

## Commission releases LFA ideas

**R**EFORM OF the so-called Intermediate LFA measure – the one currently used for support to areas with natural handicaps here in Scotland – draws closer with the publication by the European Commission of a communication on how to improve the targeting of the measure.

### Standard delimitation criteria

Responding to stinging criticism from the court of auditors and following on from a lengthy period of discussion and consultation, the Commission proposes the standardisation of criteria for the delimitation of LFAs, to be called Natural Handicap Areas (NHAs) from now on.

All socio-economic criteria have been dropped – only soil, climate and terrain can now be used to justify support through the measure and the thresholds for these are, it is proposed, to be set at a EU level.

The possibilities of difficulties arising from this major change is, we understand, the main reason why the Commission has published a communication before moving to issuing legislative proposals. They are asking member states to trial the suggested criteria and thresholds and are promising to take note of the resulting feedback.

Seen from a Scottish perspective, it is inconceivable that most of the current LFA will fall foul of the proposals, with areas with slopes >15% (1 in 7) and areas with poorly drained soils and sandy soils all being eligible.

On the other hand, the criteria are explicitly biased towards difficulties posed for crop production, meaning that it is possible at least that some areas which are extremely exposed but otherwise potentially productive are excluded.

### Peripherality dropped

A major concern, but one long since clearly flagged, is the dropping of distance to market – peripherality – as a recognised

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## Draft Crofting Reform Bill imminent

**C**ROFTERS WILL be waiting with much anticipation for the publication of the Government's forthcoming consultation paper on the draft Crofting Reform Bill. The consultation paper was to be published as *The Crofter* went to press and there will be three months for crofters and the wider public to comment.

Last October, the Government issued a formal response to the final report of the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting (Shucksmith report). They said they would publish a draft bill to make the necessary changes needed to the Crofting Acts. Once the bill is published the Government will be organising a series of public meetings across the crofting counties to discuss the proposals with crofters.

We expect the bill to contain proposals in five key areas.

First, the Government said it would reconstitute the Crofters Commission to make it more democratic, transparent and accountable. It will set out to create up to six area committees of the Crofters Commission covering (1) Orkney and Shetland (2) Western Isles (3) Northern Highlands (4) Southern Highlands (5) Skye, Lochalsh and Lochaber and (6) Argyll, Bute, Arran and Cumbrae. The Government response suggests that these area committees will have a majority of elected crofters on them and will exercise all the Commission's powers in the local areas, with appeals going to the full Commission in Inverness. We shall be looking closely at the role the Government sees for crofting assessors and whether the areas covered by the new committees make sense.

Another area that would require changes to legislation is the Government's proposals for a new Register of Crofts. The SCF has long campaigned for a new map-based register that would help to reduce the number of disputes over the boundaries of crofts. The Committee of Inquiry proposed that the keeper of the Registers of Scotland should be responsible for such

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## Message from the chair...



**A**S I WATCHED my last lamb being born, rising unsteadily to his feet and reaching for succour, all the long hours spent over an arduous six week period, (while being one of my best lambings) has left me tired and like the last lamb born apprehensive for the future.

While finishers have enjoyed phenomenal prices for cattle and sheep recently, will this translate to better store sales? Will it help to slow down the dramatic fall in numbers being witnessed across the crofting counties in particular?

We call on Government to

realise the input of farmers and crofters in providing wholesome healthy food while maintaining the environment, unfettered by crass legislation like the iniquitous EID which is unnecessary, unworkable and unwanted. Double tagging is more than robust and more acceptable.

With European elections looming agriculture will be a key issue. My fellow director Marina Dennis had the opportunity to meet the European Commissioner for agriculture Marian Fischer Boel and left her in no doubt of the worries that crofters have with the present raft of legislation which emanate from people who do not understand crofting's contribution. She appeared to be sympathetic to our viewpoint.

Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead was quite candid at a recent meeting that the present historical basis for calculating SFP will not be



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sustainable without any real indication of what might replace it. There is a lot of lobbying to ensure Government are under no illusions as to the threats and severity of our situation and SCF more than plays its part in any ongoing discussions.

While we have representation on the bull hire review group it should not be forgotten that this is only one element of a livestock improvement scheme. The ram hire/purchase and ewe lamb retention are essential components in ensuring quality, high health status which can

help redress the fall in stock numbers and maintain buyers' interest at sales.

At our recent AGM in Lewis we were delighted to have Chloe Randall, estate manager with Dunlossit Estate as our guest speaker. She was truly inspirational. They have built their own abattoir and the highly successful Meat Islay branding initiative. It was a meeting I found to be so eminently suited for crofters who so often bemoan our lack of opportunity. Book her for your next conference, she will enthuse even the most pessimistic among you.

If, like me, you are suffering from the rigours of an extended lambing, any thoughts of a change of vocation are soon dispelled by the sight of healthy lambs frolicking in a good flush of early grass and – oh yes, some badly needed sleep and those jobs I promised my wife I would do!

## Scottish Crofting Foundation policy updates

### Bull scheme

In the last issue we reported that the bull scheme (the crofters' cattle improvement scheme) had won a reprieve. Since then a review group has been set up headed by Sarah Allen, ex-Crofters Commissioner and agricultural consultant. SCF will be represented on the review group by our director Marina Dennis. The group will report back in the autumn.

### Blue tongue

The compulsory vaccination programme is near completion with the Scottish Government claiming a 71% vaccination coverage and expecting 80-90% by the end of June. This sounds fine, but a note of caution. Is it not actually that 5.7 million doses have been dispensed out of 8 million and that 71% of the doses ordered have been dispensed, not that 71% of animals have been vaccinated? For example, if you have 20 lambs but need to buy a 50ml bottle (as this is the smallest Merial size) then 30 doses are wasted. The Scottish Government's failure to order smaller bottles from Merial will result in a huge amount of waste among smaller producers. But then the Scottish Government must know the actual vaccination figures from the vaccination forms?

As this is written, we don't know yet whether Scotland will be declared a blue zone or not. (A blue zone is where livestock is vaccinated when no disease is present). Apparently

NFUS want this but the chief vet is saying that the advantages do not justify the additional costs – costs that will of course be passed on to the primary producer.



### EID

The campaign to stop the introduction of compulsory use of electronic identification for sheep failed to get enough backing to stop this from going through the meeting of ministers in Brussels. As it stands EID will therefore be introduced next January, but we will continue to urge the UK Government to use any flexibility it has to get exemption for small-scale producers, as this regime could be catastrophic.

### SRDP

A review of the Scotland Rural Development Programme is underway, the results of which will go to the cabinet

secretary for rural affairs Richard Lochhead by mid-May. The SCF put in a contribution and this is reported elsewhere in this issue.

### Crofting reform

As reported on pages 1 and 3, the draft crofting bill was released recently.

### LFASS

The European Commission has released a statement on its intentions to engage with member states in field testing the proposed new criteria for the delimitation of the Less Favoured Areas of Europe, which the SCF welcomed. Support to areas with natural handicaps is vital to the future delivery of public goods by crofters and other producers in Scotland's mountains and islands.

There are some concerns that the criteria proposed relate mainly to conditions which pose difficulties for the growing of crops and that things like exposure, which cause problems for livestock, might not be properly covered. However, this exercise enables as many of these concerns as possible to be addressed before legislation is brought forward.

SCF regrets the Commission's decision to drop distance or peripherality as a criterion. However, this has been clearly flagged up for some time and we call on the Scottish Government to take immediate action to draw up proposals for the redefinition of islands as areas with 'specific handicaps' and of other parts of upland Scotland to be defined as 'mountain' to reflect production handicaps.

We also call on the Scottish Government to take this enforced reform of LFA delimitation to address the fundamental problem with the current scheme – that less handicapped producers receive the highest payments.

Those who deliver on the objectives of sustainable land management, such as maintaining High Nature Value farmland through agricultural activity should be the ones who benefit from LFA support as the regulation intended.



## Commission releases LFA ideas

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physical handicap. The logic seems to be that the costs associated with distance can be overcome through appropriate fiscal measures or public support – the costs of ferry transport, for example – while the market is itself a very fluid concept.

Arguments that other costs, such as those imposed by tachograph or working time or animal transport rules or the uncertainties and costs of sailings cancelled due to weather, are real and are in addition to the cost of the transport itself have fallen on deaf ears.

Nevertheless, the solution is clear – Scotland needs to bring forward proposals to move all islands (in the sense of areas whose main route to market is by sea) into the 'Areas with

highest payments under the present arrangements.

## Future of the measure

One very positive, albeit implied, message in the communication is that the NHA measure is here to stay for the foreseeable future. The new arrangements are to be introduced in 2014, as part of the yet-to-be-designed next incarnation of the CAP.

Difficult issues remain to be addressed. For us in Scotland, how the payment is calculated and whether it is directly proportional to handicap is a basic question, but perhaps more one of opening eyes in the Rue de la Loi!

More fundamental still is the very purpose and logic of the NHA measure.



## Much less less favoured areas

Snow in October and bad weather in November has meant lower lambing percentages in some parts of the country. And now we have snow on the hills in May holding back the grass. Bad for crofters and their livestock but strong support for the re-distribution of LFA money to the parts of the country that really need it.

Specific Handicaps' category so that it can lawfully deliver the requisite support.

## Targeting within the LFA

Stressing the changed rationale of the NHA since 2005, when it was made explicitly focussed on sustainable land management, the Commission also flags its intention to tighten eligibility rules within the NHA and in particular to oblige member states to exclude applicants who have managed to overcome the natural handicap from payment.

Examples given are farms which are on drained former wetlands or which use irrigation in otherwise dry zones. From a Scottish perspective the obvious tool to reflect this principle is stocking density.

Some might think that it would also be reasonable to say that intensity of management is a better guideline as to the suitability of the Commission delimitation criteria than the precise match to the current LFA boundary.

Crofters will have spotted the irony that those producers who will be most worried about a change in the boundary are the very people who receive the

How does it fit in with the SFP? In particular, how do the requirements of cross-compliance and any NHA measure fit together? How can minimal activity be incorporated into cross-compliance without causing insurmountable trouble at the world trade talks?

What indeed is the justification for support, when the EU is meant to be following the Lisbon agenda of being competitive in a world free market?

Crofters should not fear these arguments – their role in delivering the public goods is clear and can be further strengthened by better targeting and proper calculation of support payments.

Notice who is scaremongering about the current proposals – those that benefit from the status quo but who contribute little to the maintenance of High Nature Value farmland or any of the other objectives of Axis II.

