrofting to secure finance for improvements. Ensuring funding is available to improve and extend existing houses preserves in-by crofting land from further development by avoiding the creation of new house sites. Increased home improvement grants would greatly assist older crofters who may be less willing to move out of their family homes and younger crofters whose homes do not meet current family needs.

The incorporation of the Water and Roads Grant within CBGLS was accepted as long as its separate budget was added to the CBGLS purse. The answer was qualified with the provision that the often high cost - and scheme provision - for water and roads is identifiable. It is essential that they are recognised with their own funding and that the ceiling is increased.

The option to extend eligibility of CBGLS to all owner-occupiers of crofts was approved, on the basis that since the scheme is directed towards croft housing it is irrelevant whether the crofter is a tenant or owner occupier, as the land is still under croft legislation. What is important is that the house remains part of the croft and that the scheme is not used to improve houses which are then sold off the croft.

On means testing, whilst there is general agreement on the principle of targeting the funding to the most needy, it was felt that the grant is aimed at the croft development not the person - ie this is a croft housing development scheme not a social housing scheme. It was also felt that the social stigma of means testing could discourage lower-income families from applying. Means testing would also increase the administrative costs of the scheme.

Payment of fewer instalments was agreed, since modern houses are generally built more quickly than in the past. However, changing grant conditions was not welcomed. The need for having a realistic, fixed interest rate was also expressed.

The SCF response concluded by approving the relocation of CBGLS administration to local offices of SEERAD, combining delivery of administration with technical function.

Copies of the response are available on the SCF website [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org), or directly from HQ.

## Consultations continue

It seems as though hardly a week goes by these days without a deadline for responses to consultations. As reported elsewhere in The Crofter, the end of the year saw the cut-off date for input into CAP reform, CBGLS and CDP.

Mid February is the final date for the Scottish Futures Landscape consultation. The Forestry Commission consultation closes on 27 February and director John McMorran will be taking the lead with this and the working group for forestry & renewables.

The Foundation will then be conveying the crofting point of view on the Animal Feed Consultation on 2 March, followed by the Crofting Community Right to Buy on 9 March.

Looking further ahead, HQ will be working on the Farm Waste Consultation, with a response due by 19 April and for SSP Planning for Rural

Development due on April 21.

Compiling a response to any consultation necessitates obtaining members' views via direct mailings, meetings, discussions with branch and area representatives, telephone conferences, email discussion groups, and so on. This all takes time, and is made most relevant and effective if as many members as possible participate and convey their concerns on the issue under consideration.

The SCF is uniquely able to put forward the views of crofters right across the Highlands and Islands in a democratic and consultative fashion. All this work to emphasise the need for appropriate measures for the crofting community benefits non-members as well as members. If you know people who are not yet supporting the work we do for them, please encourage them to join the Foundation and further strengthen our organisation.

## John Laing joins the Board

John Laing from Skye takes up his position on the SCF board after the Foundation's AGM.

John joined the SCU on its inception in 1986 and has been an active member of the Durinish & Bracadale Branch since. He was elected Chairman some two years ago. He is also Area Chairman for Skye & Lochalsh. As well as his role for SCF, he is Highland Councillor representing West Skye. Born and brought up in Perthshire, John came to Skye in 1968. He keeps 160 ewes on his croft at Harlosh near Dunvegan.

"Crofting needs strong representation with all the changes that are taking place," he commented. "Everyone should be aware of the review of the CAP and all the changes that it will bring. We must keep our eye on the ball over the next few months as details of the new regime are released and make sure that

we get the very best result for crofting and crofters. Things will not continue as they have done in the past and there will be new opportunities for crofters and townships to grasp.

"We must be broadminded and work with the other agencies in the Highlands and Islands to make sure that we maximise the returns to the crofting area so that we can help bring new prosperity, opportunities and better financial returns into crofting. We must encourage more young people to take up the crofting way of life. The Foundation is well placed to take part in the debate to find new and innovative ways to release more ground for affordable homes for our young people, for without the young folk the way of life we enjoy is finished.

"I am however optimistic and I am sure the SCF will progress and continue to bring additional benefits to its members."

## AGMs - a reminder

SCF branches and areas are reminded that their AGMs must be held before the Foundation's AGM, which will take place on March 19 in Harris. Please let HQ know the date and venue of your AGM.

## Memberships

Subscriptions for 2004 are well paid up, but 20% of memberships are still due. Please do all you can to chase these unpaid members up. It is vital that we receive all subscriptions in good time, to help us plan out budgets to undertake all the work members rightly expect of us.



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## Access code - a balanced outcome in terms of responsibilities?

Scotland's new statutory right of access to land and water recently came one stage closer to becoming law when SNH presented a proposed Scottish Outdoor Access Code to Allan Wilson, Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development. The proposed Code, which includes detailed revisions after a public consultation, sets out guidance on responsibilities for both the public and land managers as part of the new Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The Code must be approved by Parliament before the new rights of public access come into effect.

The proposed Code reflects changes suggested by 1362 responses to SNH's consultation on the draft Code. Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gives everyone statutory access rights to most land and inland water. The Code emphasises that people only have these rights if they exercise them responsibly by respecting privacy, safety and livelihoods and the environment. Equally, land managers have to manage their land and water responsibly in relation to access rights.

Detailed guidance is provided on the responsibilities of those exercising access rights and of those managing land and water. The Code is based on three key principles and these apply equally to the public and to land managers.

- Respect the interests of other people.
- Care for the environment
- Take responsibility for your own actions.

The Code is intended to be a reference point for determining whether a person has acted responsibly and is not an authoritative statement of the law, which only the courts can provide. The more obvious statutory offences relating to access include poaching, vandalism, being responsible for a dog worrying livestock, dropping litter, polluting water, and disturbing wild birds, animals and plants. There are also common law offences such as breach of the peace.

The Scottish Crofting Foundation said that crofters, while welcoming those taking responsible access to the area, feel that the Code does not provide a balanced outcome in terms of responsibilities. Although the Code tries to address the rights and responsibilities of both users and land managers, the balance overall seems to be towards giving rights to the user and responsibilities to land managers, with insufficient safeguards for their rights.

While it may be the case that a crofter would have no problem with allowing access rights on the very limited in-bye area, we suggested that the automatic right of access over crofting in-bye should be removed and the in-bye should be

treated in the Code in a similar way to a farmyard. In an enclosed space such as this, the risk of dogs upsetting livestock, particularly cattle, increases the danger for both the dog and its owner. Dogs, even on leads, should not be taken into fields with livestock. Similarly on many common grazings, the right of the shareholders to take dogs on to the hill is regulated by the common grazings committee, for very good reasons. We do not think it helpful or indeed fair, if the public have greater freedoms than the shareholders.

Access users should respect requests to avoid certain areas. There may be land management activities of an ongoing nature occurring in a particular place and these may not be obvious to the casual observer; for example an area may be being managed for ground-nesting birds. Crofters are also concerned about wild camping on enclosed land and group access, which can present increased difficulties for the land manager and should be discussed in advance.

The Foundation suggested there should be a greater recognition that access does not necessarily have priority over natural and cultural heritage objectives

While on one hand the land manager appears responsible for warning people of dangers of access to land and water, local authorities are given powers to over-rule these warnings and indeed remove them, whilst penalising the land manager. The cards appear to be very firmly in the hand of the user.

To support land managers to encourage responsible access the provision of paths, stiles and information is likely to be required. Local authorities must have sufficient funding to pay for this.

The guidance is not sensible or realistic on sources of help and local information and would not provide an immediate remedy if a problem arose. There is no practicable recourse for a land manager if experiencing an access problem, in that the recommendation is to contact the 'local authority'. There should be a named responsible officer available to advise land managers on access issues and to promptly take forward any grievances.

The Foundation advises all crofters to have public liability insurance. Details of the NFU Mutual's crofters insurance policy, developed specially for SCF members, can be obtained from your local agent - contacts on page 11.

[www.access-scotland.com](http://www.access-scotland.com) provides guidance and information on the Code, and the full SCF response can be found on our website [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org). Members can also request a copy from HQ.

## Are you liable?

Stewart Murdoch, Sales Manager for the NFU Mutual in Aberdeen Aberdeen comments on the need for public liability insurance in the light of the Access Code.

A few months ago I provided an article for the Crofter on the insurance position following the advent of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Since then my colleagues and I from the NFU Mutual have been asked many questions on this subject and as a result I feel it would be useful to restate the position.

Basically any crofter can not afford not to cover themselves for public liability insurance risks. Public liability insurance provides cover for the policyholder's legal liability for claims from members of the public arising from their business. Incidents can involve livestock, fences and equipment, buildings or a missing drain



cover. If an incident occurs and the crofter is legally liable, a successful claim could follow. There are many different scenarios that could give rise to a claim but all follow the same basic principles explained above regarding liability.

To protect yourself is very simple. If you have not already done so take out public liability cover. Cover will protect the crofter up to £5,000,000 or higher if requested.

NFU Mutual provides wide liability cover especially enhanced for Crofting Foundation Members at variable cost. This cover is contained within the Crofter Insurance Package. Full details available from Neil MacLean on 01478-611936 or Angus Graham on 01851-703935.



