



NEWS RELEASE

Use: Immediate

Date: 08/08/2016

CROFTERS MAKE IT CLEAR: THE COMMISSION CAN STAY BUT THE CONVENER HAS TO GO

A meeting attended by eighty crofters in Stornoway concluded that a Crofting Commission is good for crofting, but it is currently not fit for purpose so the convener, Colin Kennedy, must go.

A crofting meeting organised by the Scottish Crofting Federation held in Stornoway last week, attended by eighty crofters from townships all over Lewis and Harris, gave a clear message to the Scottish Government: the convener of the Crofting Commission must step down; the Upper Coll grazings committee must be re-instated; the current Crofting Commission must be sorted out by Scottish Government but, nonetheless, a Commission is essential to crofting.

Vice-chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF), Russell Smith, said, "It was a loud and clear message coming out of a very lively but thoughtful discussion. This is not knee-jerk reaction; the attack on common grazings committees by the Crofting Commission has been on-going now for several months so crofters have had plenty of time to think about this. It is not surprising that there is a call for the convener of the Commission to stand down and for deposed committees to be re-instated. It is perhaps more notable that, despite what is widely regarded as very poor behaviour, the Crofting Commission is still wanted, albeit following a thorough review and improvement of procedures. I think that this is a very sensible approach."

The meeting heard presentations from representatives of the removed Lewis grazings committees, SCF, Inksters Lawyers and Scottish Government, not only on the topic of the Crofting Commission but also on CAP, support to crofting and advocacy for crofting. The meeting, that sometimes became quite heated, was well-chaired by SCF member Donald MacSween.

Mr Smith continued, "We can understand the Scottish Government's reluctance to interfere with a majority-elected body, but the meeting was united in its view that the Scottish Government does have to intervene in this circumstance. The procedures of the Commission clearly need to be investigated and modified to stop this sort of thing happening again. The Crofting Commission may well be an 'arms-length government body', but the Scottish Government still has a responsibility to make sure that the Commission operates in a fair and

reasonable manner – and does possess the powers to intervene, for example by removing a Commissioner, if it sees fit.”

Following discussions a vote was called on the motion “this meeting has no confidence in the existing Crofting Commission and supports the SCF call for the resignation of the convener Colin Kennedy”. The motion was passed by an overwhelming majority.

END

Contact:

Russell Smith, SCF Vice-chair	01863 766 144 / 07899 896 001
Brendan O-Hanrahan, SCF director	01854 666 207 / 07766 462 844
Fiona Mandeville, SCF Chair	01471 822 555 / 07764 161 777
SCF Office	01599 530 005

Notes to editors

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