



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**Use: Immediate**

**Date: 09/10/2018**

### **Crofting Federation calls on the Comhairle to provide concrete assurances on abattoir provision in Stornoway**

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) calls on Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to provide reassurance to the crofting community of Lewis and Harris, following a report before the Comhairle's Policy and Resources committee on the 2nd October which outlined proposals for the sale of the current Stornoway abattoir site to a developer and the, apparently unplanned, relocation of the service.

"The Stornoway abattoir is central to crofting in Lewis and Harris" said SCF board member, Donald Mackinnon. "It is of great concern that the Comhairle would consider selling the site without concrete plans in place for how the service will be provided in the future. Before any discussions begin about the sale of the current site assurances must be given to the crofting community about where a new facility will be located and how its construction will be funded. Importantly, planning permission should be secured. A decision to sell the current abattoir site without these in place risks the future provision of abattoir facilities in Lewis and Harris and as a result the future of crofting itself in the area."

SCF vice-chair Yvonne White added, "It would be very short sighted of the Comhairle to agree to the sale of the current site without firm plans in place for the future. We have seen in Skye just how difficult securing funding and obtaining planning permission can be for a small abattoir."

Mr MacKinnon continued, "Without an abattoir facility in Stornoway, crofters in Lewis and Harris would be faced with a two-and-a-half-hour ferry trip, followed by a 45 mile road journey to get their livestock killed in Dingwall. For the vast majority of crofters this would simply be an unfeasible prospect.

"We welcome the acknowledgement that the current facility is in need of improvement, however we feel that this could be best achieved on the current site. Undoubtedly there are changes that the crofters of Lewis and Harris would like to see, not least the extension of opening times out-with the autumn season."

Mr MacKinnon concluded “The uncertainty of Brexit and the possible loss of traditional markets makes the option of selling direct to the consumer more important than ever for crofters. The Comhairle should recognise this and ensure that abattoir services continue to be provided in Stornoway. If the future of Scottish agriculture is to be high quality, niche products then access to small abattoirs is vital. It is time that the Scottish Government also acknowledges this and lends its support to the development and continuation of small abattoir facilities throughout the crofting counties.”

END

Contact:

Donald MacKinnon, SCF board member	07767360142
Yvonne White, SCF Vice-Chair	01470 532 729 / 07545 459 929
Russell Smith, SCF Chair	01863 766 144 / 07899 896 001
Patrick Krause, SCF Chief Executive	07739 941 199
SCF Office	01599 530 005

**Notes to editors**

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