Keen interest in Shiant Isles lambs.

## Long Island Auction Mart rises from the ashes of its predecessor

SCF Director Neil MacLeod describes the successful efforts of Lewis and Harris crofters to move on from the closure of their auction mart.

Crofters just recovering from the rigours of foot and mouth restrictions were dealt another blow with the closure of the local abattoir and mart in Stornoway. Although there were other avenues to sell stock, the auction system has always been the benchmark. The auction mart gives people an alternative.

Like the proverbial phoenix, members of the Lewis & Harris Sheep Producers Association and the Lewis & Harris Cattle Producers Group established a company, Long Island Crofters Trust, with seven directors elected by the management committee of the respective groups. After receiving seed-corn funding to prepare a business plan, they undertook visits to the marts in Lochaber, Dingwall and North and South Uist and made contact with Oban, Lerwick & Thainstone. The visits were used as a sounding board to develop our vision of a mart owned and run by the community. We secured a seasonal lease from the liquidator of the previous operators, following the purchase of the facility by Comhairle Nan Eileanan Siar. We have been able to secure a ten-year lease.

Having now completed our second year of running the mart partnership with Dingwall and Highland Marts we can reflect on what has been a steep learning curve.

From August to December sheep sales are held, selling around one third of the island lamb and cast ewe output. In addition to regular Store Fat sales, the mart is the only venue in Lewis & Harris where breeding sheep and cattle can be traded.

The main cattle sale held in October and the annual ram sales attracted large crowds in 2002 and 2003 and saw record entries of good quality animals. Mainland cattle buyers commented on the improvement in quality of store calves produced on the island in recent years.

With a combined machinery and livestock sale held in May likely to be an annual fixture, the mart is also providing other services. As the only local licensed centre it acts as the distribution centre for the Crofters' Commission Ram

Purchase Scheme and collection centre for OTMS cattle. The venue has also been used for hosting agricultural training courses, a sheep event (which was highly successful) and an equine safety training and assessment day.

The dynamic which drove the seven directors to the present day situation when we are advertising for a Development Officer (partly funded by Action 35 and our own resources) is testimony to their commitment and enthusiasm.

Running a mart is dependant on people. Our remit is to take bookings, advise on movement clerking, penning of stock, helping with grading, sorting and taking animals to the sale ring, when they then become Dingwall Mart's responsibility. Washing down & cleaning is very demanding and we need more people - particularly the day following a sale, although the response on sale day is very encouraging.

With a Development Officer in place, that person will be able to articulate our thoughts and aspirations.

The facility needs to be used more widely by the community to make it a vibrant, financially sound force for the community. In an ideal world we would like to see an agricultural merchant, vet, advisory services and produce markets on what is a spacious and accessible site with tremendous facilities; and an awareness that we are all custodians for future generations of mart users.

We have benefited from assistance from CNES, WIE, local businesses and particularly the board of management of Lewis Crofters Ltd.

The directors would be receptive to any advice or help in the forthcoming year. Our ultimate goal would be to be in a position to purchase the facility, which would alleviate the restriction which we operate under at present.

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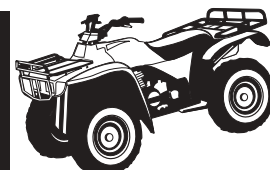
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# This valuable and beneficial way of life may become extinct altogether

Colin MacDonald, Glenelg, outlines his concerns on the obstacles facing young local entrants to crofting

**The future of crofting is a much-discussed topic. Looking at the crofting way of life and trying to work out the best way forward is never easy. Crofting's regulating bodies have an unenviable task as they try to bring about developments and policies which will meet the ever-changing demands and needs of crofters and crofting. You really cannot please all of the people all of the time, and when it comes to regulation pleasing just some of the people some of the time is difficult enough.**

Having said that, there are some areas of regulation that must be addressed, as there are some real concerns within the crofting sector that crofting is in danger. Some even believe that without a change in regulation this valuable and beneficial way of life will become extinct altogether. However, we can no longer expect the bodies governing crofting to come up with all the answers to our problems. Crofters must look at themselves and realise that it is long past time that we began a process of self regulation or we are in great danger of destroying the crofting way of life that we should be passing on to the next generation.

I want to look at what we as individuals can do about the problems which are threatening to stifle and stagnate crofting and which have moved acquisition of a croft far beyond the means of the people that crofting was set up to support. The key issues are: price and valuation of croft assignments, use of productive croft land for housing and the right to buy croft land.

## Some statistics

There are 17,683 crofts on the Commission's Register. 79% are tenanted, and 21% owned. 1,755 tenants/owners are shown as absentees. The Western Isles has the highest number of absentees at 43% while Skye, Ross-shire, Argyll and South and West Inverness area have 27%. East and West Mainland area has 25%. Shetland and Orkney have only 5% absentees.

Since the launch of the Commission's absentee initiative 911 cases have been resolved with 428 crofts being transferred to new entrants; 221 to existing crofters, and 262 absentee crofters returned to live on or neat their crofts.

In 2003 the Commission recorded 247 family assignments and agreed to 146 non-family assignments. 335 of these assignments were to people who did not already have a tenancy. 88 reletting applications were received, and 80 were agreed. 46 of these were to new crofters. 22 crofts were subdivided.

During 2002-03 115 subletting applications were received, and 100 of these were agreed. 39 of the applications were by absentees.

The same period saw 208 successions, 182 of them to people who did not already have a tenancy.

Since 1992 369 new entrants have gained crofts through the New Entrants Scheme. 40 were recorded in 2002/3. The average age of these entrants is 29, compared with age 46 for crofts transferred throughout crofting.

I live and work in Skye and Lochalsh where one only has to look at the prices being asked for croft assignments to know that we have a problem. Estate agents are currently advertising assignments of bareland crofts for offers in excess of £50,000 because they are deemed have one or more house sites on them. This is totally unjustifiable and morally wrong. Before I go any further I must state that I am in no way suggesting that a crofter who has worked and developed his croft throughout his life is not entitled or deserving of full compensation for permanent improvements when he comes to assign. He most certainly is justified in asking and entitled to receive a full, fair and equitable price that reflects the work he has put into the unit. However, many of the assignments that are going through today are of crofts that have had no investment into them for many years, have no permanent improvements and have a real agricultural value which is in the hundreds of pounds bracket rather than the thousands. They are tenanted either by people who are absentees or in many cases by people who have no interest in crofting or crofting communities. Some crofters are being encouraged to dispose of crofts as a result of absentee action taken by the Crofters Commission. These crofts are being valued by estate agents who see one or more house sites as permanent improvements and they come onto the market in the £30- 80,000 bracket. How can young resident people or people who are in the lower income bracket afford this? How do they gain access to a system which was set up to support them and keep them in our communities? We are in grave danger of pricing the resident population out of the market.

This article is not suggesting that people moving into crofting communities are damaging crofting. There have been and will be many people who take on crofts in this area who have and will improve and enrich the crofting way of life. They are a welcome and indeed a critical part of the continuing evolution of the crofting community. The key factor linking all of these people is not age, background or economic status. It is that they have an active interest in crofting and want to use their crofts productively. Unfortunately, it must be stated that a high percentage of the people who are taking over crofts today are only really interested in gaining a house site. Many purchase the assignment with no real idea of what they are taking on and the croft ends up as a house site with a garden whilst the workable croft land falls into dereliction and inactivity. The crofting system is based on communal management of the grazings by committee, which relies on co-operation between crofting tenants. In many townships it is nearly impossible to raise enough fit and interested people for gatherings and communal workings. The people



Would you pay £50,000 for this neglected croft?

who want to work the land cannot get access to it and the system is breaking down

There are other ways to answer the housing demand in this area. We have no shortage of non-productive land. If people only want to build a house and have no interest in crofting then they should not have to purchase croft assignments to find a house site. Yet this is increasingly the case, and the fact that people are paying the prices asked for croft assignments would indicate that there is continuing demand for building land. Thus we can expect this trend to continue and prices may even rise further with inflationary results, as at present. Access to crofting will become more and more exclusive. At present we have the extraordinary situation where estate agents are in essence regulating the assignment of croft land and simply not informing buyers of all their requirements, responsibilities or caveats. The order of the chequebook rules.

There is little use crying that the Crofters Commission should do something about this. Their hands are tied in this matter, as it is the crofter's right to assign to any person of his/her choice. Yes, there is regulation and consultation thereafter, but that can be circumvented. For example if a tenant wishes to pass on his tenancy for a sum of £50,000 he applies to the Commission to do this and the Commission responds by stating that he is asking too much for the assignment. He then officially asks for £30,000 with an unofficial payment of £20,000 'under the table'. What if the local community objects to the assignment? The crofter then asserts his 'right to buy' at 15 times his annual rent and sells the croft to the person of his choice at the price of his choice. The Commission cannot stop this as the right to buy severely reduces their regulatory powers. Many believe that the right to buy was one of the worst changes to crofting law in recent years and looking at it in this light it is hard to argue a case for it. Yes, a crofter must have the right to buy a house site but is purchase of the whole croft really necessary? The planned changes to CBGLS and the introduction of the CDP both propose to give owner-occupiers the same status as tenants when applying for grants. Thus the difference between these two croft holders becomes ever smaller and we can expect to see an increase in owner occupancy in the future, further reducing the Crofters Commission's regulatory influence in crofting.

