



NEWS RELEASE

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CROFTING REFORM BILL 'OPPRESSIVE' SAY SCF

The draft Crofting Reform Bill currently out for consultation is 'out of touch' and 'out of balance' according to the Scottish Crofting Foundation (SCF), the only member-led organisation dedicated to promoting crofting.

SCF vice-chair Marina Dennis, who heads the SCF working group on crofting reform said "We have scrutinised the draft reform bill at length and have to conclude that once again the Scottish Government draftsmen have produced a bill that does not reflect what crofters have said is needed to revitalise crofting. Furthermore, it does not reflect what the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting said was needed but only takes parts of the committee's recommendations and either presents them out of context or misinterprets them completely. What we are offered is the suggestion to increase regulation, increase enforcement and increase costs to crofters, with no incentives to balance the package. Lots of stick and no carrot, at a time when crofting is struggling to bring in any return at all. This bill can only be described as oppressive. When we hear again and again crofters asking 'what is the benefit of being a crofter?' and young folk saying 'there is nothing in crofting to make me want to do it' we know there is something wrong."

The draft Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill consultation was launched on 19th May and is the culmination of a long process from a failed bill in 2005 / 2006. The Committee of Inquiry on Crofting which resulted presented its findings in May 2008 after a year-long investigation into crofting, the first study of its kind since the Taylor review in the fifties. The Scottish Government have been presenting their draft bill in a series of meetings throughout the crofting counties to a marked lack of enthusiasm. The consultation will conclude on 12th August.

Mrs Dennis concluded "We have been objective and fair in our assessment but it is not surprising that crofters are feeling disappointed with what is being presented. We do not blame the officials who have tried to do their best under what must be very restrictive direction from above, and they have managed to squeeze in the odd concession. But as we have said time and again, regulation alone isn't going to solve the problems crofting faces and adding costs is unacceptable and frankly insulting. If this government really wants crofting to flourish, as they claim, the message is simple: we need incentives for crofters to continue to croft and to encourage new-entrants, realistic payment for public goods delivered, fair support to the really

less-favoured areas and increased housing assistance to reflect costs. We will prepare a draft response to the consultation for our members to comment on". END

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Notes to editors

- Pictures can be found at: <http://www.croftingfoundation.co.uk/index.php/home>