

Redistribution of public funds under a new CAP

IN THE DISCUSSIONS and negotiations on the CAP in Scotland there have been several suggestions for new strategies for using the CAP allocation.

They invariably involve redistribution of payments from the current out-dated model which favours large mono-culture agri-businesses – yes, there are farmers in Scotland who receive over £1 million of public money per year – to a more accountable structure that rewards environmental protection and social cohesion.

SCF suggested a specific work-stream for vulnerable areas that would target support to the more fragile and remote areas, which also tend to coincide with the High Nature Value (HNV) areas. This has been developed by the Highland and Island agricultural support group, who have commissioned a study and put forward recommendations for vulnerable farming areas.

SCF is also working on a proposition for a croft-only payment which would tie in many support mechanisms to one scheme, a crofting counties agro-ecological grant scheme, something like an enhanced CCAGS.

A well-researched and technical proposal comes from a study undertaken by SAC for Scottish Natural Heritage on alternative payment approaches for non-economic farming systems delivering environmental public goods. In other words, payment for holdings that are on the edge of viability that we want to keep as they provide public goods such as environmental protection and social cohesion.

In his forward to the report on the study Peter Pitkin, principal advisor for SNH says: "Existing agri-environment scheme payments are restricted by the

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Taking stock

IT LOOKS SIMPLE. You put some ewes to the tup, turn them out to the hill, gather them in, sell their lambs and bank the proceeds.

If it was really like that there wouldn't be the crisis of destocking and land abandonment that has now been confirmed in at least four reports commissioned by the Scottish Government and its agencies. Since that well-documented exodus from the hills and moors we have seen a recovery in sheep and

lamb prices to a position not seen for at least twenty years – but how can crofters use their underused resource of common grazing land to benefit from the stronger trade in all classes of sheep?

SCF's Taking Stock survey of crofters' stock clubs asked whether this model of hill livestock management, well established in some areas, could provide a route back to sustainable use of hill and moor grazings.

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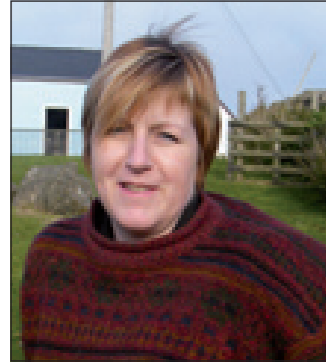
Flagship stud farm in the offing

THANKS to the efforts of the bull hire review group, on which SCF was represented by Marina Dennis, a new facility is to be built at Knocknagael. Back in 2008 SCF succeeded in persuading then minister for crofting Mike Russell to rethink plans for closing the farm.

"It's a great relief to hear that our efforts were not in vain," Marina commented. "There is no doubt that the bulls from the stud made a vital contribution to the quality of crofters' herds and its loss was unthinkable and a threat to the viability of many croft enterprises."

See page 2 for more information.

Message from the chair...



Eleanor Arthur

was excellent. In Shetland we have stunning views but Skye was just lovely, especially as we were staying in the college pent-house accommodation. The sunrise in the morning was outstanding and as the day progressed the weather deteriorated into very rough weather and seas. What a beautiful place.

We had a fair range of excellent speakers from all over Scotland, making very good, interesting listening which generated discussion over the two days. Our own minister, Stewart Stevenson, gave the opening address. The Crofting Connections school children were a welcome addition too at the college, where they sang and played to a captivated audience. A big thank you goes to them.

A maybe not very exciting, but very important, issue is happening at the moment – CAP reform, which seems to have been going on for ever. But we now have proposals from the European Commission that go to the European Parliament and council for modification and approval; so we still have ample opportunity to influence the outcome and try to get a fairer deal for Scotland. And we have to negotiate in Scotland for a fairer deal for crofters. We have had SCF officials in Edinburgh, London and Brussels and will continue to fight.

As a crofting assessor, I am looking forward to the assessors' conference in Inverness. We will be discussing, amongst other things, common grazings. We must make more use of them and

protect this very valuable resource. There will also be a session on the Crofting Commission elections which will take place next spring. Please get involved and either stand as a commissioner yourself or nominate someone. This is a great opportunity for crofting.

Since October Shetland has had very wet and windy weather with severe disruptions to the Northlink ferries. This has had considerable effect on the shipping of livestock. Our beasts are having to wait for a weather window or have very poor travelling conditions. I should also include passengers in this too. One trip which should have been 14 hours turned into 28 hours! Not very encouraging at all. Now with the clocks being set back, darkness is at 4.30pm, so this makes for a long winter.

THE SCF annual gathering, held in Sabhal Mor Ostaig in Skye, was the highlight of the last few months. No, the highlight of the year.

It was a great opportunity to visit another island and the hospitality shown to us by SMO

Vote for your commissioners

WE REMINDED READERS in the last issue of *The Crofter* that the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 makes provision to elect commissioners to the Crofting Commission, as it will be called, to make it more democratic and accountable.

A consultation on procedure closed on 5th October, the results of which should be publicised soon. The proposals put forward seem to be workable.

With the opportunity to vote for new Crofters Commissioners comes the responsibility to vote. It is vital that as many eligible crofters as possible vote in the elections next year.

It is essential that the details held on the Crofting Register by the Commission are accurate so that all registered crofters receive a ballot paper.

The Commission has written to crofters asking them ensure their details are recorded properly, but of course they could only write to the addresses they have. If you have not already done so, make sure the Commission has your correct name and address on their records. It will be too late to make changes and get a ballot paper once the ballot papers have been issued.

Director's blog...

I WAS ALL SET to be hopping mad when I heard that the Scottish Government had ignored the recommendation made by the bull hire review group on which I represented the SCF.

We had recommended that a new stud farm be built at Balrobert, which is more remote than Knocknagael in relation to the city of Inverness. And the Scottish Government did not listen after the months of research and discussion undertaken by the review group. However, I thought I had better get it straight from the horse's mouth and spoke to John Cowan, the farm manager at Knocknagael.

The news was good. Plans have been submitted to Highland Council for a new state-of-the-art stud farm at Knocknagael which, all being well, will be up and running by November 2012. An engineer's report on the Balrobert site concluded that it would be scarily expensive to develop. However, it has not been lost on me that in

2001 when I was a commissioner at the Crofters Commission, plans were drawn up for a new build at Knocknagael but the plug was pulled on the proposal.

The current Knocknagael buildings will be demolished, the site levelled and a 'comprehensive flagship stud farm' built. It will also be a centre for training staff from SEPA, SNH, HSE, SAC and others interested in agricultural issues. There will only be two bulls to a pen – and it will be cheaper, easier and so much safer for man and beast.

The management of the scheme will no longer be the responsibility of the Crofters Commission but will be administered by SGIRPID in Inverness and called the Scottish Government Bull Scheme Knocknagael. So the bull scheme has been well and truly saved and I believe the review group played a big part in that.

So once again crofters can say they have a department bull – just like the old days.



Marina Dennis

Redistribution of public funds under a new CAP

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requirement to base these primarily on income foregone and additional costs. However, for farming systems that exhibit very low levels of profitability or declining profitability, existing agri-environment payments simply perpetuate the low levels of profitability that tend to characterise the extensive farming that is often particularly associated with biodiversity and other environmental goods and services. Where systems are not profitable, the income foregone formula is clearly irrelevant and, where there is a public interest in supporting such farming systems, other approaches are needed."

Three alternative payment approaches were tested:

1. Full cost of management (FCM) approach. The FCM formula is proposed as an agri-environment-type, site-specific payment, which would be justifiable where a management activity is unprofitable. The calculations are based on the full cost of management, including a proportion of the fixed costs.

The other approaches are based on the less favoured areas formula:

2. Holding-wide payment approach – based on assistance for disadvantaged regions where farming systems provide environmental public goods. This approach explores the scope to develop holding-level payments based on a whole-farm agri-environment undertaking and is based on estimated gross margins.

3. Opportunity cost payment approach. This also involves a holding-level approach, but is based on the opportunity cost of farming expressed in the form of alternative income options within areas subject to natural handicaps.

Peter concludes: "The report highlights that there is a strong case for developing alternative payment approaches in certain circumstances and that these are likely to be compatible with WTO requirements. The analysis provides a valuable contribution to the debate about how best to support the delivery of environmental public goods where farming provides the best mechanism but where the financial returns are marginal (as with much HNV farming)."

EC sets out new CAP



© Martin Benson

A MILESTONE in Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform deliberations passed recently with the publication of the EC's legal proposals for four European parliament and council regulations.

i) Direct payments – the rules governing the distribution of direct support to farmers and crofters under Pillar I.

ii) The single Common Market Organisation (CMO) – rules governing European intervention programmes in agricultural markets for a wide range of agricultural products.

iii) Rural development – rules governing the programmes of member states and regions for Pillar II of the CAP.

iv) Horizontal regulation for financing, managing and monitoring the CAP which deals with cross-cutting issues including cross-compliance and control systems.

In addition, there are three smaller regulations to address transition arrangements.

Direct payments and rural development regulations, together with cross-compliance aspects of the horizontal regulation, will be of most importance and interest to farmers and crofters.

CAP in summary:

Direct payments (Pillar 1). The EC has proposed a continuation of direct payments to farmers and crofters. These payments will be based on an objective hectare basis, to which all member states and regions must transfer by 2019. Attempts have been made to better focus payments on active farmers, ie those who earn more than 5% of their income from agriculture and who respect minimum activity requirements. Individual payments will be capped at €300,000 with reductions of payments from €150,000 up.

There will be a series of top-up payments within this first pillar. Farmers and crofters must participate in enhanced greening practices in order to receive their basic payment, namely crop diversification (three crops, no less than 5% and no more than 70% of the land), maintaining permanent pasture and maintaining ecological

focus areas (7% of eligible hectares for fallow land, buffer strips etc). Crofters will only have to do the practices which are relevant for them.

Member states may grant an additional payment to farmers and crofters in Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) worth up to 5% of the national ceiling. Up to 2% of the national ceiling will be used as an additional annual payment for young farmers and crofters commencing their agricultural activity, for a maximum of five years. Smaller farmers and crofters will also have the opportunity to participate in a simplified scheme replacing all direct payments, worth between €500 and €1000. Coupled support for vulnerable regions and sectors, including for sheep meat and beef, will continue.

Rural development (Pillar 2). The Less Favoured Area (LFA) support scheme will continue, but comprehensively reformed and renamed: areas qualify for payment based on eight biophysical criteria (the area in question must meet at least one of the criteria) and regions must undergo fine-tuning exercises to remove land which is LFA but which has overcome its handicap through investment.

The four axes of rural development (the SRDP), with the requirement to spend certain amounts on each, have been replaced by six priorities, with no restrictions on spending:

- 1) fostering knowledge transfer;
- 2) enhancing agricultural competitiveness;
- 3) promoting food chain organisation and risk management;
- 4) preserving and enhancing ecosystems;
- 5) resource efficiency and low carbon economy;
- 6) development of rural areas.

There will be a new performance framework with targets to be met; and 5% of funds will be held back in a performance reserve for outstanding projects.

Crofters will have the following main interests in the negotiations:

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Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 - 2nd Commencement Order

Principle changes coming in to force on 1 October 2011

Definition of owner-occupier crofter

Prior to the new act, owner-occupiers were landlords of vacant crofts.

An owner-occupier is now defined as such if they are the owner of a croft; and they were either the tenant of the croft when the croft land was acquired or a crofter's nominee or an individual who purchased the croft from the constituting landlord (or a successor in title to any of those persons). In addition, the croft must not have been let to any person as a crofter since it was acquired or constituted as a croft.

A constituting landlord is the owner of the land at the time it was constituted as a croft under section 3A, or such an owner's successor in title.

Duties on tenant crofter/occupier crofters

Residence duty

Tenant and owner-occupier crofters are required to be ordinarily resident on, or within 32 kilometres of, their croft. An application can be made to the Commission for consent to be absent; however the Commission may only grant consent if the tenant crofter or owner-occupier crofter shows good reason why they should be excused from their duty to be ordinarily resident.

Duty not to misuse

A croft is misused where the tenant or owner-occupier crofter wilfully and knowingly uses it other than for the purpose of cultivating it or putting it to a purposeful use, or fails to cultivate the croft or puts it to an inappropriate use. Definitions of misuse and neglect can be found in new section 5B of the 1993 Act.

Duty to cultivate a croft

A tenant or owner-occupier crofter must cultivate the croft or put it to another purposeful use and maintain it so that it is in a fit state for cultivation.

Definitions of cultivation and purposeful use can be found in new section 5C (8) of the 1993 Act.

The Commission now has a duty to investigate suspected breach of duties and powers and to take enforcement action if appropriate. This may result in the termination of a crofter's tenancy or in the letting of the tenancy of an owner-occupier's croft.

Requirement for an owner-occupier crofter to divide the croft prior to the transfer of any part of the croft

If an owner-occupier crofter wishes to transfer ownership of part of the croft (whether or not the transfer is for value), the consent of the Commission must first be obtained to divide the croft. Any transfer of ownership of part of an owner-occupied croft which is not a new croft created through a division approved by the Commission, and any deed purporting to transfer ownership of that part, will be null and void. This provision does not apply where divisions have been concluded in respect of such a transfer prior to 1 October 2011.

Owner-occupier crofters

An owner-occupier may now let a croft to a tenant who will become (1) a crofter or (2) a short-term-tenant for a maximum of 10 years. In the case of the former, the owner-occupier crofter will become the landlord of the croft and the provisions relating to owner-occupier crofters will cease to apply to them.

Tenant crofters

Tenant crofters can now bequeath their croft to one or to more than one person. The legatee must give notice of the bequest to the landlord and must copy the notice to the Commission within 12 months (currently four months) of the death of the crofter. The right of a landlord to object to a bequest where the legatee is not a member of the deceased crofter's family is removed.

If the bequest is to multiple persons, all the legatees must accept the bequest and there must be no part of the croft left untenanted.

The deceased crofter's executor must apply for the Commission's consent to divide the croft and if no such consent is given the whole bequest is null and void and the croft tenancy will fall to be treated as an intestate estate.

Intestacy

If a crofter dies leaving no will or if the will is invalid, the consent of the Commission will no longer be required to transfer the tenancy. The period allowed for the executor to give notice to the landlord of the transfer of the croft is extended from 12 to 24 months.

Commission approval or consent

Commission approval or consent is required in a number of different types of applications. The main change here is the streamlining of the processing of regulatory applications, by requiring the Commission simply to approve applications for consent, reject them, or to approve them subject to conditions. An additional category of person who can object to an application is also introduced; being any person the Commission considers has a relevant interest in the application.