It is up to us to take a hard look at ourselves. It is difficult to see the sums of money currently being asked for croft assignments and not to take advantage of this situation - the temptation is overwhelming. But surely crofting communities are worth maintaining, surely we owe it to our young people that they should have the same opportunities that we enjoyed: access to the land and a chance to get your foot on the first and sometimes only rung of the crofting ladder.

It is long past time that these spiralling prices were brought under control, and possibly an independent body should be given responsibility to set a sensible and fair price on croft assignments. This price would take into consideration work done and the permanent improvements (or lack of them) in place. This body would need to possess a sound knowledge of crofting and the real value of croft land and most importantly realise that a house site is not a permanent improvement. This valuation would then be set and the tenant would not be allowed to ask for more. In addition, this body would also act as middleman receiving the monies from the incoming tenant and passing on to the outgoing. In this way we could encourage tenants who have a genuine interest in active crofting, and go a long way to ensuring that the law of the chequebook does not exclude people who have not got the revenue available to purchase and develop a croft. However it is we as crofters and people involved in crofting that must make the first move. We must lead the way and show that there is a will for change.

The issue of availability of ground for housing is also a problematic one. At the moment many crofts are being eroded away as house site after house site is taken away. If followed to its logical conclusion we will eventually have towns and villages built on all the available arable or inbye crofting land. Can we then have crofting communities when there are no crofts? Again we must look to ourselves for regulation. Land is something that is not in short supply in this area. A more sensible approach than using inbye croft land for housing and thereby removing it from productive use forever would be to create new townships on common grazing areas. Areas could be identified, decrofted and house sites sold. Thus we could meet housing demand without saddling new occupier with crofts that they will not use and did not really want. Again there must be a will for change and we must stand up and make our concerns heard.

We as crofters and people involved with crofting must look at ourselves and see that we cannot continue along these blind alleys. We have it in ourselves to say that what is happening at present is neither fair nor just. Spiralling croft prices will exclude the next generation from the benefits we enjoyed - access to the land at a fair price. Erosion of productive croft land for housing prevents them from having land to work. Entry to crofting should be achievable for those people, irrespective of any age and economic status, who have a keen interest in working a croft and a commitment to crofting communities. It is up to us to speak out and to do all we can to ensure that the ideals of the people who strove to create the crofting system as a fair and just system of land stewardship are upheld and passed on to the next generation.

## Criomagan a Uibhist a Tuath

Le Seonaidh Dòmhnallach, Saighdinis

Coinneamhan, coinneamhan, coinneamhan. S'e sin an cuir-seachad a bha againn an seo fad an fhoghar.

Chan e mhàin gu robh coinneamhan againn ach bha sinn a' cruinneachadh roimh na coinneamhan agus bha sinn a' coinneachadh as an deigh agus chaidh sinn thairis air an aon stuth fichead turus. Ma bha sinn troimhe chèile a' toiseachadh bha sinn dona buileach as an dèidh.

Bha na coinneamhan seo ma's fhìar a' trusadh bheachd air na h-atharraichean mòra a tha dol a thighinn air an airgiod taic a tha croitearan agus tuathanaich a faighinn agus s'e an aon rud a tha sinn cinnteach as a nis nach bi gnothaichean na's fhearr don'n chroitear. Dh' ionnsaich sinn moran de dh'fhaclan ùra, dh'èisd sinn, ghearrain sinn ach s'e sin na bhios againn air a shon.

Eisdidh an Rìghaltas ri tuathanaich mhòra Aonadh nan Tuathanach agus chan e guth beag lapach a chroitear agus chan e croitearachd idir a gheibh ceann reamar na maraig. Tha iad a' gràdh gun toir iad dhuinn airgiod a bhios 's dòcha car mar a bha sinn a' faighinn tiomchall air na bliadhnaichean mu 2000 neo 's dòcha a rèir gach acaire talmhainn a th'againn agus chan fheum sinn mart neo caora neo dad eile a chumail. Bi an t-airgiod sin againn tuilleadh agus faodaidh sinn còir air an airgiod sin a reic ma thogras sinn neo gluasad gu àite eile agus a chòir sin a thoirt leinn agus tha e furasda a thuigsinn ne trioblaidean a dh'fhaodas sin aobharachadh.

Feumaidh sinn an talmh a chumail ann an deagh staid ach s'e a cheist mhòr dè tha sin a' ciallachadh.

Do chuid s'e deagh staid gun dad a dheanamh ris agus fhàgail aig eunlaith agus ainmhidhean na

mòintich. Ann am facal s'e brochan a bhios ann.

Freagraidh e math air cuid ach s'e croitearachd mar a b'aithne dhuinne e a tha dol a dh'fhulang.

Ma bha foghar geal grianach againn, agus bha sin againn, than an geamhradh a'deanamh suas air a shon le uisge agus gaoth agus tha suidheachadh gu math doirbh aig beathaichean agus aig daoine an dràsda.

Tha Coimision nan Croitearan a ris anns na naidheachdan agus chan ann airson na h-aobharan as fhearr agus than am fear cathrach a' faighinn a chàineadh ach cha bhithinn a'cuir na coire uile airson idir.

Thainig atharrachadh mòr air a' Choimision an uair a chail na buill smachd air an roinn aca fhèin.

Aig an am sin bha buill a Choimision an urra ri sgìre an urra agus bha iad cumail suil gheur air a h-uile rud a bha tachairt agus a'cumail smachd air an luchd oibreach.

An diugh s'e na h-oifigearan, an luchd oibreach, a tha a' riaghladh a chuid mhor dhe'n obair agus bi na bhui air. Chi sinn barrachd anns na naidheachdan agus chi sinn a' choire ga chuir air feadhainn a bhios neo-chiontach. Rud eile a tha air tachairt.

Bha luchd Comhairle aig a' Choimision anns gach sgìre ris an canadh iad "assessors". Bha na daoine sin a' cuideachadh soar agus an asgaidh agus bha iad a' deanamh obair a bha uamhasach feumail.

O chionn ghiorid ghearradh sios gu mòr air an obair a bha iad a' deanamh agus tha teagamh mòr am bithear gan cleachdadh idir a dh'aithghearr.

Tuilleadh cothrom dha'n luchd oibreach an cead fhein fhaighinn.

## John Calver moves on

**John Calver, Area Manager for Scotland, moved from the NFU Mutual's Stratford-upon-Avon HQ on 1 Feb, to take up the post of Regional Manager in Bristol for the South and South West of England. We wish John well in his new role.**

**Neil MacLean, Mutual agent for Skye and Lochalsh, has moved to new premises in Portree. His new contact details are: NFU Mutual Office, Portree House, Portree, Isle of Skye IV51 9LX, tel 01478 611936**



John Calver, left, with Carol Anne and Neil Maclean.

## Neil Jones – a Tribute

*Drew Ratter from Shetland pays tribute to Neil Jones, one-time SCU Shetland Area President and former college adviser.*

Neil Jones passed away very suddenly last year, not long before the shortest day. His health had been poor for some time, and I am sure that suddenly would have been how he would have wanted to leave us, quickly, without a fuss, and especially without being a burden to anybody. We could not grudge him that, but it happened far, far too soon for his family and his many devoted friends. Those friends were very much in evidence at the funeral. They came from all over Shetland's agricultural community and from further afield, and speaking to some of them afterwards gave you a feeling for the warmth the man inspired.

For myself, I have known Neil well for going on 20 years, certainly since the early days of the Scottish Crofters Union, where he played a very big role, and throughout that time, have regarded him as a true friend, and held him in the deepest esteem and respect. He will be remembered the same way, I think, by many veterans of the old SCU.

His good qualities were many. He was that old fashioned thing, a very honourable man, whose word was his absolute bond. Personal advantage meant little to him. He was a loyal friend and supporter, if he respected you, and the embodiment of decency.

His foremost interest was the land, and in fact, the last time I saw him was when he was up helping another of his old friends to select a few ewe lambs from among ours. Neil left strong strictures to look carefully at the rams we used this year coming, to try to tighten up the oo a bit.

Neil Jones was born in Tywyn, in old Merionethshire, now Gwynedd, on a small hill farm, and was brought up doing all the kind of very varied things that such hill farmers did, not very different from what crofters all over the Highlands and Islands do. After school, and before university, Neil spent four years clipping, caaing, and working with farmers all over the

area. A good apprenticeship, and a fitting beginning to an unswerving dedication to the life of the land, its livestock and its people. His education continued to higher level, interrupted by National Service. His first degree was taken at Aberystwyth, in agriculture, and specialising in animal husbandry. A later MSc developed further in the same direction.