As Norman Leask says elsewhere in this edition, time to take the fight to Brussels. Bring the lights out from under the bushels!

*Gwyn Jones  
Consultant*

# Draft Crofting Reform Bill imminent

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a register and the Government accepted this recommendation. Any duty that would give the Registers of Scotland responsibility for creating a new Register of Crofts that is more akin to the Land Register would inevitably require changes to the Crofters Acts.

The third area that would require changes to legislation is the Government's proposals to give crofters the ability to take a mortgage on croft tenancies. This is intended to enable crofters to borrow money from lending institutions using their tenancy as collateral. Historically, the inability to take a standard security over a croft and the conditions of tenure have prevented banks and building societies from making loans to crofters on a similar basis to everyone else. We shall be interested to see how the Government will seek to address this issue in its forthcoming legislation.

The Government response to the Committee of Inquiry rejected the proposal for burdens. But they did agree to look at other options for addressing absenteeism and neglect, as well as options for preventing the damage to crofting resulting from the speculative value of croft land associated with inappropriate housing developments. So we expect the draft bill to contain some form of occupancy requirement for housing built on decrofted land. We also think the Government is likely to tighten up the existing requirement to be resident on or near the croft, and to put the land to some form of productive use, for tenant crofters and owner-occupiers alike.

Details of the consultation paper and the proposed public meetings were not available at the time of going to print but the SCF will provide these on our website once they are known. These proposals are likely to be significant for the future of crofting and the SCF encourages all of its members to take part in this consultation exercise.

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## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

# Scottish Rural Development Programme review

**S**INCE ITS inception the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) has come under a great deal of criticism for not being effective or accessible. There has recently been a review carried out by the agricultural consultant Peter Cook and the report should be with the cabinet secretary this month.

The SCF contribution to the consultation included the following main points. Our full submission can be viewed on our website.

- The SRDP has been a disaster – the idea of the provision of a one-stop-shop type of grant service was, in principle, a good one but dumping the running of the scheme on already-busy case officers has seen little or no support to clients as the case officers have no time to speak to or guide applicants and this has led to frustration, delay and poor service to applicants.
- Uptake by crofters is very low it would be useful to know exactly how many registered crofters have applied and how many have been successful. The general opinion is that the SRDP does not offer much for crofters, is very difficult (and in many instances impossible) to access, is inconsistent and is overly complicated.
- Making it web-based excludes many and it is very difficult even for those who have broadband and are web literate.
- Crofters say there is little in the LMO menu that is attractive to the small producer and that RP is dominated by bigger businesses that can afford to pay agents to apply for them. Without agents it seems impossible to apply.
- Crofters would like to see a simplified fast track route for smaller applications – which will take paper applications.
- As LFASS is part of SRDP we must insist on Scotland having a mountain and specific handicap category to ensure the continuation of LFASS beyond 2013.
- Collaboration should get many more points in any schemes even if the person you are collaborating with is not part of the scheme. Collaboration is what makes the crofting counties work.
- A cropping grant is needed – say maximum of two hectares or so.
- The scheme is severely limited for small producers. That is because it is based on land areas and not on expected net public benefit. In other words a small area can provide a significant public benefit whereas a large area can take on a monoculture look but the scheme does not recognise that.
- The thinking behind the scheme is about improvement of land whereas it should be about enhancement of people as skilled stewards of the land. The whole scheme is far too prescriptive and the inference

is that the people on the ground do not know how to manage land without close supervision. This is in complete contrast to the days when we had livestock and cropping subsidies when it was accepted that applicants were capable of good livestock and crop husbandry without detailed prescription of how they should carry that out.

- Retain the entitlement of holdings of like status to CCAGS or replace with a similar level of support through the LMO. These folk are just as vital to the survival of our fragile communities as are registered crofters in other areas and their presence on the land ensures that the land stays productive.
- Encourage and support the retention of indigenous breeds on the land. They have characteristics which may well prove vital for food security in a future that will need to cope with climate change and peak oil amongst other challenges.
- Encourage the use of renewable energy for the entire croft or farm stabling including the dwelling house. Establish measures to help crofters and like status folk reduce their carbon emissions on their holdings.
- Recognise the carbon sequestration achieved by extensive management of the land.
- The website seems to change quite regularly and with no warning or explanation. Thus, you can find yourself no longer eligible through no fault of your own for an option you have applied for.
- If community groups or individuals seeking capital project assistance or training wish to access SRDP they need to fill out a land and business change form to access a BRN. This is an extremely complicated and clumsy method. If they have no land why are they filling in a form which only makes sense if you have land?
- Minimising impacts – you can score high if your project has a negative impact and you have moved to minimise it by taking expert advice but if your project has no negative impact then you score low. Soon every applicant will be planning to stick a big effluent pipe from the site of their project, discharging raw sewage into a nearby stream and then suddenly decide that they will remove this pipe following advice from SEPA!
- This upside-down logic also applies to grazing cattle – where the carrying capacity of the land is ignored and applicants are constrained to not let stocking density fall below a minimum but can increase to over-grazing! Surely, again, rules made up by people who have little experience.
- Projects are submitted and applicants told that they can get no management costs – ie they design, implement and report on a project that they get no payment for at all. Where is the incentive?

## Scottish Rural Development

**R**URAL development is the overall theme of this issue of The Crofter and is a pertinent topic in Scotland with many aspects being in focus recently.

For example – the Scotland Rural Development Programme review, the consultation on the Common Agriculture Policy implementation, the parliamentary report on rural housing which has recently been released, the launch of the Scotland National Rural Network and the draft Crofting Bill which is now out for consultation. These are just some of the rural development initiatives taking place.

So what is rural development? Some of the articles in this issue shine a light on this, or rather on aspects of it, for rural

development of course covers just about everything in our lives. The provision of services such as schooling and health care, building community centres and transport links, providing jobs and houses, protecting the environment and growing food are some parts, all with the focus on the particular circumstances of our rural spaces.

And of course there are specific challenges to rural living, especially in the remoter areas, such as infrastructure, transport, employment, fuel poverty and so on.

There is no one aspect more important than another (though those working in one area may see it as the most important!) as all are integrated. And at the heart of rural development are people, communities that are resilient, are sustainable, that provide a

place to live and thrive.

Rural communities always were land-based with agriculture being at their core. But with increased importation of food, agriculture's role has diminished, there being rural communities and people within these communities having nothing to do with agriculture or the environment.

Rural areas in some parts of Scotland are considered dormitories, leisure facilities or sites for economic development. But can this continue? Is importation of food sustainable and secure? Will the tension between food production and other uses of rural land be resolved?

Crofting offers a viable future for rural communities and is a possible model for sustainable land use throughout Scotland.



The interest in food ethics can renew the status of home-grown food and food production can be a major part of the future of economic development again, as well as being key to environmental protection.

What we need to work at is the integration of what they are both part of – rural development.



Claire Nicolson



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## Crofting and sustainable rural development: Linking theory and practice

*Dr Calum Macleod (UHI Centre for Remote and Rural Studies)*

*Dr Nicole Busby, (School of Law, University of Stirling)*

**C**ROFTING'S ICONIC status as a lynchpin of sustainable rural development in the Highlands and Islands for over a century has long been recognised.

Yet at the beginning of the 21st century there are concerns about its continuing capacity to fulfil this role effectively. Such concerns embrace a complex set of relationships between land occupancy and use, population retention and the social cohesion and sustainability of rural communities. As anyone with even a passing interest in crofting is well aware, these concerns received their most high profile airing in the report of the Scottish Government initiated Committee of Inquiry on Crofting, (chaired by Professor Mark Shucksmith) which reported in May 2008. The wealth of evidence generated by the inquiry was distilled into a set of recommendations for the future of crofting which have produced a good deal of light and no little heat in their wake.

The broad thrust of the inquiry's recommendations is that the interests of individual crofters need to be rebalanced in favour of the wider interests of crofting, to enable the latter to remain viable and play its full part in sustaining rural communities in the Highlands and Islands.

In turn, this raises fundamental questions about what constitutes crofting communities. Should they be conceptualised in terms of a narrow function-based definition with crofting as the dominant, potentially exclusive, function? Or should they be viewed as wider place-based entities embracing crofting and non-crofting interests?

If these seem like abstract academic questions, they shouldn't. They actually have highly practical ramifications which are already being felt. Post-Shucksmith, the development strand of crofting policy has been transferred from the Crofters Commission to Highlands and Islands Enterprise, an agency with a long track record of framing community development initiatives within an inclusive place-based definition. Furthermore, attention

will increasingly focus on how the Crofters Commission, reprieved by Government despite the inquiry's calls for its abolition, will respond to criticisms that it enforces crofting regulation weakly and inconsistently, particularly in relation to absenteeism and neglect.

Against the background of a rapidly-evolving relationship between crofting and sustainable rural development, we are currently conducting an independent research project titled 'Communitarianism and Sustainable Crofting Communities'. Themes explored in the study include definitional issues in relation to crofting; the relationship between crofting, sustainable development and cultural diversity; and the socio-legal aspects of regulating crofting. We have recently completed the initial scoping phase of the research with funding support from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland. This involved conducting interviews with representatives of the Scottish Crofting Foundation, Crofters Commission, Scottish Government, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Western Isles Council, Scottish Natural Heritage and the North Harris Trust.

As a result of our preliminary findings the next phase of the study will focus on three related areas of investigation. Firstly, the challenges associated with linking functional crofting interests to a wider, more inclusive community development agenda. In particular we are interested in issues of identity in relation to crofting communities and the role of community land purchases in sustainable community development. Secondly, the extent to which crofting law is responsively regulated. Thirdly, the relationship between land management and sustainability in crofting communities will be considered with a particular emphasis on individual and community assets.

It strikes us that these issues represent the central challenges which crofters, crofting communities and public agencies must collectively address if the future direction of travel for crofting and sustainable rural development is to progress on a shared path. We look forward to sharing our research findings with interested parties as they emerge.

*\*Please email Calum Macleod (calum.macleod@inverness.uhi.ac.uk) if you would like to find out more about this research project.*



Claire Nicolson



Claire Nicolson

## Rural development opportunities

**S**OME communities will have a new kid on the streets or, more likely, at the computer: a Community Powerdown Officer.

These come courtesy of Community Energy Scotland for putting together the consortium of 27 community groups scattered throughout Scotland and the Climate Challenge Fund for agreeing to fund the officers for the next two years.