Decrofting and resumption of croft land

The Commission and the Scottish Land Court, during the course of establishing the principle of reasonable purpose in the context of a decrofting or resumption application, can now consider (a) the sustainability of crofting in the locality of the croft or such other area in which crofting is carried on; (b) the crofting community in that locality or the communities in such an area; (c) the landscape of that locality or such an area; (d) the environment of that locality or such an area; and (e) the social and cultural benefits associated with crofting.

If the proposed decrofting (or resumption) is in respect of a development for which planning permission exists, the Commission may also take into account the effect the proposed decrofting will have on the croft, the estate and the crofting community in the locality of the croft.

Issued by the Crofters Commission

EC sets out new CAP

winning a fairer share of both Pillar I and Pillar II budgets. We currently have the fourth lowest share of Pillar I money in Europe and the lowest share of Pillar 2;

meaningful re-distribution of funds within Scotland;

fine tuning the greening proposals to ensure that they fit Scottish agricultural conditions and that there is recognition for high nature value systems of production;

ensuring simplification of CAP administration and streamlining control and penalty systems to ensure that they are proportionate to a holding size;

defending a reformed LFA that reflects Scotland's climate and agriculture and which targets payment to our most vulnerable and

remote producers – crofters;

guaranteeing our future right to maintain limited and defined coupled payments to ensure the continuation of livestock grazing and land management on hill and upland;

7) that new entrants will receive payments and a level playing field from day one;

8) direct payments only go to genuinely active farmers and crofters who produce food and public goods;

adequate funding for communal systems of working, such as common grazings.

The current CAP phase comes to an end in December 2013 with a new phase starting 1st January 2014.

More information can be found on our website and there will be updates in *The Crofter*.

CROFTING RESOURCES PROGRAMME

First European congress at Vila Real

SCF board member Derek Flynn recently travelled to Portugal to talk about crofters' common grazings.

The first congress of European community areas took place in Vila Real, Portugal, on 23-25 September 2011. This landmark gathering, organised by BALADI, the Portuguese national federation of baldios (common lands), was attended by about 400 participants, including representatives of the users of the commons of various regions of Spain, Italy and Scotland; and of the Portuguese regions of Tras-os-Montes and Alto Douro; Minho; Beira Alta and Beira Baixa; Coimbra and Leiria; and Santarem.

Acivicreception for the international guests was held in the delightful baroque town hall of Vila Real, the main conference taking place nearby at the University of Tras-os-Montes and Alto Douro (UTAD) where, over two days, talks were given by the international delegates as well as by several of those from the Portuguese regions and various politicians and professionals, all associating themselves with the significance of common areas in its many forms throughout the EU. Despite some historical and topographical differences, these common areas and their communities clearly share similar challenges and threats.

The final stage of the gathering was a visit to the baldios of Ansiães, which itself won a historical legal victory in the defence of its communal areas. This was an informative illustration of what a small community can achieve and provided an excellent starting point for future work between the European bodies.

Having been brought together with so many stakeholders, academics and technical experts in the natural resources of the commons, the participating organisations agreed to propose the creation of a working group within European Coordination Via Campesina to pursue a greater recognition of community areas and to seek better support in the forthcoming reform of the CAP. It is clear that there is a general need for collective land management arrangements to be better recorded and taken into account.

The directorate of BALADI and especially the congress director, Armando Carvalho, are to be congratulated on their initiative, which deserves repeating in the future.



Armando Carvalho and Derek Flynn

Taking stock

Continued from page 1

THE FINAL REPORT on the Taking Stock survey is still in preparation, but some conclusions are already clear.

The economics of extensive hill sheep flocks depend on low inputs. Handed-down knowledge of the grazing and its capabilities determines sustainable stocking levels and, of course, only ewes hefted to the hill have the necessary foraging abilities. Of the stock clubs surveyed for the project, most restrict supplementary feeding to provision of high energy blocks. The siting of blocks also assists management of the grazing. In some cases no supplementary feeding is required.

Two stock clubs reported that ewe-hogs are wintered in sheds, in one case taking advantage of the off-wintering option in SRDP Rural Priorities. This has the added advantage that if a ewe has to be taken inside later in life she will readily take a feed. One stock club uses an offshore island for hog wintering which no doubt results in exceptionally healthy and hardy replacement stock.

The survey found that returns per ewe are in line with the Scottish LFA average of £23 (according to QMS statistics for 2010) and this season, small, good quality, hill blackface lambs are fetching £40 - £45.

All the respondents to the SCF survey of

stock clubs in Skye and East Sutherland are convinced of the viability of the stock club model of hill grazing management and are optimistic for the future.

However it is important to note that some of these stock clubs have been in existence for a century. Their success is the result of several generations of handed-down skills, knowledge and experience that would be hard to replicate today starting with a blank sheet, or an empty hill. Such make-or-break factors as stocking levels, skilled labour input (gatherers with good dogs; shearing and dipping contractors), selection of tups, administration and financial management are matters of fine judgement and call for a high degree of diplomacy as well as stockmanship.

Faced with an empty or underused hill grazing, and little prospect of hefting a new sheep flock, a way forward might be to use SRDP woodland options as a means to provide strategic fencing to enable practical management of sheep on the hill. SCF will be happy to provide advice on this option within our township assets project.

The final report on Taking Stock will soon be available. It will be on the SCF website, but please contact head office if you would like a paper copy.

The future of common grazings

by Gwyn Jones

A REPORT principally authored by grazings expert Gwyn Jones was publicly praised by SCF board member Derek Flynn at both the recent European Congress on Community Lands and at the SCF annual gathering on Skye.

The report must be recognised as a valuable tool if progress is to be made regarding the future of crofters' common grazings.

The report, *Trends in Common Grazing: first steps towards an integrated needs-based strategy*, is published by the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP) and provides recommendations as to what might be done to obtain more information on these common grazings.

Crofting and common grazings are an important element of Scotland's High Nature Value (HNV) farming system resource. Although common

grazings only cover about 9% of Scotland's agricultural land, over 20% of the agricultural land under HNV farming systems is on common grazings. Given this importance, there is a need to know much more about crofting and common grazings and their management to make a case for that management to be suitably rewarded.

There is an existing requirement by the European Commission to establish a baseline of the extent of HNV farming systems occurring in Scotland and to develop mechanisms to track trends in that HNV farming system resource within the life-span of the 2007-2013 Scottish Rural Development Programme.

Trends in Common Grazings develops a number of recommendations to address present difficulties.

The report can be accessed at www.efnecp.org/download/Trends-in-Common-Grazing3.pdf.

Our mission
safeguard and promote the rights, livelihoods and culture of crofters and their communities

CROFTING RESOURCES PROGRAMME

The croft brand – is there such a thing?

Russell Smith offers his conclusions on a recent survey

SCF PROMOTES the croft mark and croft tourism as something that will add value, to help crofters sell more or achieve a higher price for products. But do people know what crofting is and what do they associate with it? Crofters know the benefits of the crofting system – and the drawbacks – but do others?

SCF commissioned market research to find out.

Have you heard of crofts or crofting?

Overall, 42% of people in the UK had heard of crofting, 46% hadn't and 11% were unsure. Males and older people were more likely to have heard of either term, rising to 79% in Scotland. For the rest of the UK the percentage was 39%, highest in the north of England and Wales, lowest in London at only 32%.

This is consistent with a figure of 49% in 1996 survey which was more weighted to Scotland.

So less than half the people in the UK know what crofting is.

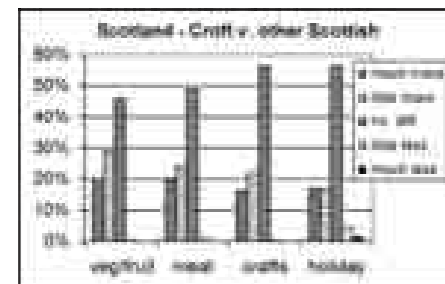
What is your understanding of crofting?

Of 968 respondents, 12% were completely wrong, many thinking about thatching or craft work. Over three quarters identified it with farming or a small holding, mostly identified with Scotland or Highlands and Islands. Around 10% associated it with houses. Just fewer than 10% identified a special tenure system and 10% mentioned communal working or self sufficiency. So most people who said they knew about crofting got it mostly correct. Only one person (1%) in the Scottish sample who said they had heard of crofting got it wrong.

About 5% specifically mentioned sheep, but there was no mention of crofting's role in maintaining landscapes, managing the environment or delivering public goods. There was only one mention of green and four mentions of sustainable, but 66 respondents used the term self-sufficiency.

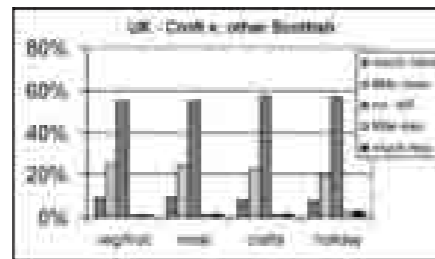
Less than 10% gave replies like "primitive", "huts", or "peasant farming" and more saw crofting as remote or isolated. But perhaps a holiday in the middle of nowhere has its own attraction to the consumer in the crowded south east of England. My favourite description was "like a farm, but not!"

Respondents were asked whether they would be more or less likely to buy a croft product as opposed to a Scottish product. The question was asked about fruit and veg, meat, crafts, and holidays.



In Scotland, over half of the replies said it would make no difference. Results are consistent across the four product types. Around 30% are more likely with 8-9% much more likely. Only 2-6% said they would be less likely to buy. This question did not discuss price differences which could affect attitudes.

UK results are similar, but with a higher percentage more likely, up to 49% for veg and fruit. Compared to the UK, fewer respondents (5/6% compared to 9/10%) answered "unsure" (not shown) and about double in the much more likely category. Only 1% are less likely to buy food or crafts, rising to 5% for holidays.



Croft holidays are less popular for UK adults than food or crafts compared to the equivalent Scottish offering, particularly for younger age groups with 17% less likely to purchase a croft holiday compared to 4% for fruit and veg or meat. This possibly points to an image problem with crofts or could just be that cities have a stronger pull on younger people who don't want the rural retreat. Or is there scope for promoting adventure, activity holidays such as mountain biking or climbing which would appeal to younger people?

People who had previously heard of crofting are 1½ times more likely to say they will buy croft produce or holidays than people who hadn't. This suggests that we can market croft produce in Scotland where the concept is well known and understood. But, as we get further away from the crofting counties, we need to add an element of education to our marketing. This may be as simple as a couple of lines on the label or a paragraph on the website.

What does it all mean?

The questions posed at the beginning of this article were:

- Should we be branding produce as croft?
- Should we be branding holidays as croft?
- Will we sell more or be able to charge more if branded as croft?

In the entire UK, less than half of people have heard of crofting. They are more likely to buy croft produce than less likely, but for most there is no difference. Visitors from abroad are even less likely to be aware of crofting – though there is a significant niche market of people tracing their family tree

and seeking their great-great-grandparent's croft.

In Scotland most people are familiar with crofting. Between a third and a half say they are more likely to buy croft-branded produce rather than Scottish produce.

So the research suggests it is worth pursuing branding for food produce in Scotland, but a different strategy is required for the rest of the UK. The Scottish Crofting Produce mark is already developing this approach.

For crafts the research findings are similar, but the target market is predominantly tourists visiting crofting areas, so the problem is more of education. Many accommodation providers are based on crofts so the opportunity is there.

Croft holidays show lower rates of "more likely to purchase" than for produce, especially amongst younger age groups. If the target market for holidays is Scotland then there is generally a good understanding of and support for crofting. When advertising to the rest of the UK there is a need to educate the consumer about crofting as part of the marketing. Authenticity is the current buzz word in tourism. Genuine working crofts which maintain traditions and culture while providing the modern benefits of central heating and broadband are well placed to capitalise.

The message about crofting and its benefits needs to be delivered further. In Scotland it is more about emphasising how crofting is good for the environment, how it retains population in remote areas and how it provides public goods by maintaining the landscape and biodiversity.

Like a farm, but much more ...

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov plc. Total sample size was 2,113 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken in September 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults. The research is part of the Crofting Resource Programme funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Esme Fairbairn Foundation.

The report is available in full on the website or from SCF HQ.

look online at
www.crofting.org

CROFTING RESOURCES PROGRAMME

Crofters ahead of the recycling game!

Donald Murdie reports

COUNCILLOR DONALD MANFORD of Barra, crofter and scourge of SNH, once remarked that the apparently abandoned vehicles and machinery, often criticised as a blot on the crofting landscape, are actually evidence of crofters' enthusiasm for recycling.

The old vans and tractors act as a store of spare parts, helping to keep equipment of similar vintage in operation. I'm sure our tractor restoration friends would confirm that. When nothing usable is left, the remaining bodywork can help to fill a blow-out in the sand dunes and save the machair from erosion. That ancient and rusting combine, that seemed to sit permanently by the roadside in Benbecula for many years, actually worked and performed the vital task of preserving the unique local seed varieties.

As well as keeping old machines working, crofters have always been good at finding new uses for redundant articles. The modern waste awareness mantra "reduce, reuse, recycle" could have been coined in the crofting counties half a century ago. Think of the once-familiar bedstead gate.

Community skips and recycling sites can still offer rich pickings for the modern crofter. I once salvaged upwards of fifty perfectly sound fence posts from a skip. They had even been carefully stripped of wire and staples. The secret of reusing fence posts is to saw off the top three inches or so, leaving sound, solid wood to hammer into the ground. Here are some other examples.

Old tyres have many uses around the croft, like holding down tarpaulins or building temporary field shelters. If you need to put a pail of drinking water in a field or in the byre, stand it inside a couple of tyres. That will stop the animals kicking it over or the wind blowing it away. By making use of old tyres you will be saving the local authority £2.50 for each one, as that's what they have to pay to get rid of them. If you start to accumulate tyres, however, make sure you have a use in mind – as they're

much easier to acquire than to dispose of. Our man at the recycling centre says he's only allowed to accept two from each client.

Fish boxes are found everywhere on the shore and I've acquired perfectly sound ones out of skips, which is a bit surprising. They have a huge variety of uses. Fixed to the carrier on a quad they will carry a bag of feed, the fencing tools, or a tired sheepdog! They make a handy shelf in the fank for the pour-ons, injections and stuff like that and they're useful for growing things in, and for storing potatoes.

A crofter once told me she had a fine collection of fish boxes and one day a man, a Buchan loon by his accent, arrived in a pick-up and said he'd come to take them away. The crofter asked who they belonged to, as she'd gathered them all from the shore of her own croft. "The fishermen," was the reply. "Which fishermen?" she responded, pointing out that a high proportion were of Spanish, Irish and Norwegian origin, and anyway, where was his written authority to uplift any of them? The man stomped off, muttering something uncomplimentary in Doric. I guess the moral of this story is that fish boxes do belong to someone, and if you find one belonging to a local boat, give it back.

