



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation greets SNH admission that sea eagles do kill healthy lambs

SCF was pleased to see the publication of the sea eagle management plan by SNH last week, accompanied by an unequivocal admission that healthy lambs are killed by the birds.

SCF chair, Yvonne White, commented, "SCF is closely involved in trying to address the sea eagle issue, which results in sometimes devastating losses to crofters all along the western seaboard. So it is useful for all to see the sea eagle management plan published.

"We particularly welcome the fact that SNH has quite unequivocally stated that healthy lambs are taken. This has been long overdue and is the first time that SNH and, by implication, RSPB, who also sit on the national stakeholders' group, have so publicly acknowledged this without reservations. It is something that crofters have known for the best part of 20 years."

Ms White went on to say, "While we acknowledge the readiness of SNH and RSPB to engage intensively with crofting interests, we still have a long way to go before a mutually acceptable balance can be found between crofters managing sheep on extensive hill grazings and conservation of sea eagles. We have had too many cases already of crofters having to abandon their use of valuable hill grazing, increasing pressure on their scarce inbye and leading to greatly increased feed bills. Yet this method of extensive, low-input sheep husbandry is at the heart of the High Nature Value Farming model which is so beneficial for both upland biodiversity and reducing the carbon footprint of sheep farming in Scotland.

"SCF is also concerned that an increase in sea eagle numbers and the further expansion of their range may result in ever more crofters' flock predation across the Highlands and Islands," added Ms White. "We are worried that the current level of support for eagle predation-affected crofters will not be sufficiently expanded to keep pace with this increase in the impacted area.

"We therefore recently joined with other organisations in writing to the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham, to urge her to at least maintain the current level of funding for SNH's sea eagle work. However, we believe that more imaginative and far-reaching measures will need to be funded by government over the next 5 to 10 years if crofters and farmers are going to receive the kind of effective help that will enable them to properly cope with the impacts of sea eagle predation," concluded Ms White.

END

Contact:

Yvonne White, SCF chair	07545 459 929
Brendan O'Hanrahan, SCF vice-chair	07766 462 844
Russell Smith, chair of SCF agriculture group	07899 896 001
SCF office	01599 530 005

Notes to editors

Please contact SCF office for high resolution photos