



NEWS RELEASE

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CROFTERS WILL CARRY ON REGARDLESS

The Scottish Crofting Federation have greeted the Crofting Reform Bill, voted through Parliament yesterday, as 'a double edged sword' but are confident that crofting will continue despite it.

Marina Dennis, convenor of the SCF crofting reform working group, said "We are pleased that the Bill has been voted through as parts of the existing legislation are not fit for purpose. Getting the Bill through means it can always be re-visited, but it is a double-edged sword. For example, we have always pressed for a map-based crofting register which has been voted through but the methods proposed by the government to implement this – the controversial compulsory 'trigger' system and the associated costs to crofters could have the effect of stagnating any movement of crofts. The government claim that this Bill is designed to free up crofts but this poorly thought out procedure could actually cause exactly the opposite. However, the SCF are working on a crofting community planning programme to help crofting communities to map their assets in a practical and empowering way. This will proceed despite the government's intentions."

The Crofting Reform Bill was debated in the Scottish Parliament yesterday with some 230 amendments voted on. Most were carried by a few votes by the SNP government supported by the Conservatives and the Greens. The Bill itself was then voted through at Decision Time, again by a narrow margin voting 'yes'.

Patrick Krause, the SCF's Chief Executive, added "It was a great shame that some very practical and helpful amendments were rejected by such a small margin, but we thank those MSPs that lodged them. It is widely recognised that this new Act will not be the panacea for crofting – it attempts to make the legislation more effective but can not make crofting viable. The entire way we look at food production and land management has to fundamentally change. Crofters are producing good food, naturally, using methods that enhance the environment and are sustainable. This protects the landscape that a recent survey showed as the number one reason tourists come to Scotland. Crofters also manage Europe's largest peat-lands which capture and lock up huge amounts of carbon. Crofters should be rewarded for the benefits and public goods they provide."

END

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Notes to editors

- Pictures can be found at: <http://www.crofting.org>