



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation rates National Council of Rural Advisors' consultation as "shallow"

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has submitted a response to the National Council of Rural Advisors' consultation on rural development post-Brexit, branding it as shallow and lacking substance.

"It is all well and good to go over the same old issues of what is holding rural Scotland back" said Russell Smith, Chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF), "but we were hoping that this consultation would be about how Brexit will affect rural development in Scotland and what a Rural Economic Strategy will need to look like to cope with the inevitable changes. The remit of the National Council of Rural Advisors (NCRA) is 'to provide evidence-based advice on the implications of Scotland leaving the EU and to recommend future actions that could sustain a vibrant and flourishing rural economy'. The consultation itself doesn't frame any questions in the context of Brexit but rather focuses on problems that exist despite Brexit and doesn't offer any suggested solutions to further problems that Brexit will bring. It therefore comes across as being shallow and lacking substance."

The consultation, due to close today 24th July, comprises 10 areas of questions. In the forward it is stated "Our aim for this document is to mark a sea change within rural development policy of the recent past."

Mr Smith continued, "There is mention of previous policy initiatives. The document states: 'There are many existing policy drivers and initiatives dating back over 25 years ... It is time now to build upon these and consider how we operate, think, and act strategically.' But the NCRA consultation does not capture that context, does not identify what has gone before, what was achieved, what was not achieved and why not – leading to what needs to be done. Many objectives in rural development are met by crofting. Perhaps this is for the Rural Economic Strategy itself?"

"A glaring omission is that there is no discussion or tackling of the land reform issues which are essential to the well-being of rural Scotland. This is bedrock policy, something that defines rural Scotland, yet there is no discussion of this or of the intention of having the land resource shared by more people through, for example, the creation of crofts."

Mr Smith concluded, "The limited composition of the NCRA we have drawn attention to before, there being no-one from north of Perth on it. This has not been compensated for by the spread, or rather lack of spread of the conversation venues – not one in Shetland, and only one in central Highland to cover the whole Highland economic region. We hope that this is just the start of the conversation that will, in future, reach greater depths."

END

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Notes to editors

- A picture can be found at: <http://www.crofting.org>