Now why are these folk relevant to crofters? Well, their principal goal is to put together projects to reduce the carbon emissions within their communities. Amongst the projects being considered by some of the groups is encouraging local food production and increasing the awareness of food produced locally to cut down food miles. So they could well be of help in increasing the markets for local croft produce.

Another area where there will be mutual interest is in the use of renewable energy technology. All in all the Powerdown folk will become a useful source of information regarding most energy matters, particularly in helping cut those energy bills which, after all, do tend to become less when carbon emissions are reduced.

To check whether your community has such a body please go to: <http://www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk/news>. Or contact Helen Houston, Community Powerdown Coordinator at Community Energy Scotland on 01349 860124.

Claire Nicolson





## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

# Our Community ... A Way Forward

*An approach to bringing residents, community groups and agencies together to agree priorities for action to improve the quality of life in local communities.*

**IT WAS PILOTED** during late 2007/early 2008 in Grantown-on-Spey, Cromdale, Advie and Dulnain Bridge, four rural communities lying within the Cairngorms National Park. The initiative involved the four community councils, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey, the Association of Cairngorms Communities – and most importantly the communities themselves.

A Community Action Planning Toolkit was produced as part of the pilot and draws on the lessons learnt by everyone involved. It is designed to be used by any community to help identify their aims and objectives, collect relevant information, involve people and decide what action to take to achieve positive results.

Success of the pilot was such that in March 2009, a seminar was held to launch a three-year project to cover the other 10 communities in Badenoch and Strathspey, starting with Dalwhinnie, Kingussie, Laggan and Newtonmore in April 2009. Residents from the pilot communities attended the event to offer advice and attendees learnt how the process fits into overall community planning for Badenoch and Strathspey, who can get involved, potential activities in the communities and how to use the toolkit.

The project is also being carried out in Ballater on the east side of the Cairngorms National Park where, with the aid of the toolkit, local residents are moving forward in the process with great energy and enthusiasm.

The project *Our Community ... A Way*

Forward started out as a housing survey but ended up as a fairly broad community needs assessment with an emphasis on the economy, tourism, housing and social issues. Although statistical information can be found on some of these issues, most is available for areas larger than single communities and often isn't detailed enough to help decide how best to tackle issues such as housing. The pilot communities were similar in some ways but very different in others so scope was needed for each community to identify what issues were most important.

Consideration also had to be given to consultations carried out previously but with few apparent results and possible subsequent reluctance to get involved in the pilot, as well as strong feelings that previous consultation exercises hadn't included some hard-to-reach sections of the community.

A survey of all households was carried out to gather facts and figures about housing issues and views about the community. A range of other methods were then used to fill in the gaps in statistical information and to get ideas from local residents about how to improve their community.

Appreciative inquiry was the method used in the pilot and adopted in the toolkit, which looks at a community's strengths and achievements and how to build upon them.

Jim Beveridge (Grantown community council) commented that one of positives of the project was that it focused on building on what was already in place. "Often community needs assessments look at the problems in a community, what people don't like or what the community doesn't have. Our starting point was that the community had a lot going for it and had achieved great things in the past. We looked at the good things and discussed how we could build on these achievements in the

next ten years."

'Big Conversation Day' events were held allowing residents to discuss and agree an action plan of what they felt were the priorities in their areas. Everyone was invited to come and make their views known. There was naturally a certain amount of healthy disagreement over some of the issues, but by talking them through, a consensus was reached on what was most important for the majority of residents which then went forward for action. Agencies were present throughout, providing support from the beginning of the process – a crucial element to ensuring a successful outcome.

Evan Wylie (Cromdale community council) was impressed that it included all residents. "We wanted to make sure that it wasn't just the usual suspects that get involved in this. We made particular efforts to involve a wide cross section of the community including young people, people with disabilities, local businesses, the churches etc. We couldn't do it ourselves and looked for local organisations that would be willing to organise their own community conversations and then feed back to us."

Ten to twelve actions were identified in each community, some of which could be delivered quickly and easily, whilst others are longer term. However all points on the action plans are moving forward and will be completed or the communities themselves may decide that they are no longer viable.

The Community Action Planning Toolkit is published by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and is intended as a guide for community councils and other community groups who want to influence community planning in their area.

*Karen Derrick*

*Community Development Officer, Voluntary Action in Badenoch and Strathspey*



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## HIE's new role in crofting

**H**IGHLANDS AND Islands Enterprise (HIE) has a new remit for crofting community development. The crofting community is defined as including all those who live in a community where crofting is a practiced activity.

HIE will utilise its community development experience and expertise to offer opportunities to those selected communities willing to take forward ownership of community planning within the fragile areas of the HIE area. A map of the designated fragile areas can be found in our guide to services on the HIE website at [www.hie.co.uk/services-guide.htm](http://www.hie.co.uk/services-guide.htm).

**Growth at the Edge/Fas aig an Oir (GatE/FaaO)** is an HIE approach which will focus on asset development and capacity building in fragile areas. It will incorporate crofting community development following the transfer of this function from the Crofters Commission.

HIE will also work to complement Community Energy Scotland (CES) activity where communities have secured assistance to bring forward their energy plans.

Crofters may also, as individuals or collectively, develop social enterprises or micro businesses which are supportable under the HIE Strengthening Communities group guidance associated with those branches of the GatE/FaaO approach. They also often have a linguistic development contribution to make as active users of Gaelic.

HIE's approach to crofting community development has two components.

#### Community Account Management

HIE will apply a Community Account Management (CAM) process to a targeted number of communities. HIE will seek endorsement from the five relevant community planning partnerships (which also have the Crofters Commission as partners) for the selected communities that have the most credible potential for growth. HIE's selection process will consider the imperative of achieving clear measurable impacts for the GatE/FaaO approach and the relevant single outcome agreements, over the next two years.

The purpose of CAM is to assist and facilitate a community with the development and delivery of a community growth plan derived

from within the community which addresses the community's development opportunities in a holistic and integrated way.

Where crofting remains a significant and important economic and cultural activity, the community growth plans will include a crofting development statement which will be derived from local crofter input. It is anticipated that these statements will be recognised under regulatory and planning activity by the new regional crofting boards and the local authority planning department.

#### Crofting development within specific sectors

HIE will also invest in crofting sector development including, potentially:

A crofting development statement toolkit – this will initially assist crofters and then their neighbours through a consideration of how they would like to see crofting contribute to the community's future, eventually producing a crofting development statement. It is intended that those crofting development statements, either free standing or as incorporated in community growth plans will be recognised by and influence relevant local authority planning policy and the new crofting regulatory boards. HIE has secured the collaboration of the Crofters Commission in the development of this toolkit.

Capacity building programmes for crofters – HIE has already funded the Scottish Crofting Foundation's crofting induction courses for 2009)

Integration of crofting into the promotional and development activities in two of HIE's key growth sectors, food and drink, and tourism.

The Rural Direct service will be delivered by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), providing advice to community groups on project funding sources including the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP).

For more information, visit [www.ruraldirect.org.uk](http://www.ruraldirect.org.uk)

The administration of crofting grants for individual crofters will be delivered directly by the Scottish Government through the SRDP and the Crofter Housing Scheme which is currently under review.

## Centre for Remote and Rural Studies

#### Creating the University of the Highlands and Islands.

**U**HIE'S CENTRE for Remote and Rural Studies (CRRS) aims to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental opportunities and challenges facing remote and rural places and people.

It seeks to achieve this by working with others in conducting high-quality research, stimulating public debate and analysing and evaluating policy options that secure the long-term wellbeing of remote and rural regions.

While based in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, CRRS works at local, national and international levels, focusing on three cross-cutting themes:

**Access and inclusion** – identifying inequalities and working with policymakers and other stakeholders to address such inequalities;

**Sustainability** – asset ownership and management, leadership and governance issues, regional development and innovation, third sector activities, and public sector service delivery in remote and rural places;

**Managing change** – particularly in relation to economic and social change, local-global linkages, climate change, demographics, migration and technological advances within the context of remote and rural places.

Established in 2004 as UHI PolicyWeb, renewed funding from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) has enabled it to expand. Dr Philomena de Lima, the centre's director, is supported by a centre manager, two senior research fellows and two part-time researchers. Coming from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, staff expertise includes regional development; regulation and governance; impact of demographic changes and population regeneration strategies; immigration and migration; social exclusion and rural poverty; community assets, including land use issues; and communities' adaptation to climate change.

CRRS has organised a seminar series on issues of interest to those involved in rural policy and research, with some funding from Highland Council. Between 30-60 people from a wide range of sectors have participated in each of the seminars from across

Scotland in person and by video-conferencing.

Topics have included: 'Crofting is the Future' delivered by Mark Shucksmith, professor of planning at Newcastle University and chair to the Committee of Inquiry into Crofting; 'Communities of Practice', led by Dr Kate Braithwaite, director of the Carnegie UK Trust Rural Programme; and 'Does Rural Proofing Make Sense?' delivered by Dr Sally Shortall, Queens University Belfast. Professor Bill Slee (The Macaulay Institute) spoke on 'Looking Backward – Looking Forward: Relocalisation and Sustainable Development' at the final seminar on 15th May 2009.

In addition to providing the secretariat to the Cross Party Group on Rural Policy in Scotland and serving on commissions such as Carnegie UK Trust Inquiry into Civil Society, CRRS staff continue to be involved in researching on issues of relevance to remote and rural places.

Recent and current projects include an evaluation of a themed grant programme on rural elderly for The Trusthouse Charitable Foundation; an Arkleton fellowship on mapping initiatives on communities adapting to climate change in the Americas; impact of the economic crisis on the third sector in rural areas for the ESRC; EU project on rural poverty; and providing consultancy to the Carnegie UK Trust Rural Action Research Programme 'Building Inclusive Communities'.

Finally in June 2009, CRRS is hosting a major international summer school, being held in the UK for the first time. The International Comparative Rural Policy Studies (ICRPS) programme is a unique international academic and professional development programme which is now in its sixth year.

The school will bring together postgraduate students, academics and rural development professionals from across Europe and the Americas and will also involve a number of policy makers, practitioners and academics who have an interest in rural development issues in Scotland.

For further information on CRRS: [www.crrs.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.crrs.uhi.ac.uk) or email at: [crrs@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:crrs@uhi.ac.uk)

Dr Philomena de Lima



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### SAC's rural society research

*Sarah Skerratt reports*

**O**UR RESEARCH focuses on social change in rural Scotland, and seeks to provide research findings which will be of use to rural communities – both directly and indirectly, by working in partnership with other parts of SAC (SAC Consulting and SAC Learning), and with external partners in the areas of health, transport, employment and policy.

