

## SCF calls on the new Scottish Government to implement five Actions for Crofting

SCF IS asking all parties, should they win the upcoming elections and form the new Scottish Government, to take forward Five Actions for Crofting. The five actions, in any order of priority, are:

- croft-proof financial incentives
- simplify crofting legislation
- make crofts available
- increase affordable croft housing
- fund a lead body on development of crofting

These actions were identified by the Scottish Government crofting stakeholder forum and

by the Future of Crofting Conference held in Inverness in December 2015. They have been sent to minister for crofting Dr Aileen McLeod and to the Scottish Parliament rural affairs committee. SCF wants to see these actions taken forward into the next session of the Scottish Government.

### Financial incentives

Funding under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) pillars 1 (Basic Payments) and pillar 2 (SRDP) are the main support mechanisms for agriculture and rural development. It is essential that current and future policies have a positive impact on crofting. The CAP has to move away

from the out-dated and unsustainable large-scale industrial model and all aspects of the CAP need to be croft-proofed.

### Simplify crofting legislation

Crofting legislation needs to be made fit for purpose. 126 items have been identified as problems and anomalies in the legislation. They are collated in The Sump, which needs to be actioned. This can only be done effectively with a new act. A panel of experts – practitioners and stakeholders – should be given the task of

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## Crofters' anger at NFUS for late payments

CROFTERS HAVE voiced their anger at NFUS Scotland for causing the delay in basic payments, following the disclosure by Scottish Government that the industry demands for three regions is a major reason for the delay.

Cabinet secretary for rural affairs Richard Lochhead named the industry insistence on having three regions and an associated headage scheme as a major contributor to the difficulties in getting payments out, and the consequential hardship for crofters and hill farmers. He said that NFUS was warned of the possible consequences of a three region system but remained resolute.

Ironically it is crofters, who were against having three regions, who are suffering most due to the complications of administering the system. Many crofters have ground in more than one region, often as a mix of region 1 inbye and region 3 hill ground and appear to be disproportionately affected by delays associated with processing these.

This is having a direct impact on basic payments; and the sheep headage scheme has yet to be addressed. Many crofters are saying that they are not attempting to claim headage payments, even though they are probably entitled to, due to the obvious chaos and

therefore a fear of subsequent penalties.

If anyone is getting paid it certainly does not appear to be crofters. SCF local groups are reporting that only a small number have been paid anything at the beginning of March, and that even this is a reduced instalment.

Our feedback suggests that only a small proportion of crofters have received letters illustrating what they could expect – a ludicrous state of affairs. Crofters are unable to plan for their enterprise if they are left in the dark as to what they may get paid.

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