Single trip pallets are not so common as they used to be, due to fish farms getting more bulk feed deliveries, but there are still plenty about, even allowing for November 5th bonfires. Again they are highly prized on the croft for storing hay, making temporary gates – temporary being until they rot away – sheep pens and compost heaps.

Finally, here is an example from Shetland of recycling ingenuity. A crofter constructed a polytunnel using salvaged fish farm feed pipe as the frame. This was so successful that the idea has been adopted commercially by the Northmavine community company and is now known as the Polycrub. See Crofter 91 and www.nortenergy.co.uk.

Niche market for quality croft produce

THE SCF was again represented at the Cawdor Living Food event in September, one of the premier showcases for local food in the north of Scotland.

The aim was to demonstrate the quality and range of produce that is available under the Scottish Crofting Produce mark.

Tasting was provided for Shetland lamb from Richard Briggs and for the crofters' pie from Robin and Penny Calvert of Rogart. Also featured were fruit and vegetables from Robson and Murdie in Skye and quail and duck eggs from Drumbhan Croft in Sutherland.

Direct sales of produce from crofts can boost income and there is a growing niche market for locally produced food where the provenance is clearly demonstrated and the customer can talk to the producer.

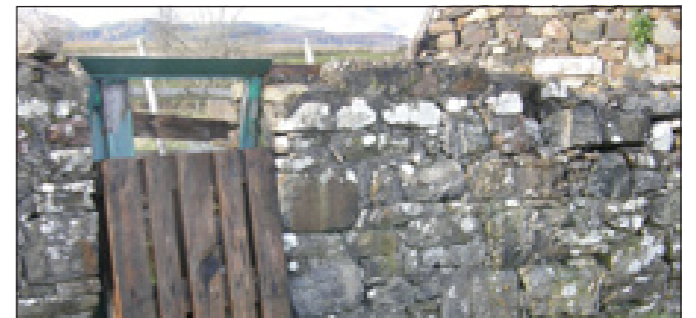
The Scottish Crofting Produce mark has been established to promote this. If you are interested in joining, contact HQ.



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Wind power failure

PROVEN ENERGY collapsed in September when a technical fault in the main shaft of its flagship wind turbine forced a halt to sales and a shutdown of machines already installed on farms and crofts.

Kingspan Renewables, who have taken over the business, have stated that all Proven's guarantees should be directed to KPMG, the collapsed firm's receivers.

A second turbine installation company, Icon Energy, has also gone into voluntary liquidation as a direct result of Proven Energy appointing a receiver and ceasing to trade. In a statement, the company said Icon Solar was unaffected by the closure.

The installer said customers who had made initial payments on orders from Icon for the Proven P35-2 may be able to install an alternative turbine.

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**Simon Fraser is accredited by the Law
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CROFTING RESOURCES PROGRAMME

Woodlands from seed – part 2

John Bannister continues his article on growing native trees from seed, a modest start to creating native woodland or simply just growing a tree.

TREES PRODUCE seed in a variety of forms and appearance: berries, nuts, winged, or granular.

All need a period of preparation to break dormancy. This can be either naturally or with human intervention. Here I only refer to the latter – replicating, more reliably, the natural process.

A mature tree will produce flowers which may subsequently be pollinated and produce seed.

The observant grower becomes aware of the success or failure of seed production during the growing season, with some trees producing abundant berries, catkins, nuts and so forth. Pioneer tree species like birch, rowan and alder can usually be relied upon to produce a glut almost every year. Keep a sharp eye open and

assess the seed's readiness to be collected. Seeds need to be ripe but not left too long on the tree or they will over-ripen, fall and/or be blown away.

Once collected, the likes of birch and alder seed needs to be kept dry, in paper packets (not sealed in polythene) until the time to sow. Birch seed can be easily removed from the catkin, whilst alder seed is contained in a small cone and needs to be naturally dried to release its seed. Gentle heat is OK. Birch and alder can be sown in trays or in prepared beds out of doors. I use seed trays kept in my rodent-proof seed store.

Berries such as rowan, holly, elder, hawthorn, blackthorn, bird cherry, gean and juniper require to be processed. Here we return to the replication of nature. Imagine a bird eating the berry; in the process the flesh and skin of the berry will be absorbed by the bird which will then excrete the seed from middle of the berry. The grower will need to separate and

discard the flesh and skin from the berry. Importantly, the skin must be removed as this inhibits germination. Then replicate the passing of a winter season by sowing outdoors in beds or trays; or out of doors in a mouse-proof store, until the time is right. Good results can also be obtained by bagging seed in sealed polythene bags and storing in the vegetable tray of a domestic refrigerator. A period of at least a couple of months is needed before they are ready for sowing.

Nuts such as acorn and hazel are processed by stratification. This is a convenient storage method using a container such as a flower pot. It should have some free-draining compost (mixture of soil and grit) mixed in a 50:50 ratio with the nuts/acorns, all well covered. The container should be kept in a mouse-proof store out of doors, or it can be buried in a well-drained pit out of doors. Do make sure the wee beasties can't get at them and mark the spot

of the burial site in case, like the squirrel, you forget where you've put them.

Fresh, winged seed, such as ash and wych elm can be sown soon after collection in a prepared bed to stay until the following year, where they will automatically go through the winter preparation stage without any further intervention.

The remaining stored seed (berry seed, birch and alder) if sown in seed trays will begin to produce seedlings the following April. These can be individually pricked-out into modular containers for later planting (lining-out) in pre-prepared beds out of doors. The container with nuts/acorns should be checked from time to time to see if they are breaking dormancy. Those that are can be planted in the prepared bed and those that are not yet showing signs returned temporarily to the container for another period of days, before being inspected again.

Crofting horticulture handbook to be published in the spring

HORTICULTURE? That's just gardening. It's a hobby. It's nothing to do with crofting.

So said a certain crofter about horticulture as a form of crofting diversification. That crofter was not a young man, so he must have had a short memory. In the days a few decades ago when crofts supplied most of the food consumed in the islands of Scotland and in the north-west mainland, most crofters were to some extent horticulturists – usually self-sufficient in potatoes, and growing turnips, carrots and cabbages by the house, along with some rhubarb and blackcurrants for jam.

These days, if you ask people in the most remote areas, from Jura in the south to Unst in the north, what they most need that they can't easily get locally they will say fresh vegetables.

That is a huge opportunity for crofters. We have an enormous land resource, much of which is only suitable for grazing, but to write off its cropping potential is to disregard hundreds of years of work by generations of crofters who have created fertile soils out of bog and rock. This land has in the past sustained much larger populations

than those which occupy the same areas today and has provided them with healthy food.

Nobody wants to return to the poverty and back-breaking work of those days and there is no need to. Recent developments of suitable machinery, the introduction of polytunnels and other protected cropping methods – and access to advisory support and grant aid – make horticultural cropping a realistic business proposition for crofters. Crofting horticulture can work at any level, from expanding garden-scale growing, through market-gardening in protected and open environments, to field-scale operations.

The crofting horticulture handbook will provide a guide for actual and aspiring growers in the challenging conditions of the islands and the northern and western seaboard of the mainland, as well as central highland areas with their high altitudes and long, bitter winters. It will cover soil and climatic conditions from the Mull of Kintyre to Muckle Flugga and will advise on sowing and planting times to suit.

We hope to prove beyond doubt the case for crofting horticulture and help to bring about a step change in local food production. In

the economic and environmental circumstances we face, the sustainability of island and remote mainland communities will more and more depend on self-sufficiency in goods and services, especially food.

Supermarket domination of the entire food chain means that most of our food is trucked from warehouses in the central belt supplied in turn from global sources, which is entirely contrary to governments' aspirations for a low-carbon economy. That supermarket

domination has undoubtedly extended choice in some areas, but has restricted it in others.

It has decimated UK dairy farming and apple production and continues to ignore much of the superb food produced in our own region. It creates mountains of food waste every day at every stage of the production and distribution process. We have, in the formidable food production capacity of our land, the ability to make a difference. We should do so because we can.



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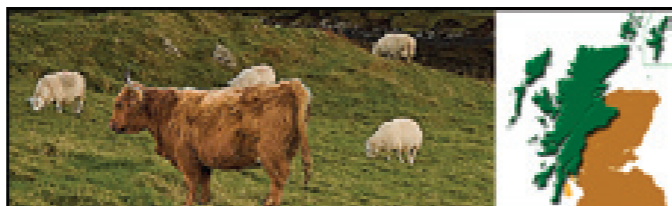


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ON THE CROFT

Asulam ban

AN EU DECISION to ban asulam, one of the most cost effective and selective chemicals available for bracken control will worsen the risk of devastating spring wildfires.

The rationale for the ban is a concern over the chemical's safety when used on spinach and other food crops. However, an outright ban on asulam, which is the active ingredient in Asulox, has deprived crofters of the right to use Asulox for bracken control. This will increase the spread of bracken, whose stranglehold across swathes of the Highlands is already being exacerbated by climate change and the loss of stock from the hills.

Dead bracken was

undoubtedly a major factor in the wildfires that raged through the north-west this spring.

SCF chair Eleanor Arthur says, "Crofters will recognise the seriousness of this situation. The single farm payment (SFP) created an exodus of animals from the hills, especially sheep, which has left large swathes of land abandoned. Active crofters are now struggling to control bracken on underused hills and are being penalised because undergrazing has resulted in areas infested by bracken being removed from their SFP. It is bitterly disappointing that the EU now removes the most effective method, other than grazing, of trying to control the spread of bracken."



© Martin Benson

The SCF has appealed to the Scottish Government to ensure that this effective means of control is still available to crofters. Rural affairs Secretary Richard Lochhead said: "I am deeply disappointed that the appeal committee did not support the continued use of asulam to control bracken. Farmers and crofters will still be able to buy asulam up to 31 December 2011, and store it for use up to 31 December 2012. From January 2013, applications for emergency authorisation to use asulam can be made to the Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD) until a longer term solution is found."

If you plan to use Asulox next year, orders should be placed with your distributor as soon as possible and by the end of December 2011 at the latest. After that date it will be illegal to sell, supply or transfer products containing Asulam.

All stock must be used up by December 2012 after which it will be illegal to store or apply products containing Asulam.

The CRD, who regulate the use of pesticides and herbicides in the UK, will update SCF about on-going issues, including emergency authorisations and we will relay this information to our members. We will continue to work with the Scottish Government to try and ensure that asulam is available after December 2011.

Crofter's wife column

LOVE THE TIME between the autumn and winter editions of *The Crofter*.

It's a busy time on the croft: new faces appearing, old ones leaving, buying, selling and a steady build up to the busy days of feeding and watering; all the while aware that days are shortening while the list of chores lengthen.

Trips to the mart provide excitement and a rare day out, usually with a nice lunch thrown in for good measure – and maybe even a quick wheel around a different supermarket (handy to begin stocking up for that other event looming on the horizon!)

Between my own work and the children I don't seem to go to sales so often these days and, left at home with that excitement fluttering away inside, "What will he bring home this time?" I find myself scuttling down to the holding pens as soon as it's light

enough the following morning to give the newcomers the once over, their official welcome provided by an enthusiastic three year old once he's up and on the go.

One trip this autumn saw the arrival of another couple of Aberdeen Angus – a breed fast becoming a bit of a favourite here on No 8. Not in their first flush of youth, these two fine ladies had an eventful introduction to their new lives – a breakdown, in a howling gale, on the north road home from Dingwall. True ladies, they remained calm throughout; a good sign as these two were bought to keep on the croft over the winter months while, for our first time ever, the remainder of the herd will away-winter in Elgin. With another bleak, cold and long winter being predicted, something had to give. Crofting in winter is tough, no doubt about it; and after last winter's long spells of

freezing conditions, an old tractor that suffered the ill effects of the weather more than any of us and the sheer and relentless slog for both beasts and crofter you need to take a fresh look at things.

We briefly considered a new(er) tractor but soon realised that would only ease some issues, it couldn't prevent the muddy trudge. There's surely no more a more depressing winter scene than a herd of forlorn cows standing in or wading their way through deep, cold mud. And during a thaw it can be difficult to find a field or park that hasn't transformed itself into a mud bath.

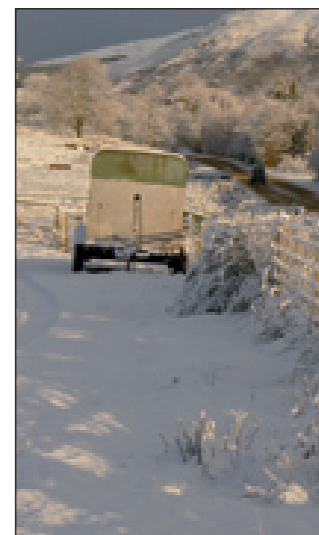
So, by the time you read this they will be gone and I'm not sure how I will feel about that! They will certainly be missed. However, our two new Aberdeen Angus ladies will no doubt become a focus, and hopefully I'll get a trip to Elgin at some point to see how the others

Minister says no to a tup scheme

THE PARLIAMENTARY cross party group on crofting recently wrote to the minister for environment, Stewart Stevenson, asking him to consider re-introducing a sheep improvement scheme as it could help in mitigating the loss of flocks from the hills.