In 1955, Neil moved north, from Wales, to Scotland. His first job was with the Hill Farming Research Organisation in Glen Saugh and Edinburgh. This in turn led him on to the North of Scotland College of Agriculture, and postings to Inverness, Keith, Skye, and then Shetland in 1972, when he became our man fae da college. That went on till 1977, when he got the chance to become a full-time crofter, at Voxter, in Delting, from which he retired in 1990. During that period and right up to his death, he remained someone whose opinion about stock, stock nutrition and other matters was endlessly sought, and whose views and help were equally freely given.

Over the years, our own friendship deepened, as he and I were involved in such organisation as the Shetland Cheviot Society, the Scottish Crofters Union, ATB, Shetland Lamb Marketing Co-op, and the New Marts Steering Group, which was set up as an SCU and NFU joint venture.

Writing now, my mind wanders off to some of those meetings, and also the pleasure I had in travelling with him. Especially through the Scottish Crofters Union, but on some marketing ventures besides, Neil and I travelled a fair bit of Scotland, invariably with me driving and Neil navigating. It more or less did not matter where you went, he always knew what was coming up around the next corner, and even better there was always somebody who had a smile and welcoming word for us, because they had known Neil at one time or another.

I am going to miss him a great deal, as will many, many others, from all sorts of walks of life. I am glad to have known him, and glad that we managed to gather with his family to bid him farewell.

## Stand up and be heard!

*SCF Chief Executive Patrick Krause reminds members that every individual has an opportunity and a responsibility to participate in the formulation of policy on crofting.*

**There has never been a more important time to make the crofters' voice heard; there has never been more need for a representative organisation. History is being made in rural development and crofters are standing up and saying "And what about us? Crofting has an important part to play too."**

The primary purpose of the SCF is to involve crofters in the formation of rural policy which will impact on the socio-economic status of the crofting areas. As you will appreciate, this process can be especially difficult and time-consuming, but it is very important to get right.

At the end of last year we had some critical issues to consult on, not least the CAP reform and the croft grants reform. We tackled the job by forming working groups to analyse the proposed changes (some of which came in the form of lengthy and bewildering documents). We then offered information and advice to crofting community members via summarised reports, individual mailings, monthly updates and many consultation meetings.

This rigorous exercise was rewarded with very lively debate and a great response from crofters which allowed us to make well-informed and representative presentations to the policy makers, and your views were heard. Thank you to all involved.

The fact that so many people came forward with their views resulted in the agenda having to evolve in

response. An example that springs to mind is the issue of historic basis verses area basis payments of the CAP single farm payment. Early in the consultation period very little was said about this, almost as though it were assumed that area basis would not be worth looking at. As the consultation progressed more and more questions were raised and increasingly people and agencies realised that a move away from historic payments would be good for crofting areas, and indeed good for the majority of the Highlands and Islands region. This progressed to the extent that "hybrid" models of payment – a move away from historic – were being scrutinised by many rural development agencies and government bodies.

Rumours such as "crofters will get a payment for doing nothing" were dispelled as people realised that there is clearly a condition that land has to be in good agricultural and environmental condition to qualify. Crofters embraced the idea of a fair and just redistribution of payments towards the activities of "public good" that crofting delivers.

So yes, you can make your voice heard. It is up to all of us to take a responsibility in participating in the consultations and therefore the policy formation. We must attend the meetings to debate the issues, to read the material that is provided, and the media, with a critical eye- and to take the opportunity to make our views known.

These consultations mentioned may be over but the decisions have not yet been made; there is still time for you to make your views known by writing to the media, your councillor and your MSP.

And of course there will always be more issues that we have to speak up about ...

## Scottish Crofting Foundation Office Bearers Contact List

A FULL LISTING OF BRANCH CONTACTS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

### SCF BOARD

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**There will be changes in the board after the SCF AGM in March. Directors who are standing down, and those replacing them, are featured elsewhere. There will be a listing of all office-bearers in the next issue of The Crofter, following the results of the AGM.**

## Longstanding Director Stands Down

*Hector MacLeod stands down as Director at the AGM. Here he reflects on his involvement with the organisation.*

**In the early 80s a Crofters' Union was mooted and I joined in 1985 when the Portree Branch was set up. I took over as branch treasurer and then chairman, became area vice-president and then area president for a few years. With that I was involved in the council and executive group of the union. I was then signed on as a director and vice-chair of the SCF. There are times I have wished that I was far removed from it but I let my heart rule my head and stayed for what I believe is a good organisation for the support of crofters, their heritage and culture.**

Looking back on crofting, people were not consulted the same as they are now. Things happened behind closed doors. But with the work of the SCU and now the SCF, government and other organisations have to take a lead from crofters. We might be few but we are a way of life in the Highlands and Islands. I don't dispute change but make the job easier – don't put hurdles in front or behind.

Crofting plays a big part in the economics of the Highlands and Islands and I believe that it should be kept alive. Look at where there are townships: there

might not be a lot of agricultural cultivation but there is green land and not wilderness and desolation of heather, bracken and trees. Don't get me wrong, wildernesses are nice as well, but in limitation.

*We are very grateful to Hector for his years of service – and to his wife Chrissie for her forbearance. We wish them well for the future.*

## CROFTERS WELCOME TAGGING DEAL FOR SHEEP

The Scottish Crofting Foundation is delighted that common sense has prevailed and that our current system for tagging and monitoring the movement of sheep and goats will be retained until January 1st 2008. Scotland has pioneered a traceability system which is practical and proven. We are pleased that this has now been accepted by the EU and must thank our political representatives both in Scotland and in Europe who lobbied hard on our behalf on this issue. "The SCF fought hard for this decision," commented SCF director Hector MacLeod, who participated in the discussions. "Thank goodness they heeded what we said."



**CROFTERS COMMISSION**

UGHDARRAS NAN CROITEARAN

Crofting is a vital element in the social, economic, environmental and cultural structure of our rural communities.

Castle Wynd Inverness IV2 3EQ  
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*If any of the above is of interest to you please contact*

Iain MacLennan 01463 741572 (Office) or 07768 163821 (Mobile) and  
Dietrich Pannwitz 01463 741572 (Office) or 07803 146566 (Mobile)

if you know someone who needs to talk in confidence, contact Samaritans

**08457  
90 90 90**

Email: jo@samaritans.org  
Web: www.samaritans.org  
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# Lambing and Lamb Survival

Dr Colin Macalldowie, veterinary pathologist at the Moredun Research Institute in Edinburgh, gives some timely advice on lambing techniques.

Lambing time is fast approaching and as we all know, flock profitability depends on the number of live lambs produced and reared. This brief article focuses on the equipment and some basic techniques needed to help you maximise lamb and ewe survival around lambing. It goes without saying that lambing ewes and rearing lambs is a highly skilled occupation that requires experienced shepherds. If you are at all unsure how to lamb ewes properly or how to perform life-saving tasks such as taking temperatures, stomach tubing, giving intra-peritoneal glucose injections to lambs or giving subcutaneous calcium injections to ewes, arrange training with your veterinary surgeon without delay. As a rule of thumb, if lambing records show mortality figures in excess of 10% amongst lambs and 2% in ewes around lambing, then this indicates a management or disease problem requiring further investigation.

Essential items for lambing are listed in Table 1. Prepare all equipment and collect the necessary veterinary supplies at least a fortnight before the first lambs are due. If lambing inside, make sure there are sufficient lambing pens to allow proper cleaning and disinfection between successive ewes. There should be at least one pen per eight pregnant ewes (or one pen per four pregnant ewes if the flock has been synchronized). Pens should be thoroughly disinfected between occupants to reduce the risk of neonatal infections, such as colisepticaemia (watery mouth) or enteritis (scour), in the lambs.

When lambing ewes, only interfere if the amniotic sac (water bag) has been delivered or burst and there has been no further progress for 30 minutes, the total period of lambing has exceeded 90 minutes or there is an obvious abnormality in the way the lamb is emerging eg head only, legs only or breech (tail) presentation. If there is any doubt about the state of progress the ewe can be gently examined to check that all is well, but not necessarily to deliver the lamb. If the lamb is alive and presenting normally, with head and both forelegs first, the ewe may be left for another 30 minutes. Always avoid delivering lambs before the birth canal is fully open, as it will at the very least be painful for the ewe and

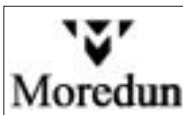
may result in either her or the lamb's death. Strict hygiene must always be observed when examining and assisting ewes to lamb to prevent metritis (uterine infection) and the spread of infections that can affect humans such as enzootic abortion. If initial attempts to lamb the ewe fail or the birth canal does not open (ring-womb), seek veterinary assistance immediately.

After every lambing, check the ewe's udders for milk and for signs of mastitis. Lambs sucking normally will consume at least 210mls colostrum per kilogram bodyweight (ie 1 litre for an average 5kg lamb) within the first 18-24 hrs of life. If there is any doubt about the ewe's ability to provide colostrum or the lamb's ability to suck, supplement natural feeding with a bottle or stomach tube using fresh or frozen ewe or cow colostrum giving approximately 50 mls per kg bodyweight 3-4 times in the first 24 hours. Dress the lamb's navel with adequate quantities of tincture of iodine as soon as possible after birth to prevent navel infections and joint ill.

