



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation's new chair urges crofters to "stand together under one banner".

The newly appointed chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) outlined his plans for the work the SCF has to do in support of crofting over the coming two years.

At their board and council meeting last Friday, the SCF said thanks to the out-going chair, Fiona Mandeville, who stepped down on completion of her two year tenure. Fiona handed the role to Russell Smith, a crofter from Bonar Bridge in Sutherland.

Mr Smith commented, "The Federation has achieved a great deal in the past two years, not least the pledges made by the SNP in their manifesto and confirmed recently by the Cabinet Secretary for crofting, Fergus Ewing MSP. The pledges mirror the 'Five Actions for Crofting' published by the SCF just before the election.

We have brought crofting very much back on to the Scottish Government agenda with the promise from them to modernise crofting law and make it more transparent, understandable and workable in practice. This will be no mean feat but the law needs to be made to work for crofters not for lawyers. We have won a substantial improvement in the Croft House Grant Scheme and await the government's action to re-introduce the Croft House Loan Scheme.

"Scottish Government will also explore mechanisms to make more publicly owned land available to new entrants, a long running campaign of the SCF", Mr Smith continued, and have promised to introduce a new entrant's scheme for crofting and to explore the creation of new woodland crofts. At last the National Development Plan for Crofting we asked for is closer to becoming a reality.

"So, yes, we have achieved a lot, but there is still much to do", Mr Smith concluded. "With the prospect of leaving the European Union, one of the few certainties is that support to agriculture and particularly to crofting will have to be fought for. Being the only organisation solely dedicated to representing crofters means that SCF will have to fight hard to avoid being marginalised by big farmers in other parts of the country. Crofters need to stand together under one banner so that our voices can be heard".

END

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Notes to editors

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