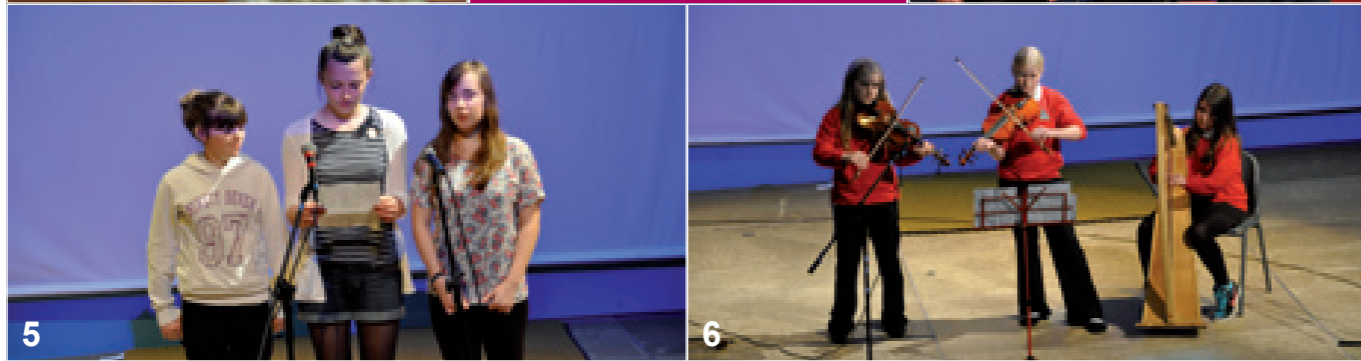
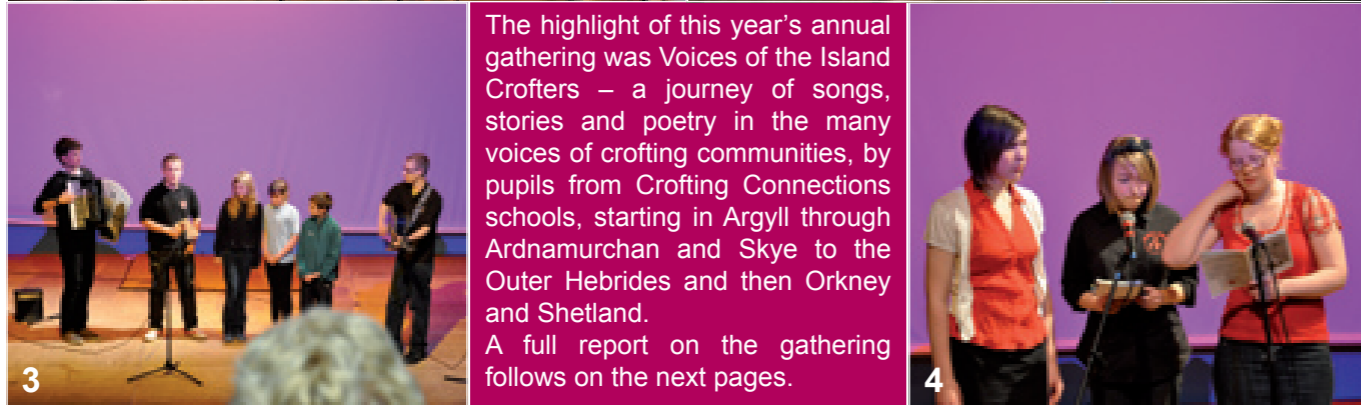
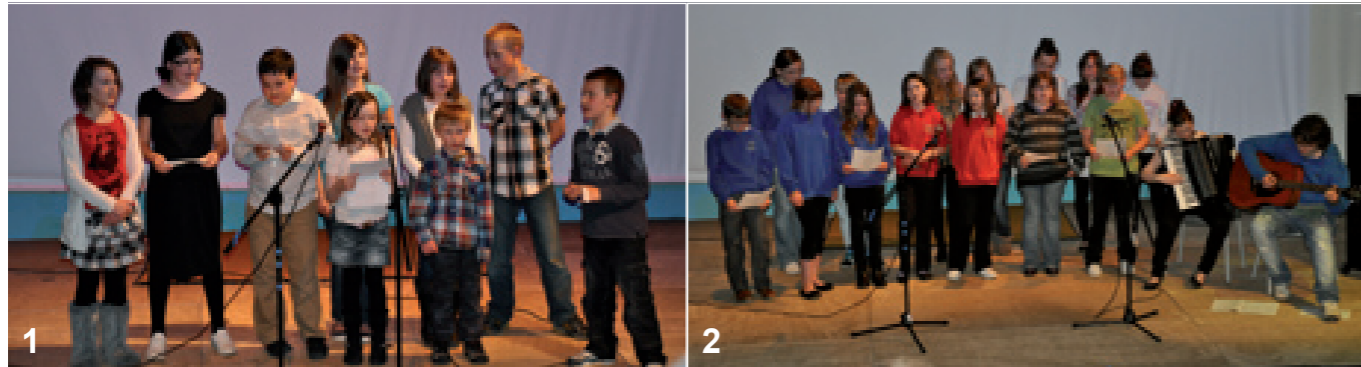
The minister's replied pointed out that the ram purchase scheme and the Shetland ram scheme were closed in 2004, following an independent evaluation carried out by the Scottish Agricultural College. He concluded: "I could not sanction the future use of scarce public resources to reinstate a scheme that did not provide value for money. However, you may wish to encourage groups of crofters to work together if they consider that the shared use of a ram would help to deliver the outcomes they are seeking".

are doing. I'm pretty certain that when they return to No 8 next spring they will have had a better winter than us and we will see that reflected in them.



© Claire Nicolson

SCF ANNUAL GATHERING – CROFTING CONNECTIONS



1. Songs sung by North Ronaldsay, Papa Westray, Shapinsay and Dounby Primary schools. 2. Farewell ta Yell sung by all the Shetland Schools. 3. Pupils from Lionacleit and Balivanich. 4. Pupils from Stronsay Junior High School. 5. Ence Apon a Time read by Mairi Polson, Rhona Tait and Anne Irvine. 6. Eilidh Ross, Mairi Duncan and Kate Bradley from Acharacle. 7. Hamish and the Faerie Queen – a sketch by Auchtertyre and Loch Duich Primary Schools. 8. Pipe tunes played by Eòghainn Peutan from Kilmuir.



SCF ANNUAL GATHERING 2011

Crofting tenure: past, present and future.

THE SCF'S annual gathering took place in early October at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic college on the Isle of Skye. The college is a proud modern group of buildings in a spectacular location overlooking the Sound of Sleat. It fosters a sense of pride in the culture and antecedents of the Highlands and Islands and is therefore a very fitting location for an event celebrating crofting.

The aim of the event was to look at crofting's history in a positive and enabling way. Learning from the past to develop crofting's future in an era where there are still many challenges to be overcome, but where at the same time more and more people are suggesting that crofting presents a model of land use that should be widened across the whole country.

The gathering was opened by SCF board member **Alasdair MacMhaoirm**, speaking in Gaelic. Alasdair welcomed delegates, observing that crofters were the historical guardians of the land and maintained the link with land and language. He mentioned recent SCF successes such as beef calf subsidy, the bull scheme being maintained; and successful lobbying for an elected Commission, to be known as the Crofting Commission. He went on to consider the challenges still ahead – CAP reform and the implications of the 2010 Crofting Act. Alasdair concluded his welcome by remarking on crofting's achievement in surviving and maintaining communities for 125 years.

Keynote speaker **Stewart Stevenson** MSP, minister for environment, began by acknowledging the 125 years of crofting legislation. He focused on the 2010 Act and its current elements. The first was an accurate crofting register and the benefits that would entail. The disbenefits to crofters who will have to pay for their inclusion on it was not mentioned. The election of commissioners, campaigned for by the SCF, will start in 2012. All crofters will have a vote but it is essential that an accurate crofting electoral role is compiled. The process of putting the elections in place is being developed. The new duties of the Crofting Commission are a vital element of the 2010 Act. Key amongst these is the requirement for all tenants and owners of crofts to reside within 10 kilometres of their crofts and to put the land to purposeful use. It will be for the new Commission to oversee and enforce this stipulation, which came into force on 1 October. The Scottish Government is working with The Highland Council on planning issues on croft land. The Commission is now a statutory consultee and decrofting applications will be considered – and rejected where necessary – with regard to any negative planning implications. In the recent government spending review, all the crofting schemes had been protected. In particular, the Beef Calf Scheme will now provide higher rates for producers with fewer than 10 animals. Looking ahead to CAP reform in 2014, the emphasis would be on fairness, flexibility and simplification. Woodland crofts and the National Forest Land Scheme offered new opportunities for croft creation and successful models are

taking shape in Mull and Kilfillan. There are opportunities for crofters in renewables and the feed in tariff. The government's 2010 map for renewables will open up further development potential for crofters.

Responding to questions from the floor, the minister said that the government had to operate within the constraints of EC legislation and he could not promise that the targeting of the beef scheme would be replicated with other support schemes. The Scottish Land Fund is to be re-opened, but it was too early yet to make an announcement on its budget. All buyouts need to be sustainable and the structures have yet to be established to assist very small as well as very large applications. He invited committees with ideas for buyouts to contact his officials right at the outset. They are enthusiastic to help.

The second speaker was **Dr Annie Tindley** of Glasgow Caledonian University. Annie looked at the historical context of the 1886 Crofters Act and its legacies. A historian of the Highland landed aristocracy, she saw crofting legislation as inherently colonial in its origins. The structures in the 1886 Act were based on measures put in place in India and on the Irish Land Act of 1881, both resulting from rural discontent and inequity.

Annie gave a fascinating account of the development of crofting legislation from the late 19th century to the present day, relating it to political perspectives at the time.

The 1881 Irish Land Act granted free sale (ie compensation for improvements made to a croft), freedom from eviction and fair rent. This model was applied to the Scottish Highlands.

The 1886 Act addressed crofting (but not cottars') tenure, not the powers and privileges of landownership; a pattern that repeated itself down the years since 1886. Subsequent legislation can be crudely divided into two main types; liberal-led crofting and land reform legislation – the 1886 Act and the 1911 and 1919 Land Settlement Acts; and conservative-led efforts to side-step land reform and concentrate instead on land purchase and economic development, for example the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act of 1897.

In an examination of crofting legislation it is vital to recognise the role played by the crofting community. If it had not protested, raided, kept the issue in front of government over decades, it is very unlikely there would have been any legislation at all. The 1886 Crofters Act provides a sense of focus and pride: that reform is both worthwhile and achievable. If it could be done in the 1880s, when the powers of the British landowning aristocracy were at their height, it might be done today as well.

Crofting and sustainable communities was considered by **Dr Calum MacLeod** from the centre for mountain studies at Perth College UHI. His key themes were the transformation of crofting from an agricultural problem to a sustainability solution; the characteristics of the crofting community; and the nature of the crofting way of life. Calum's sensitive and holistic overview

reflected his upbringing in a crofting community and his acute perception of how crofting must be sustained.

Crofting is the heartbeat of our communities but is not solely responsible for them. It is a practical, placed-based, geographically-bounded system where the focus is on the nature of crofting tenure and agricultural function. In these communities crofting predominates, but the way of life reflects crofting and non-crofting interests in community development agendas and processes.

Competitiveness driven by local assets and resources was vital – broadly-based rural economies benefiting from tourism, IT etc, not just agriculture. There was a need for investment, not subsidy, combined with more devolved decision-making.

Strategic issues of relevance to sustainable crofting communities were:

- the effects of public expenditure reductions on crofting communities;
- the impact of CAP reform post-2013;
- the roles of the Crofting Commission, HIE and SCF;
- policy focus on climate change and the low carbon economy;
- the status of land reform and community ownership.

Iain MacKinnon spoke about thinking of crofting as not merely an unusual system of land tenure, but also the expression of a much broader culture and way of living.

Things we often think of as culture – such as a song, a painting, a movie or a good story – can be thought of instead as objects or expressions produced by a culture; and that culture itself is the beliefs, meanings and values that people hold which help produce their expressions and objects.

He told a story about a visit to the mart in Portree this summer. A borrowed pickup and a late decision about which stock to send led to a trip to the sale that was probably not exactly in accordance with the laws of the state – in terms of insurance and number plates.

The same story told from a different perspective reveals some of the values by which generations of customary activity in crofting community have taken place – cooperation, mutual aid, self maintenance and trust. Although perhaps not conforming to state law, Iain concluded that the trip was nevertheless entirely in accordance with crofting culture and customs.

As the gathering was being held in his home parish of Sleat, Iain said that he was being unashamedly parochial. So when he talked about an ancient crofting culture, it was Celtic crofting culture he was describing. However, he stressed that the same argument could be made in terms of the Norse traditions of the north Highlands and Islands.

In the ancient Celtic law system 'comar' was a joint working partnership between four farmers. Centuries of colonisation had undermined the indigenous customary laws – like comar – but the same principle, albeit less formally applied and given the name 'comhair' or 'cobhair', was still described by the older members of contemporary crofting

SCF ANNUAL GATHERING 2011

communities with the expression 'ag obair comhair ri cheile'.

Iain concluded that crofting land tenure, as a means of holding land, is the expression of a particular culture and reflects the values of the people who live by that culture. These are our values and they have survived despite centuries of colonisation of the Highlands and Islands. Let's treasure them and transmit them to the next generations.

Angus MacColl, chairman of the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association, outlined differing tenancy types and explained how such arrangements had come to be through the evolution of tenancy law.

Before 1883 there had been no security, no end-of-tenancy compensation and ever-increasing rents. The Agricultural Holdings Acts introduced security of tenure, improved way-go compensation and statutory rent review provisions. More recent acts restricted succession; introduced open market rents; limited security of tenure in England to three-generational tenancies; and introduced farm business tenancies. In 2003 new limited duration and short duration tenancies were permitted. Diversification and the right to timber was included, as was a pre-emptive right to buy. Statutory arbitration was replaced with the land court.

The Tenant Farmers Association of Scotland supports and represents tenants' interests, providing insurance and legal advice.

Current issues for the organisation are: CAP reform; the effect on rent of attaching SFP entitlement to land; the effect of area-based payments on availability of land to let; the importance of defining actively farmed land and active farmers. Other areas of concern for Scottish tenant farmers are the conflict between farming and forestry; the displacement of sheep by trees and whether Scottish Government tree planting targets are realistic and/or achievable.

Tenant frustrations need to be addressed in land reform and tenants' right to buy is key. Issues are the cost of obtaining justice; the lack of investment in tenanted farms; difficulties with way-go compensation; succession; the future of limited partnership tenancies; and new entrants and availability of land.

Angus concluded that many tenant farmers are envious of crofters' rights.

Dr Liza Cleland from Glendale said that crofting tenure – as officially defined and regulated – doesn't exist on the Glendale Estate on Skye. The estate was purchased in 1908 as a crofting community which created new crofts on the best of the land. Some people in Glendale still do consider themselves crofters.

The estate is excluded from crofting support and is not subject to crofting law. But crofting issues are relevant – ensuring crofting lifestyles remain possible and land is kept in use; defining and tackling absenteeism; striking a balance between new entrants and family connection; and responding to changing pressures. The Glendale Estate is often seen as an early failure of community ownership. But placing the Glendale Estate in common – not community – ownership ensured security of holding and the integrity of the estate,

preventing speculation; since commonality requires universal consent.

It's rare to see a ploughed or planted field in Glendale – new house building is more noticeable. But distribution of new houses is very uneven; less visibility is not the same as lack of crofting activity. Active crofters often work crofts in several townships as owners and tenants and there's a lot of co-operation between resident, inactive and absentee owners of estate crofts. Active crofters graze or crop most crofts, usually by arrangement.

Liza suggested that ownership of crofts in the estate townships seems to have had a positive effect on population without much raising absenteeism. Although housing under-occupancy is high in the estate townships, it's lower than a nearby tenanted township.

Debates about reform need to look beyond ownership versus tenure to what these things mean for communities. Private property is a community-of-interest. Contemporary community landownership is based on community-of-place, ignoring interest and kinship. Crofting used to be both, but it's based on community-of-kinship too. Dealing with absenteeism has to recognise this community.

John MacKintosh, former SCU president, does not see the issue of tenancy versus ownership as important for crofting. Each and every crofter should be left to choose the land tenure system best suited to their crofting policy. Regulation is essential for the protection of crofting.