Hypothermia, either on its own or in combination with other infectious agents, is still one of the most common causes of death amongst neonatal lambs. Lambs suffering from hypothermia will need to have access to suitable warming facilities and, in cases where starvation has also occurred, may require stomach tube feeding or 20% glucose supplementation given by intra-peritoneal injection. Figure 1 shows how to assess lambs for hypothermia and how to attempt treatment for the condition.

Lambing can be a hazardous period for ewe, lamb and shepherd alike, with the potential for major welfare and economic problems. Taking a few common-sense steps and ensuring that you are properly prepared will help to reduce unnecessary stress at what is a very busy but also very satisfying time of the year!

Moredun runs a membership scheme which aims to keep farmers and their vets up to date with the latest developments in animal health research. If you would like a free twelve page newsheet on maximising lamb survival or are interested in becoming a member of Moredun, please contact Margaret Bennett at The Moredun Foundation, Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Penicuik, EH26 0PZ or phone 0131 445 5111 or log onto their website [www.moredun-foundation.org.uk](http://www.moredun-foundation.org.uk)



A proud mother with her twins.

## Bonnie

Jackie Syme from Shetland describes another of her colourful croft animal family.

Bonnie is a very pretty fawn ewe with dark brown face, legs and belly with a white blaze and four white socks. I bought her because she was so pretty - I have an interest in breeding fancy lambs for their skins. But she is not named for her beauty, more like her criminal tendencies as in "Bonnie and Clyde"!

I knew when I bought her that she had a tendency to pinch other ewes' lambs and thought I could deal with that, but I knew nothing of her ability as an escapist. She was delivered along with another ewe whilst I was at work on night shift, but when I returned home in the morning she was long gone. I retrieved her from my neighbour's park on several occasions and eventually decided to keep her in until she lambed. Guess what, she'd decided to take herself to the top early, before I got her. We can add promiscuity to the list of her sins! She was quite disgusted at being imprisoned in the shed and eventually got her revenge by producing a premature dead catmuggit lamb and then refusing to eat.

After a week on hunger strike I decided that this could not go on, and put her out in a distant park with three one-year-old hogs for company. My husband, who took her, thought that she would die as she just lay there when removed from the trailer. Next time I went up she was gone and I assumed she'd gone over the cliffs as there was no sign of a carcass. However, a couple of weeks later my neighbour said that he'd seen her - with a white lamb. "Oops!" I thought. We

never saw her again until September, when once again on a night shift I got a phone call from my husband telling me that someone had brought back my ewe from their apportionment and put her in my front park. Apparently there had been a lamb with her but they couldn't tell which one in a group of sheep it was, so I didn't get it. Of course when I got home she was gone again, but this time only as far as next door and I managed to catch her and bring her home. They were right, she had been feeding a lamb as she was full of milk.

Perhaps one of you out there with more knowledge than me could answer the question: Did she abort one of twins and carry the other full term, which seems unlikely to me in view of the colour of the lambs (the ram she'd been with was a fancy brown and white one) or did she pinch a lamb about three weeks after lambing the dead one and manage to produce milk?

This time I was determined to fix her and on advice from my neighbours put a dog collar round her neck with a length of rope and a fishing float/buoy attached. Believe it or not she could still jump my fences with that paraphernalia around her neck. At tugging time she was put to the top slightly earlier than the others - in the shed! When released I think she visited every tup in the valley with the exception of my Suffolk and eventually produced a late lamb to next door's Cheviot. Mind, what a good lamb it was. I think I've got her sussed now and found a place she doesn't escape from. Well, she did jump out once but I think she got such a fright when she ended up in with the pigs that she's never bothered again.

Table 1 - Lambing Equipment Checklist

Equipment	
	Feeding bottles and teats Boxes for housing weak lambs Kettle Hypodermic needles (19 gauge, 1 inch) and sharps box Syringes (2, 5 and 50ml) Infra-red lamps Lamb feeder (artificial rearing) Lamb warming box and thermometer (plans shown in <i>Practical Lambing and Lamb Care</i> ) Lambing snare and ropes Rectal thermometer Stomach tubes
Sundries	Disinfectants: non-irritant eg Savlon Disinfectant: hypochlorite/detergent Disinfectant: general purpose eg FAM for pens and buildings Frozen colostrum (ewe/cow) Lamb milk replacer Lambing lubricant Polythene bags and ties Soap Stock marker
Drugs (after consultation with your veterinary surgeon)	Antibiotics for injection, oral use and use in eyes Antiseptic cream eg Savlon Footrot spray Calcium and magnesium solutions for injection Glucose (sterile 20% dextrose) solution for injection Glucose (powdered) Glucose/electrolyte preparation eg Lectade (for lambs with enteritis or watery mouth) Liquid paraffin Tincture of iodine (bought ready prepared or: 25 g iodine, 25 g potassium iodide and 25 ml freshly boiled and cooled distilled water made up to 1 litre with 90% alcohol)

This article first appeared in the Sheep Farmer Magazine in April 2003.

## Advice to pregnant women during the lambing season

Pregnant women should avoid close contact with sheep during the lambing season, Scotland's Chief Medical Officer Mac Armstrong advised.

In particular they should: - not help to lamb or milk ewes; - avoid contact with aborted or new-born lambs or with the afterbirth; and - wherever possible avoid handling clothing, boots etc which have come into contact with ewes or lambs, or if they must, wear rubber gloves.

Outlining the risks, Dr Armstrong said: "Pregnant women who come into close contact with sheep during lambing may be risking their health and the health of their unborn child. This is because infections such as chlamydia (enzootic abortion of ewes - EAE), toxoplasmosis and listeriosis - all common causes of abortion in ewes - can be passed on to them.

"While the number of reported infections and human miscarriages resulting from contact with sheep is extremely small, pregnant women need to

be aware of the potential risks. If they do become ill - experience fever or influenza-like symptoms, and are concerned that they could have acquired infection from a farm environment, they should seek immediate medical advice."

Farmers have a responsibility to minimise the risks to pregnant women, including members of their family, the public and professional staff visiting farms. Any action should be determined by their risk assessment required under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

If a ewe aborts, farmers are advised to ask their veterinary surgeon to take a sample to their local Veterinary Investigation Centre to determine the cause. In the interests of hygiene, farmers should dispose of all afterbirths promptly and safely and, where possible, by burial or burning.

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# CAP REFORM – A JOINT RESPONSE FOR THE CROFTING AREAS

Recognising the potential for vital and beneficial changes to CAP reform, the SCF, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Crofters Commission, Shetland Islands Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar submitted a joint response to SEERAD in support of the over-riding principles they believe are critical to an effective and sustainable outcome from CAP Reform. This combined effort indicates the importance of CAP reform and of the opportunities for crofting if its recommendations are taken on board.

The response emphasised the importance of agriculture to the Highlands and Islands economy, the environment and not least in sustaining rural populations. Due to the fragility and peripherality of this remote area, changes to support measures will have a greater impact.

The joint response highlighted the main principles considered to be essential:

- Decoupling was fully supported.
- Recoupling was not considered to have a strong case.

- A National Envelope in the beef sector is necessary to counter the effects of decoupling in the short term.
- Progression towards a flat-rate area-based payment offers the only sustainable basis for continued entitlement to the decoupled payment.
- A high level of national modulation, match-funded from Treasury, and not applied to the first €5000 of support.

Agriculture remains a vital component of the economy of the Highlands and Islands, with over 45% of Scotland's agricultural holdings found in this area and contributing some 5% of the regions GDP. Agriculture and crofting agriculture in particular are also vital in sustaining population in the remote communities of the Highlands and Islands, and this agricultural activity is intrinsically linked to the high environmental status of the area.

The joint response highlights the need for a short term beef national envelope to support suckler cows in the vulnerable areas of the Highlands and Islands; progression towards a

flat-rate area based payment, phased in using a hybrid system combining flat-rate and historic payment; and a high level of national modulation at the earliest opportunity with the first €5000 of support being exempt.

HIE Chairman Jim Hunter commented 'To reach agreement on such a complex issue across such a wide range of organisations is a significant achievement. The fact that these major bodies have come together demonstrates the importance of this issue to the future of the Highlands and Islands and the commitment of these agencies to achieving a positive outcome from the CAP Reform.'

Ena McNeill, SCF chair, added 'This agreement demonstrates that the majority of stakeholders in the Highlands and Islands want to move away from historic, single-interest-group support, to a system which rewards farmers and crofters for the provision of public goods. There has to be transparency, enabling the public to relate the support payments directly to high nature value agricultural land management practices such as crofting. A hybrid basis of

payment will also offer opportunities for new entrants so crucial to rural industry and to maintaining populations in the crofting areas.'

David Green, Chairman of Crofters Commission explained 'The Commission is encouraged by the willingness of so many key organisations in the Highlands and Islands to join forces on such an important issue. We all share the common goal of active and thriving crofting communities and this type of joint approach on future policy can only help in achieving this aim'.

