UK agriculture: the bill, the theft and the future

WESTMINSTER recently released an agriculture bill, setting out UK secretary of state for agriculture Michael Gove’s intentions for agriculture for England and Wales.

Scotland’s cabinet secretary for rural economy, Fergus Ewing, responded angrily, particularly at the prospect of certain aspects of agriculture in the bill being claimed to be reserved, having been devolved to the Scottish government since 1999. The indignation expressed by Mr Ewing is justifiable, and should be supported by us all. However, the power-grab is a different battle to fight and must not be confused with the overall direction of the agriculture bill.

The relevance of the bill to Scotland’s crofters and the Highlands and Islands is yet to be seen, though one would assume that as the UK government will be setting out an agriculture framework for UK, there will be some leakage of Mr Gove’s quite radical ideas into the Scottish system. However, it is the Scottish government and parliament that should ultimately decide on the shape and details of the new rural and agricultural policy.

Cross Party Group on Crofting discusses crofting support

AT THE September meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Crofting (CPGoC) in Inverness, consultant Gwyn Jones presented the findings of his study and report Support for Crofting, prepared for the Crofting Commission.

This impartial and well-presented research clearly shows that existing support mechanisms do not work as well as they could for crofting. The research examines what works and what does not, and goes on to make recommendations on how support can be improved. This is very timely, with the interim phase to agricultural and rural development support being explored in the Scottish government consultation Stability and Simplicity, and with ongoing discussions being held on what the Scottish rural support system will look like post-Brexit.

We are very pleased that the Crofting Commission has taken the initiative to have this research carried out under its remit to promote the interests of crofting and to keep under review matters relating to crofting – and they selected a very experienced and applied consultant to do the job. It demonstrates a proactive commission...Continued on page 3