But the future of crofting as a land-based system will depend in significant part on the broader issue of food and agricultural policy. That policy must be reformed and based on the needs of all society and on national dietary and health requirements.

The SCF is a member organisation of La Via Campesina. Their ethos is that food is a basic human right.

Access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food should be enshrined as a constitutional right achieved by prioritising national primary agricultural sectors. Food as an item of trade should be only a secondary consideration.

On that premise the CAP reform process, which sets out to enhance competitiveness and promote market orientation, is fundamentally wrong.

Access to land is also a basic human right. We concern ourselves with rights and obligations within the crofting system. Should we not be as much concerned with the majority of the population who are excluded from occupying the land?

SCF's top priority should be its ambitious aim that one quarter of Scotland should be under crofting tenure by 2030. Will that challenge the traditional image and cultural attachment of crofting to the Highlands and Islands or reinvigorate it?

It is up to the SCF to demonstrate the important role small-scale farming can have supporting populations, maintaining biodiversity and landscapes and creating and supporting development.

Crofting is not crofting unless crofts are restricted in size. Critics will say that large farms are best suited to respond to new technology but international organisations

question that argument. Smaller-scale farming is well placed to alleviate world hunger.

As many of the Scottish population as possible should be encouraged to engage in the production of their own food, one benefit being that food is then outside the monetary economy.

We must limit our dependence on imports of food from countries that are poorer than ourselves. We should not degrade their land.

Support must be for the level of activity undertaken and should be completely disconnected from the area of land held. There should be an upper limit per person on all support payments related to the value of skill required.

Finally, crofters should be positively encouraged to make a much wider purposeful use of their holding.

These are aspirations – but crofters will continue to abandon their holdings if their household incomes are not high enough to sustain new ventures or to fund investment.

A vigorous question and answer session followed, ranging across many topics. The evening events started with some charming songs from Broadford primary school children. An excellent dinner followed, featuring the best of local produce. The after-dinner speaker was retired local vet Donald John MacLennan, who entertained everyone with his reminiscences.

The following morning **Donald Murdie** opened proceedings, looking at grazing land – which has recently come under scrutiny in a number of reports. All express concern at the loss of stock from grazing land. Donald highlighted two comments:

- *The decline in livestock numbers is unlikely to stop without economic support for hill farmers and crofters through some form of policy change. If the decline continues then the impacts highlighted in the report are likely to become greater and even more widespread, with wider social issues implicated. SNH*

- *Coupled payments are the only way to ensure certain desirable outcomes are achieved and that some very undesirable consequences are avoided, for example, the disappearance of crofting. Pack*

Gwyn Jones, in *Trends in Common Grazing*, states that common grazing land forms significant coverage of the Scottish landscape – 537615 ha, plus possibly another 54286 ha not on IACS – and 33% of actively farmed land in the crofting counties.

There are many opportunities on common grazings: renewable energy, forestry, tourism, affordable housing, stock clubs and carbon stocks

The SCF's recent Taking Stock survey shows that respondents are convinced of the economic, social and environmental benefits of the sheep stock club model. Most pay out a reasonable dividend – but figures are based on a year when store prices were strong. Some are involved in other income-producing land management initiatives such as forestry, Rural Stewardship Scheme and Land Managers Options (LMO). Low-input systems are favoured, taking advantage of natural forage at sustainable stocking levels, thus minimising feed costs. Stock clubs provide employment for contractors (gathering, shearing, dipping) as well as paying for shareholders' labour.

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However, the powers of sheep stock clubs are subordinate to crofters' rights under the Crofting Acts and grazings regulations take precedence over sheep stock club rules.

What common grazings need now are:

- properly-appointed, trained and supported grazings committees;
- practical LMO measures, eg a workable summer cattle option;
- support for new and existing stock clubs;
- lamb headage payment;
- a crofter renewable energy bill;
- strengthening of LRSA Part 3.

Gwyn's report states that common grazings cover 7% of the land area of Scotland. 49% of the area under common grazing in Scotland is on peat soils. 15% of the peat area of Scotland is under common grazing and 30% of the peat over 2m deep is under common grazings. Common grazings contain 10% (324 Mt) of the total carbon in Scottish soils. Power for the future?

Murdo MacKay addressed community land ownership on behalf of David Cameron, who had been prevented from attending by bad weather. To illustrate the positive effects of community ownership, Murdo cited statistics from some early buyouts.

In Knoydart between 2000 and 2010 the population rose from 72 to 115. The school role doubled. Visitor bed spaces increased from 132 to 185 and properties served by a community hydro scheme rose from 45 to 75. Key projects undertaken were:

- refurbishment of three properties;
- a ranger service;
- three rental properties built;
- shared equity scheme for land for homes;
- old pier shed converted into a pottery and tea room;
- ongoing upgrade of a bunkhouse.

In Gigha, since 2002 18 houses have been renovated and another five are nearing completion. Eleven new businesses have been started. In 2002, the population was 98. It is now 151. The school roll has risen from six to 22.

In 2003, at the time of the 62,000 acre North Harris community buyout, the population had halved (1951-91). There was a shortage of housing, a lack of jobs and a lack of variety of jobs. Schools were closing.

Eight miles of paths in North Harris have been refurbished. 81,000 native trees have been planted. Eight units social housing units have been built. A community recycling plant has been established. Other projects include: biodiesel manufacture, home insulation; jetty refurbishment, education, business support and funding for small projects and local organisations. Future major projects are: renewable energy schemes; conservation plans and stimulating new business.

Murdo then continued with his own presentation on the **West Harris Trust's** path to community ownership.

The west side of Harris was re-established as a series of townships in the 1920's and 30's after land raids across the Highlands forced the government to purchase and re-settle the area. This was the most radical state intervention in land holding for at least 200 years. The catalyst was the returning war-weary WW1 servicemen. The west side of Harris prior to 1922 was made up of sporting

estates and large farms.

West Harris buy-out steering group was formed Jan 2007. This was the first government-owned estate to be sold; the next should be easier to manage. It still rankles that the market value price had to be paid – especially since part of Scarista was actually gifted to the government and not compulsorily purchased.

In January 2010, three years after the first public meeting, the formal handover took place. The board of directors has five people nominated by township committees with the remainder elected from trust members, guaranteeing crofting representation.

Achievements so far include a hydro scheme; housing sites; SRDP applications for two townships; a website; and securing a £380,000 lottery grant. Grazings committees were approached to consider releasing areas of common for house sites. Ten potential sites were identified and planning permission was granted for six within the Trust's first year. Three have already been allocated and two other applications are being assessed. Future projects include jetties and wave power.

The next to address the gathering was **Peter Lanfear**, from the Foundation for Common Land. Farming in Wales, he explained that the same issues were causing problems identical to those facing crofters. Good farmland was being lost to development and second homes. People moving from the cities complain about farming practices. Wales has extensive common grazings with no common voice. There was a need for a UK-wide body and in the Foundation for Common Land this has been formed. The SCF is a member of this organisation and it is hoped that with a stronger, country-wide body, more can be achieved to protect grazings and graziers' rights across the UK.

Patrick Krause outlined the SCF crofting strategy proposal which says that we should aim to bring 85% of the existing 18,000 crofts into use by 2030 and create 10,000 new crofts by 2020.

Since publication of this document, the reaction has moved from a slight incredulity at the suggestion of 10,000 new crofts to a wry smile and nod of approval by most.

So why 10,000? It was a figure based on the proposition of increasing croft numbers by about 50%.

Is it ambitious? Of course it is. We are talking about a long-term vision, something badly lacking in Scottish politics, as in politics everywhere, which suffers terribly from short-termism based on voting cycles. This requires a radical mind-shift.

We must have a strategy for new crofts, clear criteria of what they are. We need to answer questions such as should they have an option to use common grazings? Should there be a right to buy in certain defined circumstances? Should there be positive discrimination towards young and local potential tenants? Should the new entrants have access to all crofting support measures? Should new crofts be within a minimum and maximum size – and more.

It is possible, as John MacKintosh said, to make Scotland a nation of small-holdings using crofting tenure. So please read the SCF crofting strategy proposal, digest it and then let's make it happen.

The potential of woodland crofts was explored by Forestry Commission's community development adviser **Bob Frost**.

The creation of woodland crofts is a specific option under the National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS) and a woodland crofts project officer has been in post to develop concept and advise groups. The focus is on the NFLS and a community-led approach, with the community as landlord.

A woodland croft is a registered croft created on land with sufficient tree cover to be considered woodland. Woodland crofts allow individuals and communities to base livelihoods on the woodland resource within the framework of crofting legislation.

Forestry Commission (FC) has developed a guidance package and a seminar on woodland croft housing has been held, with advice given to groups interested in woodland crofts. There are emerging examples of community-led woodland crofts eg in Mull and other groups are looking to woodland crofts in a future phase of their project, eg Kilfinan. FC has started to discuss how partner organisations communicate opportunities on other land such as private land.

One size does not fit all and core principles need to be reiterated. Woodland management is fundamental. Communities may wish to establish woodland crofts as an element of a wider project. The FC route map should help communicate the key steps in developing woodland crofts and other approaches may be applicable on other land. FC supports groups evolving their plans and a programme of field visits for groups interested in woodland crofts is being developed. FC continues to work collaboratively to develop the concept and deliver support.

SCF's **Karen MacRae** reported on the progress of the young crofters group. She has been visiting some of the crofting areas.

A very successful meeting took place in the Lewis and Harris area, with 20 young people attending. Some of the ideas agreed there were the usefulness of a platform to share ideas, plans to arrange visits and skills training. The importance of supporting one another and raising awareness, the difficulties of access to land and renewables were other topics covered.

Karen hopes that more groups will be set up in other areas and another meeting will take place in Lewis to take ideas forward. It is planned to contribute to the Via Campesina youth group with comment on CAP reform and other issues. The SCF strategy proposal has a number of possibilities for young crofters and Karen felt this was a positive time for them.

Another wide-ranging discussion session followed before the gathering drew to a conclusion, with thanks to the speakers and to Carol Anne Stewart and her colleagues for the excellent arrangements.

Full versions of the speakers' presentations are available on the SCF website.

SCF ANNUAL GATHERING 2011

Anything that can go wrong will go wrong

Carol Anne Stewart looks back on some of her favourite conferences

MURPHY IS ALIVE and well and kindly helps with the organisation of our gathering each year.

The storms that caused Cal Mac to cancel some of their ferries during this year's gathering are just one of the many challenges that await anyone organising an event. This year's weather meant we were short half a dozen delegates. A speaker, the Lochaber delegates and our honorary Perthshire crofter had a much longer journey than expected. Thankfully the keynote speaker had decided to avoid the Mallaig crossing and arrived in time to have lunch with Eleanor and some of our members.

Planning the SCF annual gathering normally starts at the winter board and council meeting. A list of possible areas and themes are discussed and a date pencilled in. When the area has been decided then the fun of looking for venues, caterers and accommodation starts. We have excellent area representatives whose help makes this all possible.

Once speakers have been confirmed and possible diary clashes avoided, (sorry about the sale clash), you would imagine

that we could rest on our laurels for the summer.

That's when the company planning law comes into effect and anything that can be changed will be changed until there is no time left to change anything. The cunning plan that we started with in January quickly becomes Plan B; and by the time of the gathering it's not unusual to have revised the programme five or six times.

Changes happen for various reasons; mainly as we try and cram even more into a fairly full programme. Usually this isn't a problem. However one of the joys of working with a small staff is that everyone assumes that everyone else knows everything. I have helped organise nine of the last ten SCF annual gatherings and my clairvoyant skills are now a match for Mystic Meg, though they have let me down badly in the past.

Some instances of my disappointing mindreading abilities include when the delegates, who had arranged to join our bus for Barra in Lochmaddy, left one of their number to let me know they had gone for a "spin" and would be back soon. After 15 minutes of increasing stress levels – mainly the bus driver's – we couldn't wait any longer. We had a 50-mile drive on an extremely windy day to catch the Eriskay ferry. If I wasn't relying on the mobile

phone network, and had honed those mind-reading skills, I would have known that the delegates would be waiting for us on the Eriskay ferry. We made the ferry by the skin of our teeth.

The bus to the Shetland gathering was collecting some delegates from Inverness airport en route to the Aberdeen ferry. Now I have a fear of losing people on bus journeys (a relic of my teacher training) and have a habit of counting everyone at least twice. When we arrived at the airport I knew we had five delegates to collect but at a quick count there were definitely six crofters; at the second count there were still six. As the merry band traipsed onto the bus a rather sheepish-looking crofter greeted me with the words "You'll never guess who I am?"

I tend to work on the principle that if everything seems to be going well, then I have obviously overlooked something.

Remember the choppy weather on the way to Barra? When we were all on the ferry from Uig to Lochmaddy I breathed a sigh of relief – the ferries were still running. What I didn't appreciate was that although the plane schedule is dependent on tides, tides are affected by wind and it was blowing the tide too far up the beach for the plane to land. A phone call from one of the speakers sitting at Glasgow

airport along with a number of delegates triggered a last-minute rewrite of the programme.

The plane eventually did make it in time for the conference start and the speakers had a shorter sprint than expected to the venue. An electrical fire that morning in Castlebay hall, the main venue, meant we had to relocate at extremely short notice to Northbay hall, which as luck would have it is a stone's throw from the airport. Thankfully Jessie MacNeil had managed to organise the change of venue before she even phoned to tell me the news. The fire caused minor damage so we managed to go back to Castlebay the next day.

Helping to organise the SCF annual gatherings can be stressful and chaotic at times and a sense of humour's definitely a prerequisite for the job. Nevertheless it is also immensely enjoyable and worthwhile. The opportunity to network with people who are genuinely like-minded is invaluable. I have made many friends over the last ten years and look forward to organising our next annual gathering in conjunction with some European friends.

To paraphrase Mr Murphy, anything that can go wrong will go wrong. With speakers and delegates from across Europe – I hope Murphy wasn't an optimist.

Changing the clocks

Patrick Krause ponders the reasoning

IT WAS RECENTLY the time of year, again, when we mess with our clocks, our heads and our sleep for reasons many, including me, do not understand.

Confusion is not surprising when there is a lot of disagreement in the media and the UK government, some of which is based on erroneous information. So please indulge me as I think aloud and try to get my head around why we change the clocks.

Our standard time throughout the year was originally Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). All world time used this as the reference point

and time zones always related to hours before or after GMT. GMT is now more accurately called Universal Time Coordinated (UTC) and is still our standard time.

Daylight Saving Time was introduced to save fuel in the First World War. It would follow logically that as a fuel saving device it was aimed at winter time, not summer time. This is where one of the untruths lies – that the change was introduced to give longer evenings in the summer. Even down in southern England the summer sun rises before 5am and doesn't set until the back of 9pm, so there is plenty of daylight at that time of year.