The rural society research team sits within the land economy and environment research group at SAC. Dr Sarah Skerratt heads up the team, and her areas of research include processes of rural community development and the ways in which communities themselves seek to ensure their own survivability and ongoing strength. She looks at processes of change at ground level and relates these to policies aimed at increasing community involvement, for example through LEADER, community planning and other development trusts and organisations. Her work is linked very closely with analysis of policy, both here in Scotland and internationally – most recently in Quebec, and also in Scandinavia.

Dr Marsaili MacLeod is a social geographer whose research is centred on understanding dimensions of cultural sustainability. She is currently involved in a European research partnership to examine how cultural heritage assets contribute to different development paths across rural Europe. At the national level, her recent research has examined the role of the cultural economy in supporting Gaelic language maintenance. Marsaili is currently developing new research to examine what components of social and economic development, such as

changing work cultures, are related to dynamics of Gaelic language change in rural Scotland.

Dr Leaza McSorley is a regional economist, looking at the extent to which regional development funding and policies benefit the rural economy. She is also interested in how regional and rural development policies are being implemented in Scotland and how they interact with other national and local policies.

Fiona Williams focuses her research on farm succession, succession planning within farm households, and the ways in which farm land is being sold and/or transferred both within farming families and beyond to new-comers to farming and land-based enterprises – particularly in those areas closer to cities.

In addition to our individual research, the team works together on projects, as well as working with other colleagues within and beyond SAC. For example, we have recently carried out joint research on rural community facilities and their sustainability; and we are currently very engaged in working with the Care Farming Scotland national initiative. We have recently won a part in a project looking at closer engagement between research providers and local authorities in Scotland.

Please feel free to contact us for any further information about anything written here, plus of course do get in touch if you would like to discuss ideas.

Our contact details are:

Sarah Skerratt (0131 535 4335; sarah.skerratt@sac.ac.uk); Marsaili MacLeod (01224 711081; marsaili.macleod@sac.ac.uk); Leaza McSorley (0131 535 4256; leaza.mcsorley@sac.ac.uk); and Fiona Williams (fiona.williams@sac.ac.uk).

Agricultural parishes at risk of livestock decline



Copyright Scottish Government and Scottish Natural Heritage 2009

Dear Editor

### Article 68 – CAP Healthcheck

After studying the map above I am speaking on the Argyll picture. I would say that some of the pink areas are already empty or have a low stock density. I smile when I look at the colour of the area shown for Tiree; there is a very real possibility of the area being denuded of stock. Perhaps more to do with the age of the crofters than anything else, it is a very old farming or agricultural society.

The main problem facing the industry is a very small pie but a lot of people sitting at the table. I feel that monies should be directed at businesses that are working and employing in the industry. Those who have trimmed their outfits, but still within their rights to collect SFP, surely cannot expect to receive the same level of support as has been gotten in the past.

The monies available perhaps should be better redistributed. LFAs and SFPs are crucial to every farming enterprise, the finance is built into the very structure of the businesses, but not so the ancillary options in the LMO or SRDP, such as rush management etc. If this money was properly used and distributed it would go a long way to help fund a package of survival for these parts of the industry which have suffered from neglect from various administrations, both Holyrood and Westminster.

So for the survival of the industry, robbing Peter to pay Paul

is essentially not the greatest idea I have come across.

The subject of support does not stop at moneyed matters, it has to be extended to the future of the industry, which has shrunk dramatically. A system of new entrant packages should be looked at – a small and effective scheme was in place for new entrants to crofting which was very effective at replacing population in fragile areas. The scheme is now unfortunately defunct.

The main ill of agriculture is trying to sustain an industry on pre-war finance. Cheap food is now not an option if the administrations of both Scotland and Britain are not willing to finance this package, so if we are now in a global market, then we have to pay the global price for goods received. The price is not in money alone.

First and foremost to the public is the availability of food in the shops, the wide variety of food. The world is now available in a shop 12 months of the year at prices that are, to be quite frank, ridiculously cheap, not the true price of course. Think of the misery in Zimbabwe. My thoughts have always been that if you buy cheap goods made or produced in Third World countries, you are advocating slave labour.

Yours

William Neilson





# Askernish golf course – SCF's position

**A**S WE went to press we heard the very good news that the Askernish dispute had been settled prior to the full hearing of the case by the Scottish Land Court. We do not at this stage know what agreement has been reached but we welcome it nonetheless.

As SCF has been subject to criticism in some quarters over the position it has taken in support of the Askernish crofters, it is incumbent here to set out our position.

SCF became involved in the Askernish dispute in January 2008 when the crofters' representatives invited us to visit South Uist. We went there with the intention of trying to help find a solution but, having met with

both sides, it became clear that relations had broken down to such an extent that there was at that time no obvious route to an agreement.

When, soon afterwards, the grazings committee sought an interdict at Lochmaddy sheriff court, a full hearing before the land court became inevitable.

At the preliminary hearing early this year, the court determined that the estate was entitled to enforce Lady Gordon Cathcart's reservation of golfing rights dating from 1922, but that such rights could not be exercised at the expense of the crofters' rights to their common grazing.

Sir Crispin Agnew, counsel for the landlord Storás Uibhist, put forward an argument which, had

it been accepted by the court, would have stripped crofters everywhere of most of their rights over their common grazings. Basically, Sir Crispin's case was that a landlord could carry out any development on a common grazing without the consent of the tenants and without the need to resume or pay compensation, provided that the tenants were left with sufficient grazing for their soumings.

So for golf course read wind farm, for example, and the implications for crofters were very clear – no compensation for resumption and no share in development value. What started life as a local dispute therefore took on a huge national significance.

Fortunately the court rejected Sir Crispin's assertion, but who knows how a higher court might have

ruled? So for a whole number of reasons the SCF board backed the Askernish crofters.

A situation where a number of ordinary Uist crofters, carrying out the best of traditional crofting practice, felt it necessary to take their community landlord to the Scottish Land Court should clearly never have arisen. People will obviously have different views as to how that situation did, indeed, arise.

SCF will always seek to defend crofters' rights regardless of who is their landlord. How could we do otherwise?

That said, we wish every success to Askernish golf course, to the crofters of Askernish and to Storás Uibhist. As a recent editorial in another newspaper put it, "It's time to proceed to the nineteenth hole."

## Askernish crofters defend crofting heritage

*This article was submitted on behalf of Askernish grazings committee and was received before agreement was reached prior to the land court hearing. It has been edited in light of that agreement.*

**T**HE CROFTERS of the Askernish township in South Uist remain resolute in defence of their rights as crofting tenants and of the crofting heritage of South Uist. This is despite the three-year dispute with the community landlord Storás Uibhist over the golfing development on the Askernish machair common grazings.

For over a year the landlord sanctioned the extended development of the previous nine-hole golf course at Askernish to cover much of the machair common grazings. The creation of an 18-hole course over most of the machair was at risk of making the land unfit for crofting purposes.

Development activity entailed the removal of turf, the creation of new fairways and bunkers, the cutting of marram grass and the installation of new tees within the dune systems. All these development activities were contrary to the local grazings regulations. In addition, safety concerns were evident in relation to how people, livestock, agriculture and golfing were to be managed on the machair, particularly during calving, lambing and cropping periods.

The South Uist machair forms a large proportion of global machair land – a rare and finely-balanced habitat, created and maintained

by traditional crofting methods. Machair remains in its herb-rich state only when grazed and manured by livestock, especially cattle, managed traditionally. Such land management is beneficial to wildlife as well as to crofting livelihoods. These benefits extend beyond the immediate crofting community to all of Uist. The maintenance of machair biodiversity is vital to the Uist economy and brings in many thousands of tourists every year, providing a major source of income for many homes and businesses.

From the outset the Askernish crofters have not been against the development of the present nine-hole course as long as this took place within a designated area of land. There is sufficient area on the Askernish machair to accommodate crofting and golf. The crofters were always happy to go to mediation in an attempt to find an amicable solution but were prepared to go to the land court with funds raised by their own efforts.

It was a sad state of affairs that the community landlord of South Uist was relying on conditions imposed by the notorious Lady Gordon Cathcart on the first tenants of Askernish in 1922.

However, we hope for a solution that will enable crofting and golfing interests to exist in harmony on the machair as they have done in the past.

Please send your letters of support and any donations that you feel able to make towards our legal expenses c/o SCF head office. We thank you in advance for your support. Any funds left over will be given to charity.

**To the editor of the West Highland Free Press**

Dear sir

Your criticism of the role of the Scottish Crofting Foundation in the Askernish common grazings dispute is unreasonable and ill-informed.

The resolution of this affair, in advance of a lengthy and damaging full hearing before the Scottish Land Court, is to be unreservedly welcomed. As agreement has been reached between the crofters and landlord this is clearly not the time to rake over the intricacies of the case, or to seek to apportion blame, rather to allow the parties involved to get on with it and to wish them success.

However, you have claimed that "the Scottish Crofting Foundation has not covered itself in glory in this affair". Apart from the intended slur, this is correct as it was never the intention of the SCF to get any glory from this, only to try to help protect crofting rights; and it will be for crofters everywhere to pass judgement on the role of SCF once they are fully appraised of the facts.

Our decision to support the Askernish crofters was taken after exhaustive discussion by our board and in the light of legal opinion on the implications of the case for the rights of all crofters over their common grazings.

We were not supporting crofters against crofters – the Askernish common grazings were in majority opposed to the landlord's decision and as

a democratic body the grazings committee had to uphold the mandate given them

Presumably the Free Press is aware of the argument put forward to the land court by Sir Crispin Agnew on behalf of Storás Uibhist, that a landlord can carry out any development on a crofters' common grazing without the need to resume or to pay compensation, provided the crofters retain sufficient grazing for their soumings.

This should be ringing alarm bells for all crofters. Had the court accepted Sir Crispin's case there would be no compensation, or share in development value, for such as a major wind farm constructed on a common grazing, potentially taking huge sums of money away from crofters and their communities. What does the Free Press think of Sir Crispin's assertion?

The Scottish Crofting Foundation will continue to stand up for crofters' rights regardless of who is their landlord, and we make no apologies for doing so. We would expect the Free Press to be the first to condemn us if we did otherwise.

We urge all concerned with crofters' common grazing rights and those who wish to understand SCF's position to read the transcript of the Land Court case at

[www.storasuibhist.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/askernish-land-court-judgement.pdf](http://www.storasuibhist.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/askernish-land-court-judgement.pdf)

Yours faithfully

Patrick Krause

## ON THE CROFT

# New guide on caseous lymphadenitis

**C**ASEOUS LYMPHADENITIS (CLA) is a chronic disease of sheep and goats which has both significant welfare and financial implications.

