



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation highlights need for land for croft new entrants

Scottish Crofting Federation has commended the Scottish Government on its announcement of more land having been made available for new start-up farms and stresses that land must also be made available for croft new entrants.

“It is good news that Scottish Government is recognising the need to make more land available to new entrants to agriculture,” said Donald MacKinnon, vice-chair of SCF. “They have announced that 6,400 hectares of land have been contributed by public bodies to create new start-up farms. Both HIE and Highland Council have donated land but there is no mention of whether there has been consideration of the creation of new crofts on this land. It would be remiss if not.

Mr MacKinnon went on to say, “Recently Highlands & Islands Enterprise announced that they intend to sell the Orbst estate in Skye, which they have owned since 1997. This project had the intention of creating new crofts but the legislation at the time did not allow for this. A few smallholdings now exist on the estate, however, the bulk of it is managed as one farm and some woodland. What we would like to see explored is the potential for the creation of new bare-land crofts or woodland crofts.”

Mr MacKinnon added, “We recently saw the establishment of the Scottish Farm Land Trust, an organisation which aims to emulate the very successful initiatives happening on the continent. The SFLT recently carried out a survey asking if people are interested in starting to farm: they had 1,286 positive responses!

“This demonstrates that there are many people who would like to get onto the land. A key driver of land reform in Scotland has been the aspiration to increase the number of people who occupy, own, manage and have a say in Scotland’s land. These two need to be joined up.

“In the Scottish Farm Land Trust survey, 73% of those wanting to farm wanted less than 20ha. A fear of insecurity of tenure was cited by 56% of respondents as a barrier to entering farming. This points clearly at the answer being the creation of crofts”, Mr MacKinnon concluded.

END

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Notes to editors

Please contact SCF office for high resolution photos