Alex A Macdonald, Convenor of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar added 'Our organisation views the outcome of the current CAP Reform as critical in maintaining population and crofting activity in the fragile communities of the Western Isles. The future shape of the CAP must more effectively support crofting agriculture and provide opportunities for young people to enter crofting, and the mechanisms outlined in this joint response we believe offer the best hope of achieving this.'

## NORTH HIGHLAND FUNDING PROGRAMME TARGETS RURAL HERITAGE AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Wendy Anderson, Programme Administrator, outlines progress on this new scheme.

The North Highland Leader+ Programme has been in operation now for just over a year. In that time the programme has awarded in excess of £400,000 to 55 projects aimed at helping rural communities make the most of their local natural and cultural heritage as well as providing new opportunities for young people in the North Highland area. Other local groups with ideas for eligible projects are now being encouraged to submit grant applications to the Programme for consideration.

The first batch of successful heritage applications included initiatives ranging from Cultural and Natural Heritage Recording of the Mackay Country, Caithness Archaeological Officer, Rosehall Forest Log Environmental Cabin, Culag Community Woodlands Trust Education Programme and the Black Isle Wildlife Corridor Survey.

We would particularly like to hear from groups with ideas which (sustainably) use the Highlands' natural and cultural heritage to support local development eg direct site management which leads to habitat/landscape improvement, implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan, tourism-related activities, adding value to agricultural/timber by-products and rural skills development. Also projects which involve young people in decision making, build self confidence and support independent living are also welcomed. The North Highland Leader+ Programme, which is due to run until 2006, covers Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty, Skye and

Lochalsh, Nairn and rural Inverness. The programme is community-based and aims to support innovative pilot projects at a local level. Projects should also be able to demonstrate economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Applications for project grants can be made by constituted groups, charities, non-profit-distributing organisations and public agencies with a role in community development in the North Highland area. Up to 45% of eligible costs (maximum grant of £50,000) may be available for capital and revenue projects. Some additional match funding may also be available from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Natural Heritage and Highland Council.

Applications for the next round should be lodged by 1st March 2004, with further rounds of bids due to be considered in June, September and December of this year. (Applications for grants of

up to £5,000 will be considered by local advisory groups meeting at more frequent intervals). Information and application forms are available from tel 01463 702548, e-mail wendy.anderson.planning@highland.gov.uk.

The North Highland Leader+ Programme is one of thirteen Scottish Leader+ initiatives running under the banner of a European Union 'Community Initiatives' programme aimed at promoting economic and community development in rural areas with problems such as scattered or declining populations. The delivery of the North Highland Programme is being co-ordinated by the Highland Council on behalf of the Highland Wellbeing Alliance, a partnership of Highland statutory and voluntary organisations.



## Crofters Commission Wind Farm Booklet now available

In response to the growing interest in renewable energy sources, with particular reference to wind farms, the Crofters Commission has produced a question and answer format booklet, *Wind Farm Development on Croft Land and Common Grazings*. The booklet outlines possible benefits to crofting communities from the development of wind farm sites.

Demand for sites has escalated in the North and West mainland, as well as on the islands, meaning that there is growing demand for sites on croft land and common grazings.

David Green, Chairman of the Commission, says: 'The Crofters Commission is keen to ensure that crofting communities understand the range of opportunities that might be available to them through the development of wind farms. Our role is to deliver straightforward information about a complex issue to make sure our communities make informed decisions.'

The Scottish Crofting Foundation has been involved in some wind farm issues, particularly pertaining to crofters' rights. We will be producing guidance on the subject with the help of a specialist lawyer. There will also be a workshop on this topic at the SCF's AGM on March 19.

Among the topics discussed in the booklet is the issue of decrofting. Land marked as a wind farm site does not necessarily need to be decrofted if all crofters with an interest in the land agree to restricted rights, and the Land Court accepts their agreement.

The booklet also covers resumption and its effects, and how crofters might retain an influence over the development.

If you would like a copy of the booklet, copies are freely available from the Commission on request. Contact: 01463 663450.

## SNIPPETS ...

### Kamikaze Midges Create Turbine Troubles

An unexpected source is being blamed for reductions in the performance and profitability of some wind farms in the Highlands. Apparently the humble midge - the scourge of the Highland summer season - could be to blame for some wind farms potential for electricity generation being reduced by as much as a quarter. It is thought that the combined weight of millions of dead midges committing hara-kiri on the giant turbine blades slows their movement.

### PARLAMAID na h'ALBA

Coinneamh Fiosrachaidh Gàidhlig - Diluain 15 Màrt 2003 Bidh Pàrlamaid na h-Alba a' cumail coinneamh fiosrachaidh dhà-chànanach airson luchd-labhairt is luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig anns an Studio Theatre, na Tallaichean Corrain, an t-Oban, Diluain 15 Màrt 2004 eadar 7.30 agus 9.00f. Tha e mar amas dhan tachartas seo com-pàirt a bhrosnachadh ann an gnothaichean na Pàrlamaid agus gus ceanglaichean a

thogail eadar Pàrlamaid na h-Alba agus coimhearsnachd na Gàidhlig. Bidh a' choinneamh seo, a thèid a cumail le Seirbheis Foghlaim is Coimhearsnachd, a' tòiseachadh le òraid ghoirid anns a' Ghàidhlig a bhios a' coimhead air:

- mar is urrainn do luchd na Gàidhlig pàirt a ghabhail ann an obair na Pàrlamaid.
- seirbheisean Gàidhlig anns a' Phàrlamaid.
- Bile na Gàidhlig (Alba) mar eisimpleir den phròiseas reachdail.

Ged is ann anns a' Ghàidhlig a bhios an òraid seo, bidh duilleagan fiosrachaidh agus slideaichean OHP dà-chànanach ann gus an urrainn do dhaoine nach eil fileanta sa Ghàidhlig pàirt a ghabhail. An uairsin,

bith cothrom ceistean a chur air Seòras Lyon BPA, Ball Pàrlamaid na h-Alba airson Earra Ghaidheal agus Bhòid mun Ghàidhlig, no mu chuspair sam bith eile, ann an seisean cheistean is fhreagairtean. Thathar cuideachd air cuiridhean a chur gu BPA roinneil na Gaidhealtachd agus nan Eilean.

Bidh teatha is cofaidh rim faighinn agus bidh caochladh stuthan foillsichte, leithid

Aithisg Bhliadhnaid na Pàrlamaid agus Faclair na Pàrlamaid air chothrom saor agus an-asgaidh. Tha barrachd fiosrachaidh ri fhaighinn bho: gaidhlig@scottish.parliament.uk, fòn: 0131 348 5395.

### Highland Fund Seeks New Applicants

The Highland Fund was established in 1953 to provide low interest loans to assist business activity throughout the Highlands & Islands (loan interest rates are normally about 2% below the bank lending rate). Over the last 50 years, the fund has lent more than £3 million to crofters, fishermen and small businesses. This year, the Fund is seeking more applications from young people looking to start a new enterprise or expand an existing one. For more information about the Highland Fund write to: The Highland Fund, Unit 5, 110A Maxwell Avenue, Westerton, Bearsden, GLASGOW G61 1HU; telephone 0141 942 2484 or email thehighlandfund@btopenworld.com.

### Community Fund Pilots New Grant Making Process

Applying for a grant from the Community Fund in Scotland has just got simpler. A new grant making process is currently being piloted in an attempt to shorten assessment times and make it easier to access grants. Applicants are required to submit a short project outline along with an idea of the project costs and details of their constitution. There will be a response to the project outline within 10 days and if the project is eligible a new, shorter application form will be sent out. The new application process should shorten assessment times by a month and cut down on the form-filling. For more information about the pilot, visit [www.community-fund.org.uk](http://www.community-fund.org.uk) or telephone 08702402391.

Thanks to the Scottish Islands Network for this information

E-mail: [scottish.islands@btopenworld.com](mailto:scottish.islands@btopenworld.com)  
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## Director Stands Down

Iain D Macleod, Isle of Lewis, stands down as a SCG Director at the AGM.

Iain has been a member of the organisation for at least the last sixteen years. A previous chairman of the Carloway branch, Iain is former area president and area representative for Lewis and Harris. At present he is secretary for the Carloway branch.

Iain works for the local authority in the Council Offices in Stornoway and is an active crofter on the west side of Lewis with a flock of about 230 blackface and cheviot sheep.

Although retiring as a director, Iain will still be available to assist the organisation at local level if required.

His colleagues thank him for his contribution to the work of the Foundation.

# The SCF Annual Conference

The Scottish Crofting Foundation (and previously as The Scottish Crofters Union) has arranged an Annual Dinner and Conference regularly since 1986.

The theme for this year is "Making Hay: Crofting with the New CAP" with talks and workshops looking at opportunities and risks for crofting in the new post-CAP era where there is much more emphasis on market-driven quality produce, environmental protection and sustainable rural development.

The conference is scheduled for Friday 19 March 2004, with our AGM and annual dinner taking place the night before. Both will be held in Tarbert, Isle of Harris.