The Moredun Foundation, a leading animal health charity which governs the work of an internationally renowned research institute studying the infectious diseases of livestock, has produced a free technical news-sheet for farmers and vets with essential practical tips to help limit this disease on farm and croft plus up-to-date information on clinical signs and diagnosis of the disease.

The disease leads to abscesses forming in the lymph nodes and other tissues and internal organs and leads to chronic wasting. It is caused by a highly infectious bacteria (*C pseudotuberculosis*) that can survive in the environment for several months.

CLA is extremely infectious. It was previously only thought to be a problem in the terminal sire breeds, but it is now established within the national flock. Direct contact with pus from burst CLA lesions is the main source of new infections. However, infectious aerosol from animals with lung lesions has also been shown to be a means of disease spread. Antibiotic treatment is ineffective. It is therefore essential that both farmers/crofters and vets are aware of this disease and that those animals suspected

of having the diseases are isolated and investigated quickly.

There is hope though. The development of the CLA diagnostic blood-test by Moredun scientists (available through SAC) has been a major achievement, providing a powerful tool to allow the identification of animals with CLA.



*CLA is highly infectious and leads to large pus-filled abscesses in the lymph nodes around the head and neck as well as in the lungs, liver, heart and other internal organs of infected animals*

Protecting your animals from CLA remains the ultimate goal, though. At the moment farmers and crofters in Britain can use autogenous CLA vaccines, which are prepared to order using bacteria taken from pus samples from animals with the disease. Unfortunately, these vaccines, which are expensive and are only for

use within a single holding, have only anecdotal evidence supporting their ability to prevent infection. The Australian CLA vaccine, Glanvac™ is also now available for use in the UK provided permission for use has been obtained from the Veterinary Medicines Directive. There is a lot of experimental data for Glanvac™; however, this vaccine, which also contains clostridial components, was developed for use against the Australian form of CLA which manifests slightly differently to the disease seen in sheep in this country.

Dr Michael Fontaine (author of the news-sheet) along with his colleagues at Moredun are therefore looking to develop a UK vaccine against CLA. He explained: "Moredun has undertaken basic trials using several new experimental vaccines. The results of these studies have been extremely promising and have confirmed that there are better alternatives to currently available CLA vaccines in the UK. We hope to continue to develop these experimental vaccines in an effort to provide an effective control option for CLA for British farmers and crofters."

If you would like a free copy of the eight page news-sheet on CLA contact Maggie Bennett or Hazel Rice at the Moredun Foundation on 0131 445 5111.



SCF area representative John MacLeod, Daviot, and his son Rory ploughing on the croft this spring, using a 1939 Fordson N attached to a cockshut plough



## Practical guides – new technical notes for busy farmers and crofters

**N**EW TECHNICAL notes have been added to SAC's large list of short, practical field guides for farmers and growers.

They are funded by the Scottish Government under the Veterinary and Advisory Services (VAS) programme and Advisory Activity, Crop Health schemes. The latest publications cover variety recommendations for grass and clover and biosecurity for livestock keepers. SAC has a long history of providing such handy, easy to read advice, although nowadays it is published on the website with fewer in printed form.

### TN 616 Recommended grass and clover varieties 08/09

This note lists the varieties recommended in Scotland with the first choice varieties highlighted in capitals. Significant advances

have been made in the last 20 years both in terms of annual yields (10-15%) and more especially in early and late season growth (25% and 15% respectively) – effectively extending the grazing season. This can have a profound impact on animal performance (live weight gain and milk yield). So, there is every reason to take advantage of these developments when sowing a new sward.

### TN 617 Stockowner Biosecurity

The prevention of infectious disease being introduced to herds and flocks is ever more important as margins tighten and exotic diseases threaten. Constant attention to detail and vigilance for signs of disease are vital for the protection of a producer's animals and business. Stockowners need to consider the disease risks when employing contractors,

helping neighbours, attending livestock auctions, agricultural shows and visiting any facility where animals are kept. There are some guidelines which, if adhered to, can prevent unnecessary disease incursion and the associated hardship and loss of income.

You can access these technical notes at [www.sac.ac.uk/technicalnotes](http://www.sac.ac.uk/technicalnotes).





## ON THE CROFT

## Woodland Crofts

**R**EGULAR READERS of The Crofter may recall an article I wrote for the newspaper on woodland crofts in autumn 2007, outlining developments to that date.

One of the things I called for in that article was dedicated and professional support for communities developing woodland crofts projects. Little did I know then that that support would be me! I am now the woodland crofts project officer attached to the Community Land Unit of HIE, and have been in post since August last year, following on from Sandra Holmes who originally held the post before moving on to a new role within CLU.

The last few months have been spent supporting communities and developing new guidance as and when issues arise. Interestingly, one of the first issues to merit attention has been what in fact we mean by woodland crofts. The formal description quoted in my 2007 article – “Woodland crofts range from being mainly woodland to mainly agricultural with a woodland element. They link housing, local rural livelihoods and woodland management” – has in some cases not given communities sufficient clarity as to what they might be able to do with woodland crofts. Accordingly, we have written a guidance note which considers the framework within which woodland crofts sit. To quote from its introduction:

#### What is a woodland croft?

A woodland croft is a registered croft created from an existing woodland.

Woodland crofts are a new opportunity for individuals and communities to build lives and livelihoods based on the woodland resource. It is also expected that the new approach to management taken by woodland crofters will deliver increased social, economic and environmental benefits.

Lifestyles and livelihoods based on woodlands are traditional in many parts of the world, but are currently rare in Scotland.

Although it is anticipated that woodland crofts will always involve an element of woodland management, the exact nature and extent of this is not prescribed. Whilst there are constraints on how a woodland is managed at the whole woodland scale, there is considerable flexibility for individual woodland croft tenants to manage their crofts to meet their own needs and aspirations.

Woodland crofts are governed by a combination of crofting legislation, and forest regulation.

The last line is significant. A woodland croft is a croft like any other when it comes to crofting regulation: there is no crofting legislation unique to woodland crofts. Similarly, the requirements governing management of woodland on woodland crofts are not specific to them – they apply to all woodlands. Hopefully this understanding will help de-mystify the concept.

What is different, indeed unique, is the opportunity for individuals of ordinary means to take on the management of woodland areas, in a range of new and interesting ways and in support of their lives and livelihoods.

Community groups now developing woodland crofts include the Embo Trust, which has received approval to purchase its local FCS woodland, whilst Craignish Community Company's application to do the same will be considered shortly. The community in Dervaig on Mull already own their local woodland and are also considering woodland crofts. Elsewhere, communities from Arran to Achmore are exploring the options. It promises to be a busy few months and years ahead!

**Jamie McIntyre**  
Woodland Crofts project officer

Tel: 01967 402332  
[jamie.mcintyre@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jamie.mcintyre@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

*The project officer's post is a partnership between Forestry Commission Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.*



## Good fences make good neighbours

**S**O GOES the old cliché.

Fences get a bad press. They can be unsightly; they consume a lot of crofting grant funding; they can be a discouragement to communal working because we can all do our own thing if we want to, rather than work as a township; and they can be dangerous to low flying birds like the capercaillie.

In the olden days there were no fences at all because crofters couldn't afford them. Animals,

of how to provide decent, affordable, durable, stockproof fences often on steep and rocky ground in inaccessible places. Croft boundaries were usually set out on a map with no reference to ground conditions.

When I first claimed a fencing grant, the inspecting officer from the 'Department' asked, "How deep did you put the strainers in?" "As far as they'd go," I replied. The officer was a practical man, and the grant was duly paid.

I recently had to remove a long distance of five-wire electric fence that a preceding crofter had put up, and replace it with conventional stock fence.

The electric option must have seemed a good idea at the time, but by all accounts it never worked. Summer growth of grass and rushes accompanied by a shower of rain was enough to earth out the whole system and the animals soon got wise to it.

So several miles of thin, springy, high-tensile wire, not much use for any other purpose, has ended up at the Council's recycling centre.

Electric fencing has its place, of course, mainly as a temporary and movable means of getting the most out of a piece of grazing.

However, even temporary electric fencing has to remain tight in order to be at all effective. A single electric wire, well tensioned, at the top of a conventional fence is the best option where cattle have a tendency to destroy the fencing by sheer weight, pressure and determination.

CCAGS is no longer available for fencing where it is a like for like replacement of an existing asset.

However, if cattle are being introduced or protection from deer is required, new fencing along an existing line is likely to be supported. Crofters taking over derelict land, or going into agri-environment measures, are also likely to have fencing grant applications approved.

To last for their design life, fences need constant maintenance – at least annual. Think of a wire fence as a machine, which in many ways it is. The better the maintenance the better the performance and the longer the working life.





## Scottish Crofting Foundation

rooted in our community

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

Crofting is a vital element in the economic, environmental, social and cultural structure of our rural communities.

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## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**NAME OF COMPANY:** Scottish Crofting Foundation

**Company Number:** SC 218658

**Registered Office:** Lochalsh Business Park, Auchtertyre, Kyle of Lochalsh, Ross-shire IV40 8EG

**NOTICE** is hereby given that the **Eighth Annual General Meeting** of the Scottish Crofting Foundation will be held on **TUESDAY 23rd JUNE 2009** at Dingwall and Highland Mart, Humberston, Baileichaul Road, Dingwall AT 2.00 pm to consider and, if agreed, to pass the following resolutions:-

1. To receive company's accounts and the report of the directors and auditors for the year ended 30 November 2008. A summary of the accounts will be available at the meeting and the full or summary accounts will be provided prior to the meeting on request to the registered office.
2. To elect and/or re-appoint directors.
3. To re-appoint Ritsons chartered accountants, of 27 Huntly Street, Inverness IV3 5PR as accountants/ auditors and to fix their remuneration.
4. To receive and resolve proposed amendments to the company's articles of association per the following special resolution.

### SPECIAL RESOLUTION OF SCOTTISH CROFTING FOUNDATION

A private company limited by guarantee without share capital  
Company Number SC 218658

In accordance with Section 77(1)(a) of the Companies Act 2006 we, being members of the company who, at the date of this resolution are entitled to attend and vote at a general meeting of the company, hereby resolve upon the following special resolution and agree that it shall be valid and effective as a special resolution passed at a general meeting of the company duly convened and held.

