

## Crofting Commission tackles issues of crofting lifeblood

IT IS VERY heartening to see that the Crofting Commission has recently appointed a consultant – Gwyn Jones, who is known to many in crofting and who has a record of first-rate research in essential crofting matters such as common grazings and the use of SRDP – to study how subsidy support systems currently support crofting, and to put forward proposals on how it might do so in future after Brexit.

Gwyn will report in the summer. See the Commission article on this on page 4.

The Commission has also offered to help SCF in a pilot project to bring together those with unused croft land and young people looking for a croft. The intention is to trial this in the Outer Hebrides. An application has been submitted by SCF to Leader for funding.

This is an essential area that SCF and the Crofting Commission can collaborate in – getting crofts back into use and bringing young folk into crofting.

## Post-Brexit agricultural support: the tide is turning

MANY SPENT the first few days of this working year in Oxford at the Oxford Real Farming Conference.

It started nine years ago with the aim of helping create a more enlightened agriculture, bringing together producers with scientists,

economists, activists and lawyers – and everyone else with a serious interest in food and agriculture. It is now considerably better attended than the industry's older Oxford Farming Conference, which takes place at the same time down the road. Videos of presentations and

papers can be found on the Oxford Real Farming Conference website.

This year, secretary of state for environment Michael Gove spoke on farming for the next generation, outlining a vision for a

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## The future of crofting legislation is hanging in the balance

THE SCOTTISH Government's consultation on crofting law closed 20th November and the results are being analysed still.

The results are clearly causing some bafflement. Surrounded by peripheral questions, the thing that most respondents will have deliberated upon, and will want to know, is which route Scottish Government intends to take to reform crofting law. Options offered ranged from doing nothing to starting again with a clean sheet – rewriting crofting law.

Looking at the responses to the consultation, it is significant not so much how different options were chosen as expected, but how the

lines between options were blurred. The difference between option 2, amendment and consolidation, and option 3, restatement of law, was never very clear anyway; but option 4, a clean sheet, would at first seem to stand out from the others as something new and different, until you read the responses.

The main organisations that opted for the clean sheet, including Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Shetland Isles Council and NFUS, all say that they want a clean sheet with caveats; a new bill pre-populated with all that is useful in current legislation. Not quite a clean sheet, but it is heartening that they don't simply want to start again, nigh on an impossibility wrought with

difficulty and risk.

Option 4 with caveats is actually not that far from options 2 and 3, the options chosen by such organisations as SCF, the Crofting Commission, Scottish Land and Estates, Law Society Scotland and SAC Consultants, as well as legal experts Derek Flynn and Brian Inkster – wanting all that isn't useful in current legislation to be taken out, retaining good law for a new bill.

It is quite difficult to see the difference, as both approaches can achieve the same end – a crofting bill that leads to law that helps rather than hinders crofters and crofting.

Scottish Government recently

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