## The programme

Thursday afternoon	Arrivals	
Thursday evening		AGM at 6.30pm followed by the Conference Dinner
Friday morning		Keynote speeches
Friday afternoon		Workshops
Friday evening		Entertainment
Saturday morning	Croft visit	

## The speakers

**Simon Fraser** (land reform law specialist) will talk about land reform and wind-farm development;  
**Adam Harrison** from WWF will talk about crofting and the environment in the context of sustainable development;

**Frank Gaskell** of Euromontana (and HIE) will talk about crofting as a model of rural development in the European context.

## The discussion sessions

We will have 3 workshops on specific themes such as large- and small-scale wind farming, balancing environment and production and marketing opportunities in the new CAP. These are to be confirmed.

## The objectives

To get people together to discuss the most salient points concerning the future of crofting and how it is affected by the CAP and land reforms. We want people to look at crofting in the wider rural development context and to formulate at least a basic strategy for the sustainability of crofting. A conference and workshop format is useful as it gives participants the opportunity to hear some of the best thinkers in the field, and to participate in facilitated sessions that have an objective.

## What outcomes do we expect?

We want the formulation of a crofting strategy to start here; we aim to get a mission statement and the key objectives of a strategic framework together. It is essential that crofters and those involved in the development of crofting are clear about what the strengths of crofting are and how it contributes to sustainable rural development (particularly in response to the anticipated changes in rural development brought about by the CAP reform).

# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Name of Company: Scottish Crofting Foundation  
Company Number: SC 218658  
Registered Office: The Steading, Balmacara Square, Balmacara, Kyle of Lochalsh, Ross-shire

NOTICE is hereby given that the Third Annual General Meeting of The Scottish Crofting Foundation will be held within the Harris Hotel, Tarbert, Isle of Harris on Thursday, 18 March 2004 at 18.30 to consider and if thought fit to pass the following Resolutions:-

- To receive Company's Accounts and the Report of the Directors and Auditors for the year ended 30 November 2003. A summary of the accounts will be available at the meeting and the full or summary accounts will be provided prior to the meeting on request to the registered office.
- To elect John Laing as a Director
- To elect Donald Linton as a Director
- To re-appoint Messrs Campbell, Stewart, MacLennan and Co, Chartered Accountants, of 8 Wentworth Street, Portree, Isle of Skye as accountants / auditors and to authorise the Directors to fix their remuneration.
- To adopt three alterations to the Articles, as discussed and minuted at the last AGM, with a view to minimising the expense of the administrative burden on the Company. These are as follows:-
- Under Article 21.5, at present a copy of every balance sheet and other items requires to be circulated to the membership. The following provision is suggested:-

A summary of every balance sheet (including every document required by law to be annexed thereto) which is to be laid before the Company in general meeting together with a copy of any report thereon by any auditor or other suitably qualified person in terms of the Act in such form as the Directors may determine shall not less than twenty-one days before the date of the meeting be sent to every member of the Company. Provided that this article shall not require a copy of those documents to be sent to any person of whose address the company is not aware. In addition there shall be deposited at the Registered Office of the Company not less than 21 days before the general meeting before which it is to be laid, an unabbreviated version of every balance sheet (including every document required by law to be annexed thereto) which is to be laid before the Company in general meeting together with a copy of any report thereon by any auditor or other suitably qualified person in terms of the Act and a copy of such unabbreviated version shall be provided to any member upon request.

The effect of this is that it is only a short summary that is required to be circulated to each Member, but that no Member is denied the opportunity to access a copy of the balance sheet etc. on request from the Company.

- Under Article 21.6 :-

It may be that the Company is able to take advantage of the Audit Exemption Regulations which provide that, in certain cases, it is not necessary for a full-scale audit to be undertaken by a registered Auditor. The following provision is suggested:-

Once at least in every year the accounts of the company shall be prepared by a suitably qualified person who shall act in accordance with the requirements of the Act

This means that a person who is not a registered Auditor, but who may be a qualified Accountant, is able to undertake the necessary examination if this is permitted in terms of the Act.

- Articles 22.1 and 22.2 currently provide that notices require to be in writing. The following provision is suggested:-

The company may give a notice to a member either personally or by (i) sending it by post in a prepaid envelope addressed to the member at his/her registered address or by leaving it at that address or (ii) by e-mail or other electronic means to any address provided by a member for that purpose.

This obviously allows for communication with the Members by e-mail. Again this is to allow matters to proceed in a way which will save expense to the Company.

These three clauses have been approved by the Inland Revenue in a set of model Memorandum and Articles of Association.

You will note that adoption of these Articles would not prevent the current practice of (a) sending a copy of every balance sheet and supporting papers, and (b) having a Registered Auditor carry out the audit from continuing if the Directors so require.

Company Secretary: Douglas R R Graham

Date of notice: 16 February 2004

## Booking Form

### "Making Hay: Crofting with the New CAP"

19 MARCH 2004 HARRIS HOTEL TARBET ISLE OF HARRIS

Complete the form below and either send it together with payment or fax it to:

Scottish Crofting Foundation  
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Balmacara Square  
Kyle of Lochalsh  
IV40 8DJ

Please complete the following in block capitals:  
Please photocopy one registration form per delegate.

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Any other requirements \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### HOW TO PAY

Full Delegate Rate inc. two nights Dinner B & B £180.00

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#### Invoice

Please send invoice to \_\_\_\_\_

State contact name and address if different from above

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Please ensure this form is returned to SCF HQ by Friday, 12th March 2004 at the latest to confirm your booking. Thank you.

Tel: 01520 722891 Fax: 01520 722932 Email: [hq@crofting.org](mailto:hq@crofting.org)

## Thank you to another outgoing director

*Mairi MacFarlane stands down from the Board at the AGM. Here she recalls her years with the SCU/SCF. We thank Mairi for all her valuable contributions.*

**I have been a member of the SCU since the beginning, when I was in Strathclyde Police serving in Dumbarton. My late father Iain MacPhail, who was on the first Union Council, insisted on it. Compulsory membership, maybe that would help!!! My father's enthusiasm and commitment to the Union was infectious.**

I got to know people over the phone years before I met them: Donald Macdonald, Baleshare; Hector MacLeod, Sconser; Angus MacRae, Lochcarron; Alan MacRae, Assynt; Robin Currie, Islay; Donald Linton, Oban; Mary MacKinnon, Tiree; and Fiona Mandeville to name but a few. I heard great reports about others round the dinner table listening to my father - John MacKintosh, Jim Hunter, Iain MacIver and George Campbell, amongst countless others. People who inspired me with their dedication to the organisation and who have made a difference with the policy makers for all our benefit.

I have since been involved with the SCU at Branch, Area and Council levels with some of these people and with other great people all of whom bring their own skills and enthusiasm to an organisation which has continued to help and support crofters through some very difficult times.

I recently returned to the organisation as a co-opted Director and have been assisting a very competent, diligent staff with case-work. The staff are impressive; they work twice the hours they are paid for, without complaining. The run up to Christmas saw them working flat-out to deal with all the consultations that are so important to our members. They did this with extreme efficiency and professionalism. I would add they must all have very understanding partners, and give the staff my thanks.

The organisation has had its black times but with the unity of staff and the Board these days are in the past. I look forward to remaining part of an organisation that is going from strength to strength.

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# SCF MEMBERSHIP PRODUCT DISCOUNT SCHEME

Your SCF Membership Card entitles you to take part in the Product Discount Scheme and make savings at a variety of outlets throughout the Highlands and Islands – remember many of these businesses also have a mail order service.

## Latest Additions to the Product Discount Scheme

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43 Clachnaharry Road Contact Tilhill for details  
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# CAP Reform – Opportunities for Crofting Communities?

(Continued from Page 1)

agricultural activity away from the north and west, with associated risks, we do not believe that any of the recoupling options are desirable mechanisms for addressing these concerns. We do not support use of any of the partial recoupling options.

**National envelopes.** It is crucial to retain and encourage mixed agriculture in upland and remote areas through targeted use of national envelopes in the beef, sheep and arable sectors. Agricultural production in the marginal areas requires recognition of the 'real costs' of continuing activity. Support should be targeted at the systems that are at most risk.

We advocate use of a 10% beef National Envelope to target suckler cow systems in the Fragile and Very Fragile LFA areas. Analysis has suggested that support of £140/cow is a minimum required, although over the longer term even this level of support is not actually sufficient. We suggest the first 10 cows as an appropriate figure, to support cattle-keepers as well as cattle-keeping. A short-term payment for the last 10 calves, or last 20 %, whichever is the greater, should be made.

A National Envelope is required for small but exceptionally important areas of arable production, to provide important feed sources for farmland seed-eating birds, which are in dramatic decline

A sheep envelope should target producers in the marginal areas, where the effects of decoupling are likely to be felt most severely. This measure would recognise the special importance of sheep in the north and west.

We advocate a move over time away from a mostly historic system of payments towards a mostly area-based system. We suggest that more work on hybrid models and the transitional stages would be helpful for all stakeholders.

The SCF believes that there are a number of major difficulties with historic entitlement, and that an area-based system would be more justifiable in the longer term. We suggest that a transition phase is necessary, to allow for businesses to adapt to the changing market.

