



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting support is shown to be lacking, says Federation

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has welcomed the research report 'Support for Crofting' released today by the Crofting Commission, saying it demonstrates that crofting support is lacking and needs to be redesigned.

"This impartial and well-presented research clearly shows that existing support mechanisms do not work as well as they could for crofting" said Russell Smith, Chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF). "The researcher, Gwyn Jones, 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 the on-going discussions being held on what the Scottish rural support system will look like post-Brexit.

Mr Smith went on, "We are very pleased that the Crofting Commission has taken the initiative to have this research carried out under their 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 that is willing to be more than just a regulator. We welcome this development of the government agency for crofting."

The Crofting Commission employed Gwyn Jones, who is a director of the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism and the author of several studies relating to crofting, common grazings and UK and Irish support and development mechanisms, to carry out this research. His remit was to 'examine the extent to which the support payments currently available to crofters are sufficient to achieve the Scottish Government's objectives for crofting and the sustainability of the crofting system and to identify alternative support systems that might achieve these objectives to a greater extent in future.'

Mr Smith continued, "The report demonstrates what we have said for a long time, that adding crofting to a support mechanism designed for farms doesn't work well; crofts are different and have unique challenges as well as offering exceptional public goods. Mr Jones favours adapting the support system to work better for crofting, rather than developing a croft-only scheme. We can go with that, the object being to deliver croft-friendly outcomes. The report recommends

schemes specifically catering for small-scale, less-intensive crofts and crofting common grazings and recommends the design of systems that encourage small steps of improvement, activity on an appropriate scale, accessible training, a scheme to encourage the passing on of crofts to new entrants and adapting capital grant schemes such as CAGS to include woodland crofts. Mr Jones also recommends the redesign of the LFASS / ANC – support to constrained areas – so that it does actually favour the constrained areas, something the SCF has advocated for a long time.

“The report contains a wealth of information and a range of recommendations SCF will be promoting” concluded Mr Smith. “This is going to be seen as a benchmark piece of work and I would recommend everyone who has an interest in crofting to read it and use it to inform Scottish Government, whose stated objective is to have crofts occupied and cultivated - so they need to back this up with appropriate support.”

END

Contact:

Russell Smith, SCF Chair	01863 766 144 / 07899 896 001
Yvonne White, SCF Vice-Chair	01470 532 729 / 07545 459 929
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>