

## Croft Tourism

We've farmed for livestock, we've farmed for subsidies, should we now farm for tourism?

We all think we live in the finest area of the country if not of the world but you can't eat the scenery. Or are there ways that we can use the attractions of the Highlands & Islands to enable us to make a living here?

### What we are doing

The SCF is starting a project to look at the opportunities of croft based tourism. This ties in with the work currently being done on establishing the croft brand and is part of the sustainable land use project.

We need to look at what the market is and where the growth areas are. Does crofting have a positive image? How can we exploit our image? Is there any premium from using a croft brand?

### Why we are doing it

Tourism can provide another income stream for crofters – especially now when all sorts of things in agriculture seems to be going wrong. In many cases, tourism can be more profitable than agriculture for less work and is natural fit – the livestock and crofting environment provides the attraction for the tourists. The SCF remit is to sustain crofting not just agriculture – if members are diversifying then the organisation needs to support them in that as well as in the traditional areas.

### What we want you to do

If you are running an existing business eg B&B, self catering, pony trekking, fishing trips, craft shop, quad bike safaris ..... get in touch. We want to know how you are getting on. Do you have advice for new starters. Or did you used to run a tourism business and have got out? Or if you are interested in establishing a tourist venture on your croft but don't know where to start – you can learn from those who have gone before.

Or if you know of anyone who might be interested, let me know and I will contact them.

Contact me Russell Smith, at [smith@drumbhan.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:smith@drumbhan.freeserve.co.uk), or 01863 766144 or via the SCF HQ.

We can all learn from the experiences of others. This project may lead to new advertising channels eg via the SCF website which would help you get more business.

### What could be the outcome

It will be up to yourselves to decide what assistance you want from the project but this could include anything from establishing a brand and kite mark to advertising croft enterprises to employing an advisor or pointing you in the direction of financial support or setting up training.

### Potential issues

We may think that we have a great product but will everyone agree? Do the general public know what “crofting” is – why would they pick a croft based enterprise rather than any other? Just because something is on a croft doesn’t mean to say it is any good! Will we need basic standards, eg something like VisitScotland’s star rating, to weed out low quality businesses who will damage the brand. How will any scheme be paid for? Do we restrict it to SCF members or to all crofters or to all businesses in crofting areas? Most tourism is seasonal and may require capital investment and new skills.

### What happens next

Please get in touch if you are interested. Then we can get together either in person or over the phone to discuss what help you want (if any) from the project.

Russell Smith