SCOTTISH CROFTING FEDERATION (SCF) has emphasised the need for a grant scheme specific to crofting in the next round of the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). This comes in a Parliamentary report sent to the Scottish Government last week.

The Parliamentary Cross-party Group on Crofting, of which SCF holds the secretariat, convened a working-group to explore how the revised Rural Development Programme can help crofting and sent their recommendations to the Scottish Government team working on the new SRDP.

SCF’s Parliamentary spokesman Norman Leask said, “It is uncertain exactly when it will take effect, but there is a new SRDP under development now. It was originally scheduled to start in 2014, but despite a possible delay we have fed our views into the development team as it is imperative that the needs of crofting are taken into account as it is being designed. The government officials are being very receptive and helpful in this. We are suggesting that a new scheme, which we have called the Crofting Support Programme (CSP), should replace the Crofting Counties Agricultural Grant Scheme (CCAGS). As well as the existing measures in CCAGS, the CSP would have new options specifically aimed at crofters and common grazings. We also call for reinstatement of Standard Costs, increased intervention rates, increased capital grants and improved scheme accessibility. We have urged that the scheme should continue to be specifically for crofters.”

Along with the SCF the working-group comprised representatives from organisations and agencies that have an interest in crofting including the Crofting Commission, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, NFU Scotland, European Forum for Nature Conservation & Pastoralism, RSPB and SNH. Consensus was reached on all points, though the report includes a view from NFU Scotland that the scheme should be opened out to non-crofters. This found no support in the group.

Mr Leask added, “CCAGS is a crofters’ scheme and so should the CSP be – the name says it all. Why anyone would want to open it to non-crofters is beyond me. Crofting is the only regulated land tenure system of its kind in Scotland, or perhaps anywhere. It is a model of rural development and as such should have its own support scheme. If non-croft holdings want to
enjoy the benefits of being regulated, such as the CSP, they can become crofts. We would welcome that.”

END

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