**Cross Compliance** and the definition of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition are currently under review. The SCF highlights that the costs of cross-compliance should not be prohibitive, that the standards should be deliverable on small units and that definitions of GAEC should be made at appropriate local or sub-regional level.

We suggest that **national modulation** be operated under a similar franchise to European modulation, returning the first 5000 euros to the producer.

The efficacy of Pillar 2 to support rural development in the Highlands and Islands depends on revision of the Rural Development Regulation and the SRDP to create a system which suits our needs in supporting and maintaining agricultural systems delivering numerous public goods. Given past dissatisfaction with Pillar 2 mechanisms, ie the targeting of LFASS on better land, and the inaccessibility to many of the Rural Stewardship Scheme, we believe that suitable, prioritised and robust mechanisms for delivering Pillar 2 funding should be developed before decisions are made on modulated funding. A suitable system, supporting genuinely multi-functional agriculture and prioritised at whole systems delivering public goods, with access for all to some level of rural development funding, would be likely to attract strong support among the farming and crofting community.

The full SCF response is available from the office, or from our website [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org)

# Report from Chair

(Continued from Page 1)

discussion there and I think the local Goose Committee will get more money for scaring. However, the remit of the GNRG is only to protect agricultural land, not to lower goose numbers. Those who have shooting rights should make a better effort; there is no ceiling on the numbers they can shoot. Considering the numbers around just now I dread to imagine what it will be like at harvest time this year!

Health Ministers are still dragging their heels on the Over Thirty Months Scheme and Home Kill. The Food Standards Agency has made its decision but it's now up to the Ministers. SCF are fighting hard to speed up the end of this unnecessary incinerating of healthy beef. In the meantime this is costing the country £1,000,000 per day - actually £400,000,000 a year. Hopefully despite the powerful lobbying of those who don't want the ban to end, surely by October common sense will prevail.

We are also discussing Home Kill with Food Standards Agency and the strongest lobbying is coming from the Shetlands.

I'd like to thank all the Board members for their willing support, advice and loyalty since my election. The SCF are very fortunate to have a dedicated staff who often work voluntary hours to catch deadlines they know are crucial to SCF members. I must give special thanks to Becky Shaw who is on holiday with her husband Bob in New Zealand. Becky made an excellent job of the final response to the CAP consultation. She has been keeping in touch with Balmacara by e-mail & mobile (at midnight in New Zealand!) - so need I say any more.

To the Board members who are retiring, "Ceud Mile Taing" and I know they will always continue to support the SCF with their mine of experience and wisdom.

This is a short summary of the work the SCF is doing for its members. You'll find more detail on the following pages. I often wonder why so many active crofters don't become members because we genuinely want to get a better deal for all crofters and we need your support.

Ena McNeill, SCF Chair

# Opportunities for volunteers – We need your help please

If anybody has time and skill to offer on a voluntary basis it would be greatly appreciated. There are things that can be done from home, home being anywhere. A PC and internet connection would be essential though. We are looking for help with the following:

**Fundraising** – experience of preparing applications necessary.

**Web site management** – to update the site on a regular basis.

And on a local level, if anyone could give a little time in the Balmacara office we can provide the coffee!

# Members' commitment to Gift Aid continues to grow

47% of members are now signed up for Gift Aid, which increases the value of any subscription and donation to the SCF by 28%. So far, this has meant the SCF has benefited from nearly £25,000 of extra funding from the government. As we are a charitable organisation the contributions we receive through the covenant of Gift Aid make a tremendous difference to us and our ability to continue our work assisting members.

To qualify to be a Gift Aid donor you must simply have paid tax in the UK during the membership year. This may be in the form of income from employment, bank account savings, even state pensions or benefits etc as these all count as taxable income. It costs you nothing more as Gift Aid is the Inland Revenue refunding to us on your behalf the tax you would have already paid on the money you donate as your membership subscription. This adds a further £8.40 to the £30 membership we receive, at no extra cost to you!

If you wish to increase the value of your contribution by using the covenant of Gift Aid, you need only telephone the office to give your consent verbally and directly that you wish to have your subscription made through Gift Aid. You don't need to sign any forms or give any additional information. Instead of telephoning, if you prefer you can alternatively request a simple tick-box form to be sent to you.

Thank you.

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# Dun-Aliscaig Estate – providing the safe solutions

Landowners, farmers and crofters interested in pursuing The Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department's (SEERAD) policy to support them in environmental development and enhancement, have to be aware of safe and productive methods in carrying out any such schemes.

An extract from the Rural Stewardship Scheme states: "The (RSS) is an Agri-environmental Scheme designed to encourage farmers, crofters and common grazing committees to adopt environmentally friendly practices and to maintain and enhance particular habitats and landscape features." SEERAD will contribute towards the cost of preparing an Environmental Audit and Moorland Management Plan and successful applicants to the scheme will receive payments based on their plan. The moorland management plan is expected to be prepared by a suitable qualified professional adviser.

On receiving approval to join the (RSS) the successful applicant must adopt the management plan, which may require the assistance of specialist contractors and/or equipment.\*

One activity encouraged by SEERAD is muirburn and bracken eradication, but this must be tackled under controlled conditions and managed effectively.

Muirburn aims to "create blocks of heather at different growth stages

through planned programmes of burning or swiping". Bracken eradication is encouraged "to eradicate bracken from an area of moorland and thus allow the moorland vegetation to re-establish itself."

Controlled muirburn has long been recognised as being beneficial to moorland habitat. Muirburn activities are regulated by the Hill Farming Act 1946. Uncontrolled muirburn can needlessly destroy huge areas of hill ground leaving a sterile and barren landscape that can take years to re-establish. Uncontrolled fire, apart from being dangerous to animals, property and people, can be very costly and disastrous for the forester.

Dun-Aliscaig Estate Management Ltd (DEM) of Edderton, near Tain, is the leading manufacturer of specialist muirburn control equipment. This incorporates high-pressure, low volume pumping equipment, which produces a blanket of fog that will extinguish muirburn fires quickly and efficiently. The equipment is fully integrated and is designed and built to their customer's ATV requirement. The water reservoir tanks are manufactured by DEM from tough polypropylene plastic. Polypropylene is a material that will withstand heavy and prolonged use, and requires little or no maintenance, other than cleaning. Muirburn control equipment is already being widely used to control moorland fires throughout the Highland and Grampian areas.

DEM can also provide, for sale or hire, a range of heather swiping

equipment for use with an ATV or tractor.

Bracken is a vigorous and invasive plant that, if not controlled, can quickly dominate large areas. The plant is unpalatable to stock and will reduce good pasture to a barren environment. Control can be achieved by cutting, rolling and spraying. The most effective of these methods is spraying with asulam. Where large areas of bracken persist, aerial spraying is the most efficient and economical method of control, particularly on steep and rocky ground. As with all pesticide applications, care must be taken to adopt good working practices. Bracken eradication is not a "one shot" operation but is a management programme with follow-up treatments necessary.

Pesticides are hazardous and must be handled responsibly and with care. It is important for the safety of everyone concerned and the protection of the environment that the people who handle and apply pesticides are properly trained. DEM can provide such personnel.

When it comes to All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), no one machine is capable of meeting all aspects of requirement. Where soft and steep ground is encountered, low ground pressure tracked vehicles will quickly show their worth. Track machines, however, do have a number of drawbacks in that they are usually slower over the ground and can be less comfortable on hard ground and are usually considerably more expensive to purchase. Tracks are, generally, kinder to the environment, particularly those having one-piece rubber construction. Wheeled ATVs that have tracks fitted do offer some advantages over regular wheeled vehicles, but are no substitute for purpose built machines. DEM has carefully selected a range of ATVs for

every application and can provide hire, sales and service throughout. As is this case with all equipment, and is particularly true with ATVs, regular planned maintenance will ensure long and reliable service.

DEM is the Scottish agent for SOFTRAK manufactured by Loglogic. SOFTRAK is fast becoming the leader in the field for low ground pressure tracked vehicles. The equipment is widely used in forestry and land management.

DEM has recently been appointed a dealer for Bombardier ATV quad bikes. Bombardier offers a comprehensive range of models including utility, leisure and sports. They are the first and only manufacturer to provide a fully approved, two-man quad bike. The revolutionary liquid cooled Rotax engine and visco-lok drive system power the bike.

DEM will continue to hire, service and repair the ARGO range of products. They also provide a wide choice in ATV ancillary equipment. The equipment includes topper mowers, weed wipes, trailers and fertiliser spreaders, manufactured by PORTAGRIC.

With their considerable experience of hill ground and ATV capabilities, DEM is actively involved in the development of wind farm sites. Site evaluation, mast erection and data collection are just part of their renewable energy activities. With continuing success in environmental care, and the need for specialist knowledge, vehicles and equipment, DEM are well placed to provide you with a full package of solutions.

Call today and ask for Michael Brown, who will be happy to discuss your needs and give you his advice on choosing the right application and equipment. Contact him on 01862-821230 or mobile 07867-528067.

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