



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**Use: Immediate**

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### **SCF WARN THAT GOVERNMENT CROFT REGISTER PLAN COULD ROB CROFTERS OF THEIR RIGHTS**

The Scottish Crofting Federation have warned that the Scottish Government plan for a compulsory register of croft-land could lead to many traditional crofting rights being lost.

The proposal for a Register of Crofts to be compiled and held by Registers of Scotland is part of the controversial Crofting Reform Bill which was debated in Parliament yesterday.

Norman Leask, SCF's Parliamentary spokesman, said "It is astonishing that the government are still doggedly going down this track, even against advice from crofting lawyers, the experts in this field. There was also significant questioning of the need for there to be two Registers of Crofts by the Parliamentary committee who scrutinised the Bill and by MSPs from across the parties in the debating chamber yesterday. There is an existing register held by the Crofters Commission which needs to be completed and would benefit by up-grading to include croft maps. This will be all that is needed and is all that crofters have asked for. But the Government is insisting that a second register needs to be compiled, at crofters' cost, to put crofts on to the land register, a property register held by Registers of Scotland in Edinburgh. Our legal advice is that the Keeper of this register is highly unlikely to record all the information that is pertinent to crofts, such as grazing rights, hill share and souming (number of livestock allowed), peat cutting rights, the position of nousts (where boats are kept), rights of access and so on. If title is then exchanged without these rights recorded they are lost forever."

"Furthermore", Mr Leask continued, "the Government insistence that mapping of crofts should be compulsory on a 'trigger' activated mechanism is nothing short of a colonial attitude and has been condemned by crofting lawyers. Government officials saying 'you will do it or else' in this age of supposed enlightened government does not go down well at all. Crofting communities are capable of mapping themselves should they wish to."

The Parliamentary Rural Affairs and Environment Committee, who scrutinised the Bill, reflected the wide support for community-led mapping in their report and advised that government should offer incentives for this.

“Mapping of crofts by the crofters themselves as part of wider township development plans can have many benefits for communities taking charge of their own development”, said Leask. “This opportunity would be wasted in the Government proposal which would be counter productive, causing endless dispute and halting crofting development in its tracks”. Mr Leask concluded, “The minister has conceded that she will hold off her dogs for a year, but if there is going to be a compulsory trigger-activated process then a postponement of at least five years is needed to allow communities to map themselves. We appreciate that the minister is trying to do her best for crofting but this whole issue of an inadequate property register of crofts held in Edinburgh, compiled by compulsory mapping at crofters’ expense, will have to be knocked on the head at Stage 2 of the progress of the Bill for it to be accepted by crofters. I will be going down to meet with the Minister next week and this will be top of the agenda.”  
END

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**Notes to editors**

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