



NEWS RELEASE

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Federation denounces councillors for betraying crofting

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) reacted to a planning decision with strong criticism of Highland councillors who ignored the regulator and their own policy in advocating using productive inbye croft land for housing development.

"That these councillors claim to represent Highland interests is fallacy" said Yvonne White, Chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF). "Crofting is deeply rooted in the Highland culture and communities. The croft inbye is the good land, the land that we need to protect for food production. It is scarce in the Highlands and Islands and, who knows, we may well be needing every scrap we can get in the near future. There is alternative land that is not suitable for food production available for houses. It is galling to hear councillors, who are supposed to be our representatives, say that housing trumps the need to protect croft inbye. Granting development consent on inbye is rarely necessary and these recent assertions demonstrate a disappointing degree of ignorance or bias against crofting".

Ms White went on to say, "Coincidentally, on the day the Highland Council were deliberating upon this subject, so relevant to the future of crofting, an article in the media lamented the plight of young people trying to get into crofting but thwarted by exorbitant land prices. The value put on croft land is inflated by the fact that crofts are often situated in areas of outstanding natural beauty. People with the desire to own a holiday or retirement house amidst this beautiful scenery rarely want a croft to work, but have the purchasing power to push croft prices up and out of reach of young folk. This situation is exacerbated by councillors fuelling croft prices by giving planning consent for inappropriate developments on croft inbye. In this case it was even against the recommendation of the Crofting Commission, a statutory consultee, and their own planning officer. Are councillors competent to over-rule two professional recommendations and their own policy which 'seeks to protect croft land and crofting as a core component of life in the Highlands'? Comments made by some councillors about crofting seemed to be prejudiced against crofters and not worthy of someone in public office within a crofting county. We will be taking this up with the council.

"We all know that young folk are the future of the Highlands and Islands", concluded Ms White, but it is difficult for them due to the work situation, jobs being scarce, seasonal and insecure. Crofting can give them a foothold to live here, the necessary resilience. We have numerous examples of young families thriving because they have a croft. This irresponsible behaviour by the councillors is nothing short of betrayal of our culture and of our future."

END

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