Daylight Saving Time was

actually planned to run throughout the year. This was tried again as a three year trial from 1968 and was known as British Standard Time (BST). The idea was to alter our standard time to UTC+1 all year round with the aim of having brighter evenings thus saving fuel in winter.

However, the Scottish MPs successfully argued that winter mornings in the north were too dark under BST and it endangered children going to school. So BST was dropped and to placate the English MPs UTC+1 was kept for the summer months only (where it could do no harm) and BST became British Summer Time.

So that is why we change the clocks; British Summer Time is

the deviation away from our standard time UTC, brought about as a political fob-off for the English MPs (who don't seem to have noticed that changing the clocks to BST for the summer months doesn't do anything useful at all).

So why not just go back to an all-year-round time, given that it is the changing of clocks that is the most confusing thing about this whole debacle? And it probably doesn't actually matter very much whether it is UTC or UTC+1 as there is no getting around 'the elephant in the room' which is that we can't save daylight at all.

Winter days are just short and that's a fact.

SCF ANNUAL GATHERING 2011

Paddy and Fiona join the team – SCF AGM 2011

Company secretary John Bannister reports

AS THE DUST began to settle at the close of the SCF's gathering on 4th October, so it rose again briefly at this year's AGM.

Most AGMs tend to be low key affairs – and this year's SCF AGM was no exception. Except, that is, for the most pleasing appointment of two new directors, both well known throughout crofting circles.

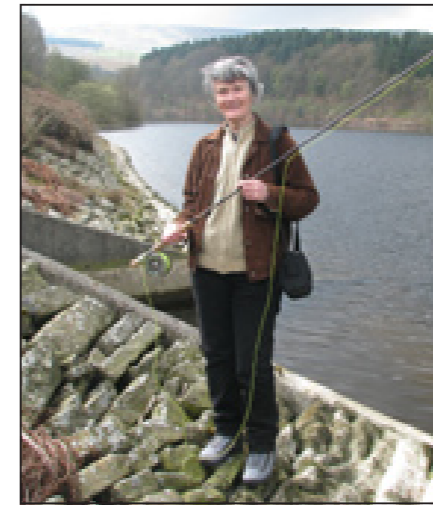
Dr Paddy Zakaria was brought up with Merino sheep and Hereford cattle on a farm in Victoria, Australia. Paddy came to the Highlands in 1973 and bought a croft where she breeds Shetland cattle and supplies bulls each year to Shetland breeders. As a north Scotland representative of the Shetland Cattle Breeders Association she is also involved in sourcing and selling cattle and promoting the breed as an ideal multi-purpose smallholder's cow. She keeps a small flock of native sheep and is involved in a project to produce super-fine lace-weight wool yarn.

As well as following agricultural pursuits, Paddy has experience in management and governance, having worked in both academic and senior administrative roles in colleges and universities. As a freelance consultant in education she also worked for many years on large aid projects in south and south-east Asia.

Fiona Mandeville will already be well known to most SCF members throughout the Highlands and Islands.

Growing up on the family croft on the shores of Broadford Bay in Skye, Fiona has always had a strong commitment to crofting; and a few years after graduating from Edinburgh university she returned to Skye.

Fiona and Jim Hunter set up the Scottish



Paddy



Fiona

Crofters Union in 1986 – the forerunner of our present SCF.

Union HQ was situated in Broadford, where Fiona helped run the organisation, providing advice and advocacy to the union's many demanding members. Such was the success of the SCU that it soon became a force to be reckoned with and gained considerable respect at both local and national government levels.

After working for 17 years at SCU HQ, Fiona left the organisation in 2001 to go sailing with her husband Geoff, returning home in 2005. While sailing round the Med Fiona was still, unbelievably, involved with the production of *The Crofter*, thanks to a laptop powered by a wind generator and email links via her mobile phone. She continues her role as editor today.

Fiona now brings to the board of the SCF her multi-faceted business and community

development experience.

The SCF is indeed fortunate to have these two very able individuals to help run our organisation. On your behalf, I welcome them both to the team.

As a reminder, the following is a list of your present board members:

Eleanor Arthur – chair

Derek Flynn – vice-chair (replaces Marina Dennis, at her request)

Marina Dennis

Norman Leask (re-appointed by the board)

Dr Alasdair MacMhaoirín (invited by the board to serve another year)

Dr Paddy Zakaria

Fiona Mandeville



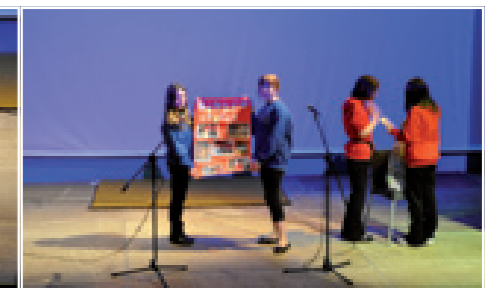
Eleanor Arthur introduces Margaret Bennett, Crofting Connections patron



Broadford Primary sing a selection of songs



Shona-Mae Mclean from Staffin



Making Kishies – Cullivoe Primary School

Practical training courses

A WIDE RANGE of practical training courses has taken place since the last *Crofter*, from Shetland to Argyll and involving well over 100 participants. The view from two contented trainees on one of our dry stone walling courses can be read below.

A programme for the winter months and into the spring is currently being developed and will cover a number of lambing courses, vet skills, willow management and further dry stone walling training. There is also still time to request courses in other topics of interest.

Dry stone walling course, August, instructor Innes Watson

Report kindly provided by Hilary de Vries.

This was my first time on a SCF course so I didn't know what to expect, but I needn't have worried. We were to repair some gaps in a field boundary wall and after

some initial instruction and a few pointers from the trainer, we were soon started. I found the trainer both informative and helpful, guiding and keeping us right as we went along and more than happy to answer any questions people had. Everybody was there to learn and willing to help each other out. I came away at the end of the weekend feeling I'd really learnt a lot – especially with the course being so hands on – and I intend to use some of these new skills in the future.

Report kindly provided by Seoras Burnett

How much can you learn about dry stone walling in two days? A fair amount, it would appear. As we stood back admiring our work, we all agreed that with a little time and the addition of some lichen and moss it would be difficult to tell our work apart from the original wall. Not quite, perhaps, but under the able guidance of Innes Watson we all felt closer to

unlocking the secrets of building walls without mortar and certainly ready to tackle any field dyke. We returned to our homes and crofts keen to put our new found skills into practice after a very enjoyable and informative two days.

Entry level crofting induction course

As *The Crofter* goes to press our first two-day residential version of the established course will be getting underway. There has been a lot of interest in this format, and



once we have evaluated the first attempt we intend to add this version to the regular offering of evening classes from early 2012.

Winter 2012 ten-week evening classes will be starting in January. Locations are likely to include Mull, Kilmartin, Strathspey and Ullapool, among others.

For more information on any element of the training programme please contact Su Cooper, training@crofting.org

Following ancient roads

CAMERON ORMISTON (82 years old) and his son, SCF member Ruaridh, spent the first two weeks of October with TV presenter and comedian Griff Rhys Jones making a documentary about the drove roads in Scotland and recreating one of the 200+ mile droves that used to happen from Skye to Falkirk.

Accompanied by four Highland

cattle and assisted by two Highland ponies, they started from Ramasaig near Glendale in Skye and finished at the site of the great tryst at Falkirk where tens of thousands of cattle used to be sold. Some days Cameron spent up to eight hours a day in the saddle and even Griff got into wrangling the cattle on horseback too.

Highlights of the trip included crossing the ancient bridges at

Sligachan and Stirling, using the Kylerea ferry, cresting the Devil's Staircase in Glencoe, droving up the Main St in Crieff and over the Falkirk tryst golf course.

The program will be the fourth in a new episode to be shown on BBC1 in Jan 2011 and the series should be called Lost Routes of Britain.

The Ormiston highlands were selected to do this trip for two

main reasons:

1: The Ormistons can trace the roots and bloodlines of their Highland ponies right the way back to John Cameron "Corriechoillie" (1781-1856) from Spean Bridge – the most famous drover of them all. Ruaridh's great grandfather Edward in 1905 wrote about the famous mare Gaick Calliag saying that "she had a curious splash of white on the inside of her hock" that was attributed to the piebald Highlands that Corriechoillie was famous for. He regularly used to ride 60 miles a day on his ponies and in his days it was normal for 200 ponies to be for sale on Skye alongside 1200 cattle at Sligachan. Gaick had bought two foundation mares from Corrie prior to his death and Edward took over the stud in his own name by the 1880s.

2: The Ormiston Highland ponies and cattle have a long heritage of being used in the movies with Cameron acting as stunt double to Errol Flynn in making "The Master of Ballantrae" in the 1950s; right up to the present day and successful movies like "Rob Roy" and "Highlander" as well as "Chasing the Deer", "Monarch of the Glen" etc.

As usual the ponies behaved very well and the moo-vie stars were the real stars



ANIMAL NUTRITION

Winter stock diets – don't make a meal out of it

AT THIS TIME of year, with the clocks falling back and the nights drawing in, it is worthwhile focusing on forward planning the winter rations for stock and ensuring appropriate rations are available. Given the ferocity of recent winters and prolonged cool autumn, stock may be a degree back in condition that may lead to issues in late pregnancy for cattle and sheep.

Condition Scoring

It is important to monitor your stock regularly to ensure overall condition is not dropping at a critical time and that they receive the correct ration. Stock condition scores (cs) range from 1 (lean) to 5 (fat). For ewes they should be around 2.5 at tupping. Leaner ewes need access to better grass at a lower stocking rate whilst fitter ewes can be stocked tighter. Cattle should be at cs 3.0 at weaning and at this level could afford to lose 0.75 of a cs over the winter. It is better to try and monitor and maintain condition than play catch-up in late pregnancy. Further information is available on how to condition score from your SAC office and support funding through LMO animal welfare option.

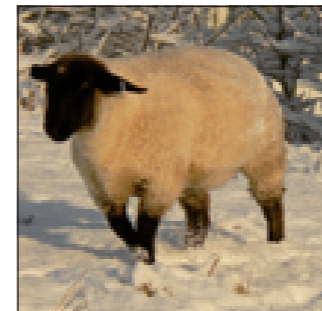
Diet

Availability, cost and quality are all factors to assess when looking at options such as concentrates, draff, hay, silage and blocks. The vagaries of our weather, the age of the grass ley and the failure to replenish nutrients can result in questionable forage quality. We can all read a concentrate label but your silage bag comes without this analysis.

SAC offers an effective forage analysis and ration service for cattle and sheep and can assess energy levels and calculate ration requirements, ensuring you make the most out of your available diet resource with minimum wastage.

Sheep

With tupping underway it is important in the first month after mating, and whilst rams are running with the flock, to aim to maintain body condition and avoid stress. If you have enough grass reserves, avoid daily trough supplementation as ewes can be supplemented with a hard type feed block/lick and 0.6kg of hay in snowy conditions. In this early stage of pregnancy any stress can result in the ewe reabsorbing embryos. Ewes in better condition at tupping will lead to more lambs and hence the



© Claire Nicolson

greater need for feed.

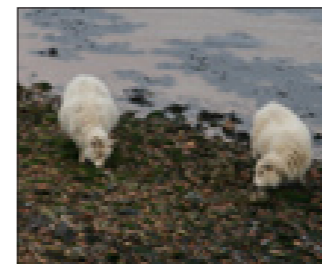
If the hills are covered in deep snow or sheep are on in-bye with no forage available and you can still access them, start feeding a restricted amount of quality hay – what they can clear in an hour or two. Give one small bale per 30 ewes per day. If access is restricted, or forage quality is dubious, feed blocks should be placed on the hill or made available in-bye to supplement their diets in the interim.

Cattle

Spring-calving cows up to calving with access to good silage and shelter can be fed ad-lib silage only. However in most cases out-wintered cows need a diet with 15% more energy. In our area they will be subject to a harsher climate and likely have access to poorer silage – supplementation is often required. This can vary from 0.5-2.5Kg/head/day of either bruised barley or a 16% protein cob. Forage testing is crucial.

Cattle on silage and hay-based diets are very much at the mercy of the quality of this forage. If your silage is of a poorer quality or wetter then the cost per unit of energy will increase. Do not always assume that "they did well on it last year" will suffice and concentrate and mineral supplementation will be essential. Vice versa good quality silages may require reduced access to forage to avoid calving difficulties.

Iain M Macmillan
SAC Stornoway



Shetland sheep on the shore

Draff – a valuable food

DRAFF, or malt distillers' grains, is a valuable by-product from malt whisky distilling.

It can be a cost-effective source of energy and protein feed for those in the vicinity of distilleries. Most distilleries have an exclusive contract with a feed supplier, who will deliver bulk loads of around seven to eight tonnes direct to the croft or farm. Cost is typically in the region of £18 per tonne, which is very good value even allowing for the high water content.

Typical dry matter content is 25 per cent. For feeding beef animals on the croft, a suitable ration would be eight kilos of draff plus 25 kilos of silage per head per day. A point to watch is that mineral content is generally low, so mineral supplements will be required, and this should be discussed with an agricultural consultant. Once delivered, draff can be ensiled in a silage pit and can be stored in this way for up

to a year, otherwise it should be used within a week of delivery.

So here is a well-balanced working relationship between two of the renowned products of the Highlands and Islands – malt whisky and quality beef cattle – a relationship that boosts energy efficiency and lowers food miles.

But is that long-term, fruitful relationship starting to break down? Some distilleries have started using draff to fire their boilers, as a carbon reduction measure.

This development is causing alarm throughout the beef industry, raising a new aspect of the food versus bio-fuel debate. Carbon reduction on one side of the equation will cause carbon increase on the other, and what is the point of that?

Surely draff is far too valuable a material to be squandered as a low-grade fuel?

Thanks to SAC and Harbro for assistance with this article.

Adapted to survive

SHETLAND SHEEP, like all others, have adapted over the centuries to utilize what is available and when it can be obtained.

Nothing shows this more than their ability to manipulate the nutrients and minerals available in seaweed. They also know when the tide is out and the seaweed is available for them to graze.

Our sheep have a daily routine. Any sheep can be found in the same part of the common grazings at any set time of the day or night and the only thing to break this routine is the time of low water. Not all the sheep have to have their daily fix, but all seem to spend some time browsing at the low water mark.

The tradition in our area was that a worm turned in the sheep's feet just before low water, reminding them that there were some nutrients available at the seashore. However it happens, all of sudden when low water is approaching you will see a string of sheep wandering their way to their favourite part of the seashore.

I have watched them stream toward the shore at the appropriate time of day; in fact the 'caa' of communal sheep was often timed around this.

