



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation offers proposals for taking crofting forward

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has responded to the Scottish Government 'Crofting Consultation 2017' with a clear set of proposals to form new fit-for-purpose legislation before 2021, the end of this government term.

"There are a range of possibilities being talked about", said Russell Smith, the chair of the SCF, "ranging from doing nothing to starting all over again with completely new law. Having consulted with our members over a long period of time it is clear that crofters do not want to lose any of their existing protection and rights and therefore want existing law, law that has evolved over many years, to be made fit for purpose. There is the perpetual hope that crofting legislation will interfere with crofting less and help it more.

"There are three fundamentals that can be done relatively quickly and to great effect", Mr Smith continued. "To begin with, a lot of work has been done already by the Crofting Law Group on compiling the issues that need correcting to make the law work. The law can be fixed.

"Along with this, crofting development must be returned to the Crofting Commission which is best placed to implement it in conjunction with regulation. The Crofting Commission will then have a more holistic role in which to best serve crofting. However, the Crofting Commission cannot carry out all its functions if inadequately resourced. So we call on Scottish Government to sufficiently resource the Commission; if it cannot, this needs to be stated and an alternative plan for crofting put forward.

"And the third leg to the stool is common grazings", Mr Smith added, "a high priority for the Commission in its role of crofting development. Common grazings must be effectively regulated and grazings shares must be used. Shares getting separated from crofts is a failure of the law that really needs to be rectified and shares reconnected to active crofts and used. Then agricultural and rural development support schemes need to be appropriate to common grazings, not left as an after-thought."

Mr Smith concluded, "Do these three things and crofting will have a chance to flourish. A common theme from our membership has been to question why we are going through this navel-gazing

again; there is a feeling that this is wasting valuable time given that the Scottish Government have set the target of 'modernising crofting law and making it more transparent, understandable and workable in practice' within the term of this government. This has already been a long road and needs to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion."

END

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Notes to editors

- The full SCF response to the Crofting Consultation 2017 can be found at:
<http://www.crofting.org>