**That the name of the company be changed to**

**'SCOTTISH CROFTING FEDERATION'**

**with effect from the date on which the new certificate of incorporation is issued.**

Company Secretary: Alistair MacIver

Date of notice: 1st June 2009

## Scottish Crofting Federation

As we gave notice of in the last issue of The Crofter, we were tasked to investigate a change of name for the SCF at last year's AGM. The reasons were several:

Firstly, there was a sense of loss over the 'Union' part of the name going in the change to charitable status (though it was at the time the law that dictated this); secondly, 'Foundation' can be confusing as in development and funding circles this is a name given to a grant-awarding body and thirdly, as the only

member-led organisation promoting crofting, the representative status of the SCF could be reflected better in its name.

So, after many contributions the consensus is currently to return to the name 'Federation' which indicates that we work as a group of self-governing areas who share a common goal – to safeguard and promote the rights, livelihoods and culture of crofters and their communities.

This will be put to the AGM as a resolution in June.



**Scottish Crofting Foundation Company Number: SC 218658**

## **FORM OF PROXY**

For voting at the annual general meeting to be held on Tuesday 23rd June 2009.

I (name) .....

of (address) .....

being a member of the above named company, hereby appoint the chairman

or (name) .....

of (address) .....

as my proxy to vote in my name and on my behalf at the annual general meeting of the company to be held on Tuesday 23rd June 2009, and at any adjournment thereof. This form is to be used in respect of the resolutions mentioned below as follows:

Special Resolution \*for \*against (\*strike out whichever is not desired)

Unless otherwise instructed, the proxy may vote as he/she thinks fit or abstain from voting.

Signed (name) .....

Date .....

SCF Membership No .....

*For this proxy to be considered, it must be returned to the company's registered office at:*

**Lochalsh Business Park, Auchtertyre, by Kyle, IV40 8EG**

**by Monday 22nd June, 2009**





# AGM notice of proposed directors of the company

**T**HE ANNUAL General Meeting of the Scottish Crofting Foundation will take place on Tuesday 23rd June 2009 at Dingwall Auction Mart, at 2pm.

The calling notice is included in this edition of The Crofter. All members are welcome to attend this meeting. A buffet lunch will be available from 1pm. If you are unable to attend please return the proxy form which is on the reverse of your calling notice.

Earlier in the year all SCF branches and areas were asked

to nominate candidates for the board.

## Changes to the SCF board.

Hugh Donaldson has stood down.

John MacLeod will stand down.

Norman Leask will stand down – the board is minded to co-opt him on for a further year to continue his work as parliamentary liaison.

Eleanor Arthur is nominated by the council of area representatives to be a director.

Derek Flyn has been asked by the board to be a director and has agreed.



## Eleanor Arthur

**T**HANKS TO the council for nominating me to become a director of the SCF. I realise I have much to learn and will enjoy the tuition of more experienced board members.

Since becoming a council member in 2007 I have been working along with Norman, mainly on Shetland-related issues and I attend the cross party meetings in Holyrood whenever I can with Patrick and Norman. This I find very comprehensive and challenging.

Crofting is a complex and varied subject and one I find quite frustrating at times. It's like a moving tide and one can never manage to get over the top of the wave – but constantly battling to justify why you still swim against it.

I live in a small island called Whalsay on the east side of Shetland where there is a population of around 1000, a junior and secondary school with a constant role of about 180 children. We also have a fully-equipped leisure centre and swimming pool and host the most northerly 18-hole golf course in Scotland. The island is mostly supported by the fishing industry which is made up with a pelagic fleet of six boats and the white fish/shellfish fleet has 10 boats.

My first job after I left school was in the local fish factory where I was a fish filleter. I left that to work in the leisure centre where I was until 2000. I then went to catering college in Lerwick, gained my catering certificates and now work as chef in a small establishment on the mainland, which means I travel each day

by ferry, which takes 30 minutes, and by car 15 minutes to work.

My family and I live on a croft which has been in our family for three generations. I also rent two crofts giving a total of about 30 acres, on which we have native/cross sheep and Shetland kye. This is my main interest, but with working full time, the cattle are looked after throughout the winter by a friend of mine who stables her horses beside us (unofficial rent) and a lot of carting muck.

I am chair of the Shetland Cattle from Shetland breeders group which is extremely interesting work. We have been busy trying to find a way forward to preserve the breed and publicise the excellence of the quality of beef and the hardiness of the breed and to promote these wonderful cattle, the small holders' dream of a house cow.

I also have native Shetland sheep, which my husband is now crossing, getting a first-cross ewe then texel lambs, so that's his pastime. I just sit back and watch. (I think he needs a dog!) His aim is to increase the flock and sell lambs into the market.

Of course I could do very little of this work and travel without the support of my family, who also live on the croft and help look after animals. Last but not least, not forgetting the children – Thomas age 11 and William age 9, who both attend the local school and fit like a cog into the workings of a very busy household. Our older daughter Maria lives and works in Glasgow, but always manages to get home for holidays and festivities.



## Derek Flyn

**D**EREK FLYN retired from the Inverness legal firm of Macleod and MacCallum after 30 years as a partner.

A native of Edinburgh, Derek joined the Scottish court service from school in 1962. For a period he was sheriff clerk in Portree. In 1972 he entered Dundee University as a mature student graduating LLB in 1975.

Derek took up a legal apprenticeship with Macleod and MacCallum and became a partner with them in 1978.

Much of his early work involving crofters was to assist them to obtain their enhanced rights under the Crofting Reform Act of 1976. This was in the early days of the

Scottish Crofters Union with whom he worked closely for many years.

Aware of the need for a clear statement of crofters' rights, in 1990 he co-authored with D J MacCuish the first legal textbook on crofting law for 50 years.

In 1993 Derek co-founded the Crofting Law Group with Keith Graham of the Scottish Land Court and was its vice-chairman for ten years.

In 1995 he became the first solicitor accredited by the Law Society of Scotland as a specialist in crofting law.

Derek and his wife Fiona live in Beaulie. They have two older sons and a daughter at university.

## ON THE CROFT

# Bluetongue SNH launches radio tag study to track lamb mortality

Ena MacDonald reports

**W**HEN RICHARD LOCHHEAD announced a compulsory vaccination programme, most crofters were very unhappy about the practicalities of such an exercise. The main objections were because England and Wales were not forced to vaccinate and yet they were the ones guilty of importing the infected stock.

As there were so many strains of bluetongue what was the point of concentrating on only one? Surely the wise option was to control imports?

I spoke to Richard Lochhead's secretary who said if there was support for a voluntary scheme they would seriously consider it. I decided the best way to discover if there was enough support was to organise a petition. As a result I got over 800 signatures.

This made them realise the strong support. After communicating with Western Isles and Shetland Islands Councils there was an encouraging letter from Richard Lochhead. I quote: "the Scottish government would be willing to consider a derogation from vaccination for animals staying on the Western Isles if this can be justified by the disease situation and by appropriate mitigation measures being put in place (such as testing of all animals moved on to the islands). Any firm proposals to implement such a scheme put forward by the Western Isles would be welcomed by the Scottish Government. As you may be aware my chief veterinary officer for Scotland will be visiting the Western Isles to discuss the campaign".

There has been much discussion with the council and on 22nd May the Crofting JCC will meet and a firm decision will have to be made.

On a personal note – even if bluetongue didn't exist, every crofter should be very careful when importing livestock. It would be in everyone's interest to keep diseased animals out. I sincerely hope that after this meeting and long before November when the next vaccinating year begins we will have a biosecurity programme in place to enable us to have a voluntary scheme.

We have the healthiest livestock in the UK. Let's keep it that way.



Claire Nicolson

**A** STUDY BY Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is looking at into the causes of lamb mortality in the north west Highlands. The study monitors the activity of predators and the well-being and mortality of lambs in an area where a significant number of lambs have been lost in previous seasons.

The project tracks the movement and health of lambs in parts of the Gairloch peninsula in Wester Ross, from birth until weaning. Radio tracking technology and fieldworker observation will be used to follow the fortunes of sixty lambs on two holdings in the area and an additional holding will be used for visual observations on hill ground.

The study aims to deliver a scientific measure of the true level of lamb mortality directly attributable to sea eagle predation as opposed to other causes. The information will be gathered via radio transmitters attached to the lambs to track their movements and signal any mortality rapidly after the time of death. Each death will be mapped and the carcass traced and recovered to allow post mortem tests to ascertain the exact cause of death.

SNH Head of Policy and Advice Ron Macdonald said: "Following our discussions with crofters, farmers and land managers SNH has responded to concerns about levels of lamb mortality in areas with sea eagles present by establishing this study. The project will deliver an unprecedented level of detail for mapping the extent and cause of lamb mortality in typical highland conditions which in turn will provide an assessment of sea eagle impact. The study will also provide recommendations on the management of stock and sea eagles so as to reduce potential conflict."

The project aims to involve local crofters as much as possible and will be dependent upon their help for aspects of shepherding. SCF local representative Willie Fraser, a member of the project steering group, said: "We welcome this study which we expect to provide a clear picture of the true impact of sea eagle predation on lambing flocks and the ratio of lamb losses which can be attributed to sea eagles in the Gairloch area. The most important outcome for crofters will be to help minimise this problem in the area and ensure the continued viability of sheep rearing as an economic activity in the west highlands."

"We look forward to the conclusion of this study which should clarify the levels of lamb losses caused directly by sea eagles and enable appropriate measures to be drawn up to reduce the impact on crofting viability in this and other areas of the highlands."

Funded by SNH, the study has been designed and agreed by a steering group consisting of local crofters, the RSPB, Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate, the State Veterinary Service and SNH. Its findings will provide robust scientific evidence alongside other SNH funded historic studies to establish the likely impact of sea eagle predation on lamb populations in the west Highlands.

SNH is also funding a programme of enhanced sea eagle nest surveillance to identify the type of prey being carried by adult



Skye Images

birds to feed their chicks. The study's detailed mapping of lamb deaths will dovetail with this work being carried out by RSPB Scotland on behalf of SNH.

RSPB Scotland's Alison MacLennan, conservation officer for Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross, said: "We hope that the study will shed light on the causes of lamb mortality in the Gairloch peninsula, address the worries and concerns of the crofting community and help ensure that crofting continues to have a sustainable future."

"It will build on the valuable recent study also funded by SNH on the island of Mull – the most densely populated area of Scotland for sea eagles – which showed that a fraction of one per cent of all lambs that died were due to sea eagle predation."

