



NEWS RELEASE

Use: Immediate

Date: 13/09/10

SCF LAUNCHES NEW TRAINING PILOT FOR CROFTERS AND SMALL LANDHOLDERS

On its 25th anniversary Annual Gathering in Oban, the Scottish Crofting Federation is launching a new pilot programme of skills development for crofters and small landholders.

Crofters and Small Landholders Skills for the 21st Century encompasses courses at Entry Level (Crofting Induction courses), covering subjects ranging from tenancy and ownership laws to livestock and land management, landscape and wildlife conservation, forestry, horticulture, finance and marketing, the European dimension, and community development. These are followed by wide ranging practical skills options under various individual unit headings of Crofting Livestock; Land Management; Conservation and environment; Crofter Forestry; Crofter Horticulture and Crofting Heritage skills.

The 18 month programme is responding to a recognised and pressing need for appropriate and affordable training in the crofting sector. It will also complement SCF's existing *SCF/Soil Association Crofting Connections* programme which provides crofting, land management and food production skills to secondary pupils in 23 schools across the crofting counties.

The Entry Level and practical skills courses will be delivered in seven areas across the Highlands and Islands: Inverness and East Highland; Skye, Wester Ross and Lochalsh; Western Isles; Argyll and the Islands; Northern Isles; Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey; Caithness and Sutherland.

During the life of the project it expects to provide training to around 210 people at Entry Level, and 420 on the practical skills programme. They will be delivered by specialists and accredited practical trainers who are themselves in tune with the small scale nature of crofting and smallholding in the Highlands.

While the Entry Level course is aimed at aspiring and new entrant crofters and small landholders, it is expected that the courses will also attract existing crofters looking to develop their skills and ensure they are keeping up to date with law and industry approved good practice.

John Bannister, SCF's Training Manager, said: "The Federation's aim is to underpin and develop appropriate skills for crofters, smallholders and rural contractors in the Highlands and Islands area. The skills programme in particular will be delivered through a structured system conforming to a range of National Occupational Standards which have been specifically designed by LANTRA in consultation with crofters and smallholders."

Scottish Government funding for the programme of £99,000 was confirmed by Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham on Monday (September 13) in her keynote address to the Scottish Crofting Federation's Annual Gathering in Oban. It is to be matched by contributions from

Highlands and Islands Enterprise, LANTRA, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Agricultural College and Forestry Commission Scotland.

Information about the courses is available from SCF headquarters on 01599 530005 and at www.crofting.org.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND TO ARRANGE TO SPEAK TO SCF'S TRAINING
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