I have watched them leave their shelter on a snow-covered moonlight night to get their desired and much-needed minerals, but

they do not require light, they seem to find the seashore with great ease, in the darkness. When coming home across the isthmus to our house I have to be careful not to kill one of my multi-coloured treasures while they make passage to and from the beach below our house.

Some incomers have complained to the welfare officials and others that Shetland crofters starve their animals so they are forced to eat seaweed. This would be laughable if it were not so serious.

I have the use of islands where I produce an extremely good-looking strong breeding animal. Occasionally there are some spare and for several years the same person bought my female lambs. One year he said he was not having good luck with sheep bought from me. I was very disappointed to hear this, so I offered him some not so-good-lambs for free from a croft that had no seashore, not realising the significance of this. They did well but my 'isles' lambs that went where I had no seashore starting dying, two or even three years later. This was many years ago and since then all sheep that are brought up on seaweed stay within access to the seashore and needless to say they do well.

Norman Leask

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WOOFERS DOG FOOD GIVES GREAT PERFORMANCE

David and Nicky Davies of Inverpoll Estate, Ullapool, Ross-shire have found that using Harbro's Woofers dog food gives their dogs endless energy, but has also helped health problems from which one dog was suffering.

In total, they keep seven dogs – five collies, a spaniel and a pointer. When fed on other dog foods, the pointer suffered from fits. When moved onto Woofers dog food, the fits stopped.

Mr Davies says "The effectiveness of the food was proved when our supply of Woofers ran out. We fed the pointer on another more expensive brand and the fits returned. When the dog was fed Woofers again, the fitting stopped."

The cessation of fitting was attributed to the formulation of Woofers, where energy is released steadily through the day.

"Our dogs find the feed very palatable – the collies have to run for miles and miles daily and

Woofers provides all the energy they need to keep them going," added Mr Davies.

The Davies family own and run 12000 acres and they rent a further 5000 acres at Inverpoll. The enterprise includes 561 ewes and gimmers, 130 hogs and 30 cows kept on rough hill ground. Their land includes the famous Stac Polly where many of their sheep graze.

Woofers dog food is manufactured by Harbro and is carefully formulated to ensure that the energy requirements of working dogs are met. The addition of trace elements and vitamins ensures that dogs remain in peak fitness. Woofers contain crunchy cereal chunks, vegetable flakes and tasty beef and salmon chunks. Fish and linseed oils provide additional energy and also contain the essential nutrients for healthy skin and a glossy coat.

Our North Ronaldsay sheep

THE SHEEP on our island of North Ronaldsay, in Orkney are very different than the sheep you would see in the fields in Scotland because they live on the beach and have a lot longer necks than usual.

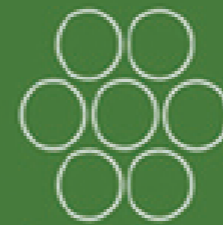
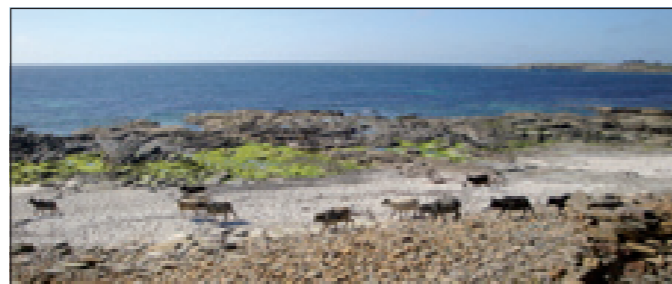
They are also a bit smaller. Their coat is a bit colourful but some of the sheep are all one colour. Some sheep have a white fleece, some are shades of grey or brown and black. Sheep on North Ronaldsay are different because they eat seaweed.

The dyke that keeps them on the beach is thirteen miles long and goes round the outside of the whole island. They are on the beach all the time apart from at lambing time. The only times the sheep get to eat the grass is at lambing and when they jump the dyke. They jump quickly.

When we clip the sheep we do it with our hands and if you touch the wool it is greasy and curly. Some of the fleeces are taken to the mill which is at the lighthouse and then it is spun into wool and made into rugs and jumpers. When we work with the sheep we go through stages of punding, which means to gather the sheep together off all of the beaches and scare them into pens.

Then we butcher the sheep and keep it fresh for the Harvest Home to celebrate all the hard work that people have been doing all over the island. The mutton we eat tastes a little like seaweed, just like their diet.

*Macsen Johnstone and Hannah Sherbourne
North Ronaldsay primary school*



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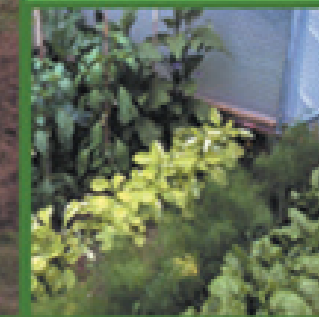
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KC MacKinnon: 7 November – 12 October 2011

THE ISLE OF SKYE recently lost one of its most-loved characters, KC MacKinnon of Bernisdale, well-known sheep dog handler and crofter.

KC was born in Edinbane in the Isle of Skye. His father was a crofter and KC developed his interest in crofting from an early age. After leaving Portree high school, KC moved south to join the metropolitan police, but he quickly realised city life was not for him. After a brief spell in Ayrshire, he returned home to Skye where he met and married Betty.

KC was a family man at heart. He and Betty had three daughters and nine grandchildren. He was immensely proud of his Gaelic heritage and passed his love of the Gaelic language and culture to all his children and grandchildren. It was a common sight to see KC at home singing a Gaelic lullaby to a sleepy grandchild on his lap.

He enjoyed success as a self-employed builder and joiner, but his love of crofting and rural life gradually began to take a bigger role in his life. He was a keen hunter and fisherman and venison

and salmon were regularly on the menu in Bernisdale.

In 1980 KC was given a young puppy – the runt of the litter – called Mona; and so began his life-long passion for sheep dog trialling. He had his first success in trialling with Dawn (from JJ Templeton's Moss). He ran his own dog trials in Drumuie and later in Bernisdale.

KC could comfortably work five dogs at once and he became a regular attraction at agricultural and local shows. His sense of humour made these occasions enjoyable and the sight of his dogs working with ducks appealed to all. Many were fascinated by his whistling. He based his whistle on birdsong he had listened to as a child – and KC's birds always sang Gaelic phrases!

Working for the Highlands and Islands Development Board as a trainer, KC helped enthusiasts train their dogs, but he also trained people to catch moles.

He even kept a frozen mole in the freezer so he could show people what these pests looked like.

He set up his own sheep dog

and crofting demonstrations in Bernisdale when he retired and became known as 'Fear nan Con'. On display were the beautiful shepherd's crooks he so painstakingly carved; and they are proudly displayed in his house today.

KC was also a keen horseman and enjoyed driving his pony and trap. This earned him a small role in the Inspector Allyn Mysteries, filmed in Plockton. He also played the much-more-important role of Santa at the local school, arriving fully dressed as Santa in his pony and trap, explaining that the reindeer were unwell that day.

He was the Scottish Brace Champion in 1989 and 1998 and went on to win the International in Wales in 1999. He also had his bad days and his time on One man and His Dog in 1991 was definitely one of those.

Betty has been overwhelmed by the kindness she has received from people from all over the country.

It so fitting that his trialling colleague of many years presented Psalm 23 in Gaelic at his funeral service in Portree. KC



loved music and singing and Iain Macdonald's rich voice echoing through the church was extremely emotional.

All agree that the final tune of the funeral service was a fitting farewell to KC:

"Soraidh leis an àit' san d'fhuair mi m'arach og, Eilean nam beann arda far an tàmh an ceò"

Our thanks to Ewen MacKinnon for this tribute.

Protecting South Uist's coasts

Caluna Campbell of Oxfam describes how

VIOLENT STORMS, destructive flash-floods and devastating droughts – the effects of climate change are all too obvious around the globe.

But this is not a problem that's remote to Scotland. In fact, we are seeing the impact right here too, with coastal erosion a real and ongoing problem.

Take South Uist. In February 2011, Oxfam Scotland was awarded £100,000 from the Postcode Lottery Dream Fund to create a community-generated project based on the island. This is specifically designed to tackle the effects of climate change through three key pieces of work; coastal adaptation, livelihood adaptation and the production of a climate change adaptation toolkit.

We have been working to assess

the different township's needs for coastal protection alongside the Coast Adapt team – specialising in safeguarding people living in North Atlantic coastal communities – and a number of township clerks. We have identified seven key areas where protection is needed: Kilpheder, Daliburgh, Bornish, Kildonan, Stoneybridge, Smercleit and Eriskay.

A one-size-fits-all solution simply won't work. The coastal adaptation methods need to vary depending on the landscape of each particular area – ranging from sand dunes to hard rock coastline. The adaptation methods include the installation of sand blow fencing – a technique which uses fishing nets, fence posts, fencing wire and fishing twine to replicate the natural reinforcements. It's important the township itself now takes responsibility for the maintenance

of the new fencing. During the winter months, cattle and sheep are put onto the machair for grazing so it is imperative that the fencing is protected all year round. The results of this innovative solution are beginning to show. We hope this will help motivate crofters to maintain the work already started.

In Smercleit flooding is the major problem. During the storm of 2005 the area's coastline, which includes the drainage system culvert for the south side of the island and a seawall that protects croft land, was destroyed when it was submerged in seawater six feet above road level. After nearly seven years – and with the help of the Postcode Lottery funding – a low-cost, community-led solution has emerged. The repair work will be completed on a local level through the Lochboisdale Amenities Trust. It sounds simple but the

results could be substantial.

A valuable spin-off from all this work is a new – and in many ways unlikely – community partnership. In July 2011 we took 18 volunteers from community groups in Govan in Glasgow to see what's been happening. Members of the traditional skills workshop Gal Gael travelled to the island alongside community activists from Sunny Govan Radio, Govanhill Baths and Tea in The Pot. Not only did they witness the work being done, but they took part in the first stage of the sand blow fencing installation.

Such was the success of the exchange it was repeated in September 2011, to coincide with the completion of the fencing barrier. Both the island community groups and the Glasgow community groups are learning so much from each other and they hope this will continue in the future.



Community groups working to build the sand blow fencing



The second sand blow fencing completed

A new crofting venture

Chrissie Sugden of Acorn Co-operative reports on an innovative initiative to create new crofts in Argyll

WHILST I COMPLETELY support SCF's vision to create 10,000 new crofts by 2020, I am somewhat sceptical that any government policies that don't put cash on the table will help.

After all, it's been possible to create new crofts for several years and I doubt that more than a handful have actually been created.

I empathised with the article in the last *Crofter* about Embo's attempts to create new woodland crofts. I led a similar project in Argyll that also failed to attract lottery funding. After devoting three years of my life to the project, jumping through a seemingly endless number of hoops, I finally gave up.

I still passionately believe that new crofts are the way to re-invigorate the Scottish countryside and to address the huge challenges we all face: food and fuel security, climate change and environmental protection, to name a few. And I have an idea for a way forward that's not dependent on political or charitable support.

Acorn Co-operative is an industrial and provident society (a particular kind of co-op that can issue loan stock). The co-op will borrow money (loan stock) from its members and supporters to buy land and create a number of new crofts and an area of common grazing. The co-op will then lease the crofts to its members.

The croft leases will remove the right to buy, ensuring that the land stays communally-owned for ever – thus remaining affordable to future tenants. Co-op members would be both tenants and landlord.

The loans will be repaid from croft rents and other income generated by the co-op, such as feed in tariffs from solar panels and running educational courses. Once the loans are repaid croft rents will be minimal. A croft

tenancy is for life; and with the agreement of the co-op, is heritable.

We have found a suitable farm for sale on the Kintyre peninsula, large enough to create 10-15 new crofts and are looking for people interested in joining us.

In order to finance the farm purchase and start-up costs, each croft household will be responsible for raising around £30,000 of loan stock. This could come from savings, friends or relatives but not from a loan secured on the land. The loans will be repaid with interest if required. When issuing loan stock, a choice of interest rates is usually offered. Some investors will accept a lower rate to support a project they believe in.

Crofters still have to finance building a house – but with a creative approach such as cob-building, or using local timber and recycled materials, we believe that costs for a modest home can be kept low. Also, crofters can apply to the Crofters Commission for a discretionary grant towards the cost of building a house – £11,500 in this location. We are in discussions with Argyll and Bute planning department to ensure their support.

So there you have it! An opportunity to live securely and sustainably on and from the land, run a small business, build your own house, grow your own food and live in a new crofting township all for half the price of a normal building plot – and a good deal of your time and effort of course!

The model can be varied to suit people's differing local and financial circumstances. Bare land or woodland would be much cheaper than a farm, but we believe that an existing farm gives us the best chance of co-operation from our local planners.

We would welcome enquiries from anyone interested in joining us or copying this model in their own area. In the first instance contact Chrissie Sugden on 01852-500684 or email chrissie.sugden@gmail.com.

Sutherland meetings

On Tuesday 13 December the East Sutherland ward forum will discuss "The Local Economic Situation", which will cover crofting and its importance to the local economy, with representatives from HIE, Highland Council and others. The meeting will take place in Edderton Hall.

On Tuesday 20th December SCF Kyle of Sutherland and East Sutherland branches will host a meeting with the local MP John Thurso in Rogart Hall on a "Timetable to Prosperity". All are welcome to attend and put your questions to John.

Membership matters

Direct debits

Since launching a new discount for members who sign up to pay by Direct Debit, the overall number of members taking advantage of the discount has increased substantially.

If you do not pay by Direct Debit already you can also take advantage of this offer. When you get your renewal though in the post all you need to do is complete the Direct Debit form on the back of the letter, we do all the rest! You will receive a 20% discount off your first year's payment through DD.

If you are already paying by DD we are pleased to enclose your new membership card for 2012/2013.

Case work

As always we get a large amount of case work coming into the office. Some of the things we have been working on this quarter include: applications to the CHGS and appeals; contacts for croft solicitors; help in decrofting and planning. If you have any issues that we might be able to advise on please let Karen know at HQ.

Local contacts

Karen is in the process of writing to all local contact from areas and branches to update contact lists. If you would like to be added to a list of local contacts or are interested in arranging local meetings please let HQ know. We are always happy to help.

Young crofters at the annual gathering

For this edition of *The Crofter* I was hoping to bring you an article from a young crofter so you could see the work that our members are doing.

However time constraints and busy schedules put a stop to that idea. So instead you have me (Karen) again!

At the young crofters' Lewis and Harris meeting we saw progression of the ideas and development of goals and aims of the group. There are a number of items which still need sorting out including funding the group and how it links in with the SCF and existing projects; in particular Crofting Connections. With the help of all concerned an

outline will be set out with these aims to help take the group forward.

There has also been increasing interest from people in Uist and we are hoping to hold a meeting there very soon.