"Going forward with the results of this study will help us manage the range of factors that cause lamb mortality in Wester Ross and ensure that the right measures are put in place to underpin the vital contribution crofting makes to the economy and wildlife."

## Sea eagle story in last issue

I would like to apologise for any misunderstandings that may have arisen from the story of my father and his sister being attacked by a sea eagle. My points were that:

1 – Crofters should be careful to do nothing that would cause a feeding frenzy in a hungry predator.

2 – it should be ensured that feeding is available for all animals and birds, including predators. A great deal of work should be done on this before major changes in the balance of nature are created by man.

As you will notice from my Brussels report we have been working hard to extend the derogation for feed stations gained for buzzards in Spain. We still await the details of the benefits to Scotland from the recent successful vote in the European Parliament on fallen stock being used to feed hungry predators.

Norman Leask



## ON THE CROFT

## Geese

For about 20 years the SCF/SCU has been trying to get permission to destroy the eggs of the Greylag geese.

At long last, permission is granted in Uist. However, instead of SNH employing two workers to carry out this work only one person is employed. Crofters can also apply for a licence from the SGRPID office (why was DAFS not god enough!!!)

I managed to get a copy of the application form. Imagine eight pages to be filled in just to oil goose eggs. SNH already know what damage is being done by geese and yet we are asked such stupid questions. Surely they have already done their research? I was hoping that the small islands on the lochs would be raided but I was quite shocked to hear that was not happening. If boats would be used then there would be a health and safety issue. I was thinking that SNH could have contracted the work to the expertise at the Uist Outdoor Centre; they no doubt have plenty of inflatable boats and every licence needed.

I'm just waiting for the day that the government will demand a licence for taking peats home. We will need training on how to drive a tractor on boggy ground and how to throw peats into a trailer in case we hit someone.

Anyway this scheme is welcome and hopefully you young people won't be put off by the form-filling exercise so take the opportunity to try and reduce the number of goslings surviving.

It would be interesting to hear how many eggs there were and I'm sure it will make a difference. However it won't reduce the present numbers and that can only be done by large shooting parties. It is the only solution and it's high time those with shooting rights honoured their responsibilities. There's no point in protecting crops and ignoring damage to grazing – both are needed for livestock to survive.

There's a big fuss about the welfare of animals especially when travelling. What about the pollution and destruction of their food?

Ena MacDonald

# Life on Number 8

## by The Crofter's Wife

*The first of a new series*

**A**S I WRITE, we are about to welcome summer back onto the croft, hoping it'll be a good one.

It's a busy time for everyone with lambing just behind us, calving on-going, ploughing looming and the planting and tending that will follow along with fencing and a whole raft of summer-time chores.

I suspect I'm somewhat unusual as most people are looking forwards at this time of year but I always pause for reflection and, while genuinely appreciating the longer days and less stormy weather, lament the more tolerable attributes of winter: cosy nights by the fire, hot broth after a chilly drenching, nights of a billion stars, even the ubiquitous forty shades of grey visible from the window on a January morning. I may well be alone in this and put it down to being born a mid-winter baby.

I begin a new season with a fresh list of outdoor jobs, which admittedly, is only ever longer come the end of the season thanks to new observations (the weeds have grown back there/the baby needs to be kept away from the burn/where on earth did that twenty foot high rhododendron appear from) or to The Crofter himself finding jobs for me (the driveway needs weeded/the shed needs painted/can I bring those cows back from the hill).

With the cyclical nature of our lives my reflections wander through previous springs and summers sifting out experiences to learn from, pitfalls to avoid, ideas to develop. Many of them bring smiles (the joy of harvesting the first summer fruits having mastered how to keep the birds at bay, hearing the crazy wee

dog bark at the newly erected scarecrow for hours at a time, handing new responsibilities over to the Wee Crofter) ...or shudders – last May for example.

I was commencing year two of my Battle of the Rhododendron: tackling a jungle of twenty years or more neglect and trying to reclaim what used to be a garden/veggie patch in front of the house. The loppers were in overdrive cutting and hacking, my muscles aching each night. With good dry weather I decided to start burning some of the previous year's garden waste – anything that hadn't been salvaged for logs or kindling – and a roaring fire burned most of the afternoon.

Sitting on the gravel weeding the next day I became aware of lots of "cheeps" and quickly saw activity in the hedge just feet from where my fire had blazed, and mere inches from where the loppers had reached: a nest with three chicks. I began to observe from the upstairs window with binoculars but to my dismay the nest lay abandoned next morning. The shame of it, I'd scared them away with my fires and cutting. No more cutting until later in the year, a lesson learned...

And so, having reflected, I move to my list which starts, "empty and move compost bins", moves through, "re-dig back ditch" and (currently) ends, "sort and tidy caravan". So, I'll not be at a loose end this summer! Just as well something has put a spring in my step. It must be the iron tablets the doctor prescribed me – there's no way this lover of all things cold, dark and dreich is going to admit to it being the turn in the weather or the longer days.

Scorraig  
Dundonnell

Dear Editor

A few months ago I wrote a letter to The Gairloch Times suggesting that the way to make sea eagles acceptable to crofters was to pay a sea eagle subsidy to all crofters etc who had eagles on their land. I don't remember if I suggested it should be payable by the RSPB as well. I also mentioned Dr Mackenzie's anecdote about his stalker who shot 2½ brace of golden eagles before breakfast.

Whatever, the next week I nearly got my "head bit orf" by some bird lover writing to say how stupid and crass I am. Just to prove how true that is and in the belief that the readership of *The Crofter* is more enlightened and has some humour, I offer you a picture from a book by W Heath Robinson which I was given in the mid 1930s when I was about four, which I have treasured ever since. Admittedly it makes no reference to sea eagles. The book was concerned with the attempts to rescue his nephew who had been stolen by the wicked bagbird.

And our neighbour John, who lives on the back of the hill reports that he saw the sea eagle quite often in Annat when he was building the dyke round the new bone yard there this winter.

Yours sincerely  
Alan G Bush

*The Adventures of Uncle Lubin by W Heath Robinson was published in 1904 I think. Penguin reprinted it in the 50s or 60s.*



# Wee Grey Fergie



**T**HIS PARTICULAR Ferguson TEF 20 four cylinder diesel came to Duisdale in Skye in 1960 and remains in daily use there.

It started off life in Fife as a farm tractor (1956) where it

must have been worked pretty hard as prior to heading west, by train to Mallaig and ferry to Armadale, it underwent a complete refurbishment and a full reconditioning of the engine.

From the sixties onwards it has been used predominantly in ploughing and hay work by the purchaser, Angus Nicolson, and his son, Roddy. Despite changing times it retains its rightful place as the flagship piece of machinery under the current crofter, Innis Nicolson, Angus' grandson.

The Duisdale Fergie has just finished another winter of putting bales out to cattle and bringing home firewood. Indeed, there are no plans to give it a rest as ploughing and manure spreading are underway and there'll be plenty for it to do over the summer. However, the Fergie has no plans to make a return to the small screen where it starred in the 1980s British Gas privatisation adverts.

So, if you see Sid, will you tell him that?

Innis Nicolson

## CROFTING HEROES

# Roddy Steele – a prophet in his own land?

## Ruairdh Chalum Ruairidh 1936-1987

*Long-standing SCU/SCF members will remember the late Roddy Steele, a founding member of the Crofters Union. Here Alasdair MacEachen, himself an SCU stalwart, remembers Roddy and his tireless work for crofters and the community.*

**T**HE HEADING asks a question – perhaps, as you read this, you can make up your own mind.

Being a prophet in your own land is often said to be very difficult and I am sure that some of you who have struggled for the good over the years will say it is pretty well impossible.

Where I grew up and still live and croft to this day we have, close by in Balivanich, roads and cul-de-sacs named after high-ranking military personnel associated with the expansion and redevelopment of the rocket range in the early 70s. But no mention of the crofters (many of whom experienced a very different military career) who worked hard on the land over which much of the military complex was to be built.

So, in a roundabout way, that takes me to the top end of South Uist where priorities are somewhat different and among the names of local landmarks such as Ben Kenneth (Kenneth Drive), local clergy (MacKellaig Place) we find a relatively modern development, Slighe Ruairidh Chalum Ruairidh named after no other than the late Roddy Steele – so need I say any more about that stalwart of the Scottish Crofters Union – he obviously made it to the top – and in his own land. Now that is an even greater achievement than all his successes with the SCU put together!

That's possibly not quite right. Roddy's contribution to the SCU was significant to say the least. For example soon after the SCU became fully operational in January 1985, the union took on the fairly formidable task of reviewing the crofter housing scheme, setting up a housing committee under the chairmanship of Roddy Steele who, by that time, had been elected as the first SCU Area President for Uist and Barra. The committee went on to commission Mark Shucksmith, at that time with Aberdeen University's Department of Land Economy, to undertake the first independent assessment of the workings of the crofter housing scheme.

Mark Shucksmith's report was formally accepted by the SCU Council at their meeting on 5th November 1986 and the first significant crofting policy statement was duly signed off by Roddy in January 1987.

All of this work had to be carried out alongside Roddy's many other interests and commitments. Obviously family life was very important to Roddy, he was in full time employment with a fish farming company and the following are just some of his other interests and significant achievements.

Roddy was involved in local township improvements, taking advantage of initiatives like the government-sponsored Job Creation Scheme to fund improvements to the common grazings and township facilities. This was

again very early at the start of these schemes before many others had seen the potential that crofting areas could get from such schemes. In the early 80s he also obtained a Cumberland shorthorn bull for the township and the female calves from that bull were kept for breeding stock because of the milk yield associated with the breed. The results of this improvement are still evident today, with his home township, North Boisdale, producing some of the best and most sought-after calves that are sold in Lochboisdale market annually.

As well as his union business, he was also chairman of the steering group that was set-up to take forward the building of the livestock market at Lochboisdale. This was a big challenge that required a lot of financial input from the local crofting community but Roddy persevered even when most around were saying that it could not be done.

The Integrated Development Programme (IDP) came along and funding for markets was part of the scheme. In 1986 the new market was completed. Again, without Roddy's drive and commitment, it is debatable whether it would ever have been built. He was elected the first chairman of South Uist Livestock Marketing Ltd and proudly introduced the three oldest sellers and the two oldest buyers at the first sale to perform the opening ceremony before the first beast was sold on 27 September 1986.

When the IDP scheme was first discussed there was an article in the British Association of Nature Conservationists Journal which stated: "It is an ill-conceived, poisonous little plan, which is likely to destroy not just the wet machair, but the long term prospects for industry and tourism, increase rural unemployment, disrupt stable land holdings and waste public money". This sort of comment rang true with a lot of people with similar opinions and the programme was thoroughly investigated and all environmental aspects looked into before it was approved.