At this year's gathering, a number of young crofters took up the offer of funded places. Participants joined the other delegates at the annual conference, hearing from all of the speakers. It was of particular interest to learn about the predicted future for crofting.

I think that the young crofters group will play an important role in this future.

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Gliocas bho bheul-aithris

BHA MI AIG Cruinneachadh nan Croitearan am bliadhna agus rudeigin a chòrd rium gu mòr aig an dinnear, 's e Domhnall Iain MacIlleFhinnein, a bha na bheat san Eilean Sgitheanach fad iomadh bliadhna, ag innse naidheachdan, feadhainn èibhinn, feadhainn feumail agus feadhainn dhiubh an dà chuid.

Nuair a bha mi ag èisteachd ris an naidheachd mun tart ann am beathach agus na diofar sheòrsachan de dh'ola a chaidh a mholadh airson a leigheas, leis na diofar eòlaichean às a' choimhearsnachd, bha e bualadh orm gum bi mòran de na seann leigheasan a' dol air diochiumhne mura bi iad air an glèidheadh an dòigh air choireigin.

Chuala mi corra eisimpleir mi fhìn, mar dhòigh air fiabhras bainne a leigheas, agus sin le bhith bleith fhaochagan slàn

gus am biodh iad nan taois a rachadh a bhìadhadh don mhàrt bho chd. Ma tha seo ag obair, tha mi creidsinn gur ann air sgàth a' chalcium sna sligean a' ceartachadh cion an stuth sin ann am bodhaig na bà.

'S ann bhon aon bhodach a chuala mi mu leigheas airson a' mhuin dheirg. 'S e sin uinnean a phronnadh agus a bhìadhadh don bheul-aithris ach tha gliocas ann mu dhòighean obrach a tha tric stèidhichte air bliadhnaichean de ghnàth-eòlas. Mar eisimpleir trusadh nan caorach far monadh creagach, no bancaichean iasgaich far am faighear iasg ann am pailteas.

Chan e a-mhàin na seann leighisean a tha gan toirt dhuinn le beul-aithris ach tha gliocas ann mu dhòighean obrach a tha tric stèidhichte air bliadhnaichean de ghnàth-eòlas. Mar eisimpleir trusadh nan caorach far monadh creagach, no bancaichean iasgaich far am faighear iasg ann am pailteas.

Tha cuimhn' am air bodach às a' Mhorbhairne innse dhomh mu

dhòighean air siol a chur; gum biodh tu ga chur cho tugh 's gum faiceadh tu seachd gràinneachan anns gach làrach a dh'fhàg ingnean an eich. Bha cuideachd molaidhean aige air flagais a dhèanamh. Chuireadh tu sreathan de dh'innear, feamainn agus raineach air muin a chèile, agus chumadh tu a' dol mar sin. Nuair a bha am flagais air grodadh sin am mathachadh a b'fhearr a chuireadh tu air an fhearann.

Tha mi cinnteach gu bheil tòrr de leithid seo sna clàraidhean aig Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba agus 's math gu bheil. Tha na clàraidhean a-nis a' nochdadh air an eadar-lìn tro shaothrachadh Tobar an Dualchais, agus 's e goireas air leth a tha sin. 'S e an dùbhlán a tha romhainn a-nis, an cumail beò, air ar teangannan agus gu dearbh mas urrainn, ann an cleachdadh.

Gabhan Mac a' Phearsain

Food... as if people mattered

Patrick Mulvany pays tribute

WE CELEBRATE the 100th anniversary of E F Schumacher this year. He was an advocate for localism, autonomy and living within environmental limits.

He would have been an ardent supporter of crofters and crofting. In his iconic book, published at the height of the oil and food crisis of 1973/1974, *Small is Beautiful: a study of economics as if people mattered*, he expresses prescient ideas about agriculture and the land. Alastair McIntosh's recent wonderful book, *Rekindling Community: Connecting People, Environment and Spirituality*, is rooted in Schumacher's ideas and is well worth reading, perhaps before dipping again into Schumacher's seminal work.

Schumacher's time has come again with the re-emergence of global energy and food crises. He would have celebrated the fact that, despite 40 years of the intense spread of what he termed present-day industrial society (which) everywhere shows the evil characteristic of incessantly stimulating greed, envy, and avarice, local food production still supplies more than 70% of the world's food.

But he would have railed against the agribusiness corporations that are intent on capturing the markets, livelihoods and resources of small-scale producers. Over many years, however, their organisation, La Via Campesina,

of which the SCF is an important member, has shown how these threats can be mitigated and what changes in policy are necessary to secure future food supplies – all summarised in their food sovereignty framework – a policy for a safe, resilient and nutritious food system.

The food sovereignty approach is the type of proposal that Schumacher would have supported. New economics foundation fellow, Andrew Simms, said in a recent interview for the newsletter of Schumacher's organisation – the Intermediate Technology Development Group, now re-branded Practical Action – "The food sovereignty movement, for example, is an ideal manifestation of everything Schumacher believed in. It is a model of how you would apply Schumacher's notions of subsidiarity and appropriateness of scale to the food system." Food sovereignty, with its focus on local food needs and making sure these are compatible with local ecosystems, is a living vehicle of the ideas and insights of Schumacher.

At Practical Action, we strongly support this approach – Food... as if people mattered.

For more: see
<http://practicalaction.org/schumacher-centenary>

Patrick Mulvany, senior policy adviser, Practical Action and chair, UK Food Group

Small is successful

THE Ecological Land Co-operative, whose main purpose is to support the creation of truly affordable and highly sustainable land-based livelihoods, has produced a very interesting report on a study they commissioned looking at creating sustainable livelihoods on ten acres or less.

As Brett Spiller says in the foreword, *Small is Successful* is an enlightening, captivating and timely read. Through eight case studies, you will be given an insight into the aptitude, passion and enterprise required to make a small farm succeed. And all succeed without the benefits of any grant assistance.

Small is Successful dispels some of the prevailing myths about the viability of working 10 acres or less. It draws acute observations on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by each case study, culminating in key findings and some thought-provoking recommendations.

This is a wee book very worth reading. You can get a copy from:
The Ecological Land Co-operative

The Hub, 5 Torrens Street
London EC1V 1NQ
E info@ecologicalland.coop
W www.ecologicalland.coop

Dates for your diary – December 2011

KEEP YOUR farming calendar up to date with our guide below, put together in partnership with Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services (SEARS).

These are some of the key dates and deadlines for application forms, licenses etc. The list is not exhaustive, and some dates may change. Keep in touch with your local office for the latest information.

- 1 December 2011 – Single Farm Payment Scheme (SFPS) 2011 payment window opens. The Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (SGRPID) will be writing to SFPS claimants shortly to tell them that this year they will be able to view their SFPS 2011 payments online in advance of the issue of a paper advice note.

- 31 December 2011 – last day for SGRPID to receive claims under the Scottish Beef Calf Scheme (SBSC) 2011.

- Additionally the SBSC will cease to exist at midnight on 31 December. It will be replaced with a new Scottish Beef Scheme (SBS).

- 31 December 2011 – cross compliance period closes.

- From 1 January 2012 cross compliance will include a new Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) measure relating to the establishment of buffer strips along watercourses. The new GAEC measure restricts the application and storage of fertilisers and dung along watercourses and beside springs and wells. Full details will be published on the cross compliance pages of the Scottish Government website.

You can find information about Scotland: National Rural Network regional events at http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk/en/events/regional_events

For more information on SEARS visit <http://www.sears.scotland.gov.uk/>.

Crofting in Sweden

Fiona Mandeville reports on a recent visit to Sweden

FÄBOD, an ancient transhumance farming tradition, is vital in preserving the environment and culture of rural Sweden.

That was the message from a parliament of pastoralists' organisations held in Stockholm in September. Representatives from crofting organisations had been invited to participate at the event, in recognition of crofting's similarities to this historical way of life which is still practiced across Scandinavia and other parts of northern Europe.

Reporting on crofting were Crofters Commission chair Drew Ratter, crofter Angus McHattie from the Isle of Skye and SCF's Fiona Mandeville.

Fäbod literally means a place to put livestock, but refers to the summer grazing pastures where small farmers take their stock to benefit from the lush grass and herbage growing on the upland pastures and amongst the trees. Cows, sheep and goats are walked from the inbye land through a network of forest tracks to the settlements of old wooden huts and barns where some of the family, or often just the women, remain for weeks tending the beasts.

It's a hard-working time, up early to milk then let the stock out, the rest of the day spent making butter and cheese, before bringing them in again at night for protection against predators. No electricity supply, no mains plumbing, no handy shops – all has to be done the old-fashioned

way with water boiled on wood stoves to scald the milk basins and buckets.

Fäboden are usually in national parks and surrounded by popular walking trails, so many have a building specially for guests, who may sleep in these community-owned chalets free. Some farmers provide them with breakfast, a way of earning a little income. One we visited on a trip up north was beautifully fitted out with old hand-woven bedcovers, rugs and cushions with traditional jackets, tools and utensils hanging on the walls.

But this is not an idyllic way – of life. There are many challenges. One of the most problematic is predation on stock by wolves and bears – re-introduced in Sweden in the 1980s – and since then numbers have multiplied dramatically. One speaker lost several cows, goats, lambs and sheep each year. Farming since 1993, he had to give up keeping cattle in the traditional summer pastures, as they would not stay in a place where they were aware of bears. Once the wolf or bear got the taste of a kid or lamb, it would return each night for more.

Permission from the local authority for emergency protective hunting was theoretically possible, but consent usually took up to a month to be granted, no good at all when immediate action is required to protect the herd or flock. Dogs are used as guardians, but they too are not-infrequent victims. Now this young family are about to give up fäbod farming. With a 10-year-old son very keen on animals and the farming way of

life, this is a real loss.

Compensation is given when predator kills can be proved with evidence, but this is not possible when stock disappear completely, which happens not infrequently. One farmer took hair samples from the serious wounds of his dog, certain they were from a bear. The local authority lost the samples.

Minister for culture Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth opened the event, emphasising the importance of fäboden and their contribution to the cultural identity of the country as well as to the environment. The government recognised this importance and was very supportive of transhumance. However, when I asked her later if this recognition was translated into specific support measures, the answer was no. Fäbod farmers receive the same support as other farmers in Sweden. They were interested and envious when told of the specific support mechanisms enjoyed by crofters in Scotland.

Some of the other speakers concentrated on biodiversity which was enhanced by fäbod farming. The fäbods are mostly in the "highlands" of Sweden, just below the snowline. In winter, of course, most of the country lies under a snowy blanket for months. The extensive husbandry supports countless landraces which need to be conserved and biologists recognise that fäboden make a vital contribution to this process.

Speakers from several northern European countries spoke of identical farming systems in their countries. Transhumance still has

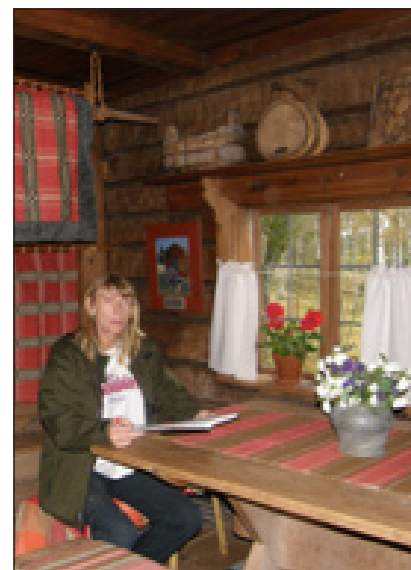
a vital role to play in agriculture and more needs to be done to make governments favour its survival. United action was the way ahead.

The Scots explained about crofting, how it was administered by the Crofters Commission and how crofters got together to represent themselves via the Scottish Crofting Federation.

Finally, Maasai warrior Raphael ole Moono told how his people keep cattle in the bush and protect them from predators such as lions and hyenas. They know the life patterns of these animals, can identify individuals and kill them with spears if they take stock. The Maasai live in harmony with their territory and can exist in desert and semi-desert land. They move with the seasons, taking their herds to new water sources as other pastures dry up. They drink the milk and eat the beef, supplementing their diet with herbs. The Tanzanian government would prefer that they abandoned their semi-nomadic existence but the people have resisted. Recently, Oxfam has claimed that the lifestyle of the Maasai should be embraced as a response to climate change because of their ability to farm in deserts and scrublands.

Raphael the Maasai's passionate description of his farming and culture brought the gathering to a conclusion, with thanks to all the participants and particularly to Pauline Palmcrantz, president of the Swedish Association for Transhumance and Pastoralism, who had organised the event.

www.fabod.nu



Fäbod house interior



Checking out the herbage at the fäbod



Fäbod farmers in traditional dress

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LET'S LIBERATE DIVERSITY



Scotland
2012



Celebrating crofters' seeds and breeds

THE Let's Liberate Diversity forum is the annual gathering of farmers and associations working on agricultural biodiversity in Europe.

The SCF is delighted to be hosting next year's forum, the seventh, which will take place in Strathpeffer from 9th to 11th March 2012. This will enable as many of our members as possible to attend the event, which will be held in conjunction with the SCF annual gathering.

The theme of next year's event is "Celebrating Crofters' Seeds and Breeds" – looking at how they contribute to sustainable land use and the high nature value of the

crofting counties.

The first Let's Liberate Diversity meeting was held in November 2005 in Poitiers, France, where 150 participants, farmers and associations exchanged views and experiences on the rights of farmers linked to the production, exchange and conservation of seeds. This was followed by events in Bullas in Spain, Halle in Germany, Ascoli in the Marche region of Italy and Graz, Austria.

SCF was part of the organising group for the 2011 forum held in Szeged, Hungary. Its central theme was the question of farmers' rights related to the conservation, sustainable use and development of agricultural biodiversity. Last

year's event was attended by some 280 delegates including farmers, gardeners and seed artisans, as well as local communities implementing initiatives on agricultural biodiversity in Europe.

This year's event is being organised by the European coordination of Let's Liberate Diversity in conjunction with the SCF heritage seed library/Garden Organic, Practical Action and other members of the UK food group, with support from the EU. The first steering group meeting was held in Balmacara last June; and with the majority of the work since then accomplished by e-mail – in three working languages – the next meeting is due to take place

in London this month.

The programme for celebrating crofters' seeds and breeds includes among others a poster exhibition, seed exchange, film festival and workshops on food sovereignty, the Scottish action plan, livestock health and policy issues – and poses the question What is sustainable food?

To find out more about the event, visit our website www.liberate-diversity-scotland2012.org or keep up to date by following us on twitter at @LLD2012 or find us on Facebook Let's Liberate Diversity Scotland.

Further details and a booking form are enclosed with this edition of *The Crofter*.



Farmers' Seed steering group in Balmacara



Steering group members visit Duirinish

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