At the height of the debate, Roddy spoke at a meeting of conservationists in Inverness and gave the crofting and crofters' point of view in a calm, clear way. The response he got from his talk was terrific and it was the first time some of his audience had heard a first-hand account of the methods of cultivation of the machair land in the Uists being put forward in such a clear and understandable way. His input to the debate changed a lot of minds and several years later the Uist and Barra ESA Scheme was introduced with payments to crofters for the way that they undertook their crofting activities on the unique machair areas. Again, would we have seen this without his input?

I could go on, but space in *The Crofter* is limited and I will just leave you with these few thoughts of a remarkable man sadly taken from his family and the community at such an early age – but the memories live on in the examples of his good work that we see around us in South Uist on a daily basis.

*Alasdair MacEachen ... with thanks to Roderick MacDonald (Poker) for his assistance.*





# From our Brussels correspondent

Norman Leask, SCF  
parliamentary spokesman

**A**FTER COMPLETING the long and arduous journey to Aberdeen, the rest of the journey to Brussels was a piece of cake.

My travelling companion was Gwyn Jones, the well-

put these designations in place but we may manage to move some of the pot to the Highlands and Islands in 2013. EuroMontana would also be able to advise us as our mark progresses.

We then dropped in on Via Campesina, who have developed out of CPE which the SCU was

committee meeting in Brussels in late May. Having met again the Scottish representative in Edinburgh and all things going to schedule, I will meet her again during my visit, to continue the process of explaining the specific problems to our areas.

The next morning we had what may well prove to be the most important meeting of our trip with Michael Hamell and his team. They are the Agri team in DG Environment but, by the nature of the job, straddle the divide between DG Env and DG Agri. They give an input into all Agri matters which could affect the environment, including not only RDPs but also state aids. They were interested in the UK's approach to regional state aids, such as those operated by the council in Shetland.

Eventually we got to the main event, the DG Agri sheep and goat meat advisory group. Various topics were discussed, including the animal by-products regulation. The environmental section brought up the possibility of a feeding station for birds where fallen stock could be left in the open air but also a possible derogation or exemption for the requirement to bury stock in extensive systems.

Some discussion was on wool being a by-product of sheep rather than a waste product – as

the proposals exist at the moment wool would need to be transported in especially-made watertight vehicles. This will happen over my dead sheep's bodies.

There was a long discussion on EID and it was clear that COPA, the large-scale farmers unions group, had changed their common position, now calling for EID to be made voluntary for each member state. Although we fought tirelessly to encourage our Minister for Agriculture to put EID on the agenda for the next European Council meeting, we had to depend on another state to do so. I will do my part but also call on anyone who has any influence with our UK government to use it, so that before the next meeting we can convince the minister to argue and vote for a voluntary EID system. We and the Commission's own advisory body advised in the strongest way possible: "We are strongly recommending that the legislation is put in force on a voluntary basis."

It was interesting that one of the Brussels bureaucrats said: "Problems that were identified with the technology in the 90s are still in existence today and never has so much time, effort and money gone into something that will do so little for health, traceability or food security."



known agricultural consultant. Gwyn's knowledge of people and European protocols and his convivial manner made it so easy to meet what I believe are the really important people in Brussels. We had discussions on EID, transport, LFASS, state aid, food security, local food and environmental issues with officials who can influence policy at the time before decisions have already been made.

We popped along to EuroMontana where I knew one lady, Marie Guitton, who is working on the European Mountain Mark – similar to what we are doing with the Crofting Produce Mark. We also met the new head of EuroMontana, Alexia Rouby, a French lady who had done a lot of work for their ministry on traceability. While it might be an exaggeration to say that she was very enthusiastic about EID and she admitted that small farmers in France were very opposed to it, it was clear that she felt that the ministry and the large farmers in France were in favour – so there will be no support from that quarter to prevent introduction. She felt that fighting the imposition of the rules was therefore not worth it and attention should shift on how to ease the costs.

I believe Euromontana could get help and be an influence for Scotland to develop a specific handicap and mountain area in LFASS if that is the way we choose to push. At this time Pentland House do not intend to

involved in. Via Campesina is the representative organisation for the world's small-scale producers and has over 200 million members. They will be a great help with our fight over EID and many other issues that affect small-scale producers throughout Europe. They put us in touch with a small farmers organisation in Germany who are looking for support on the EID issue.

We called in on the unit in DG Agri dealing with LFASS reform. We discussed where the Scottish LFASS is at the moment and how it is not well understood in Europe that the principle in Scotland is to pay most for the least disadvantaged. They asked for as much information as we had to advise them on our scheme at present and how we thought it could be improved.

We also met with the DG Agri desk officer for Britain and his assistant, the desk officer for Scotland. They are the people who deal with SRDP both when it has been approved and when it has been monitored and reported on. Whilst discussing LFASS it became evident that no one had told them how LFASS is dispersed in Scotland, in fact, at one stage I feared that we were going to be expelled from their office as rogues, vagabonds and liars. Eventually we promised we could prove that we were not liars by presenting them with facts. A great deal of work needs to be done to get these very influential people up to speed.

I am invited to attend the beef

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## MEMBERS' PAGES

## SCF Orkney Area

*SCF area representative for Orkney, Nickie May, introduces the SCF's newest area.*

**T**HE ORKNEY AREA is the newcomer on the block, formed in winter 2006/7.

We have 20 members scattered throughout the islands which makes communication and holding meetings difficult. Currently we have a grant application pending to help with the costs of setting up a website and holding meetings by teleconference to tackle these problems. Just like every other crofting area, Orkney is unique and so has its own take on some of the issues facing crofting and small food producers. I would like to take this chance to give an Orkney perspective.

Due to various factors, largely historical, Orkney does not have a lot of registered crofts. What we do have are a lot of folk of like status which makes the proposals to exclude these holdings from CCAGS devastating for the individuals concerned and the communities to which they belong. We too need folk to stay within our communities to help keep those ferries going, the local shop open and retain all the other services that keep our communities viable. Proposals to move the SFP from a historical to an area basis is another area of concern. This would represent a significant loss of revenue for an area with the highest density of beef cattle in Europe.

OK, I know that we are very

fortunate here to have good quality land but we too have long, incredibly wet winters and a short growing season. We too are burdened by expensive transport costs – worse for those of us out on the islands as we have to get stock and feed to and from mainland Orkney.

The ferry system in Orkney is organised as a spoke and hub so inter-island connections are negligible, limiting all activities to the population of the individual islands. The nature of the ferry service and the cost means that generally it is a darn good job that the land is capable of providing a significant part of our living as other options to earn are limited. A daily commute to mainland Orkney is impossible for those on the North Isles.

Tourism on the isles is relatively underdeveloped with some islands getting less than 1000 visitors.

Just like others throughout the crofting counties we too are concerned with the costs and rigmarole of blue tongue and the threatened EID of sheep. Changes to LFASS are another issue causing concern, particularly if they evolve into concentrating on the quality of the land and ignore the other problems we face.

Enough of this doom and gloom. The sun is shining as I write and we have that magical combination of jet black lambs – we have Hebridean sheep – and bright, bright daffodils and I would like to wish one and all a really good summer.

## Lewis Branch AGM

**I**S ANY NIGHT a good night? When should we have our AGM? Beginning of the week? Middle? End? We settled for Tuesday because we had to. You see, our main guest speaker was Chloe Randall, estate manager of Dunlossit Estate in Islay. Timetables and travel times dictated that Tuesday was the most suitable night.

We decided that once the formalities of our AGM was over the rest of the evening would be a public meeting. Iain MacLeod was re-elected as secretary and Donnie MacDonald (oh ... that's me) was re-elected as area representative. Onto the more interesting part, then.

Brief mention was made at the beginning of current topics such as bluetongue, tagging and the state of the agricultural industry in general. It was intentional to keep that brief. These issues have already had much debate.

I had wanted a meeting where there was no opportunity for negativity or argument. I wanted those present to leave at the end of the night full of enthusiasm, having been educated and inspired to think the near impossible – that crofting could be made profitable and indeed enjoyable with bold and imaginative ideas. It is a unique way of life that must not be allowed to disappear through political ineptitude and lack of understanding (I'm talking EU and Westminster here!) and more importantly, through the apathetic approach of crofters themselves.

The first speaker was Roddy MacMinn, area officer with SNH, who gave an excellent presentation on the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Although it is not perfect by any means and is currently being reviewed, it is a gateway to new opportunities.

It is a £1.6 billion programme of economic, environmental and social measures designed to develop rural Scotland over the next seven years. Applications for funding can be made by individuals or groups. Those whose RSS programme has come to an end should now be applying for similar payments through the SRDP.

... and finally, ladies and gentlemen, brought to you at great expense, it's that entrepreneurial genius from Islay, Chloe Randall!

Set in around 18,500 acres of farmland and woodland, Dunlossit Estate is located towards the north-east of the beautiful island of Islay. The estate was purchased by the Schröder family in 1937 and

still remains an important part of their lives today. Dunlossit is one of the biggest private employers on Islay, employing around 30 people and strives to be a major player in Islay's development of life on an island.

Chloe takes a very determined and entrepreneurial approach to her work. She was instrumental in establishing a much-needed abattoir on the island and had to overcome major funding hurdles to achieve this. The abattoir is highly successful and the estate exports its meat products far and wide under the label 'Meat Islay!'

Any meat bearing the 'Meat Islay!' mark guarantees that the animal was born, reared and slaughtered on Islay.

Why do farmers farm and crofters croft? The average income is (very) significantly below average full-time wage. Who in their right minds would do what LFA crofters do for the money LFA crofters get? Is there a way to balance the books? Yes – and Chloe went on to explain how. She did so in a highly detailed and informative way with added humour.

It was a wonderful presentation given by a wonderfully nice person and the perfect way to end an evening.

I would like to extend my thanks to our chief scribe Iain MacLeod, Neil MacLeod, Murdo Mackay and Calum Iain MacMillan from the council. The latter kindly allowed us the use of the council chamber and agreed to meet all travelling costs incurred by our main speaker.

Here's to a productive, profitable and politician-free future!

## Skye and Lochalsh area AGM

**J**OHAN MACKENZIE, of the State Veterinary Service (SVS), provided a very informative talk on the necessity to vaccinate against bluetongue. As an authority on the disease, John was able to give valuable advice to local crofters on how and when to vaccinate.

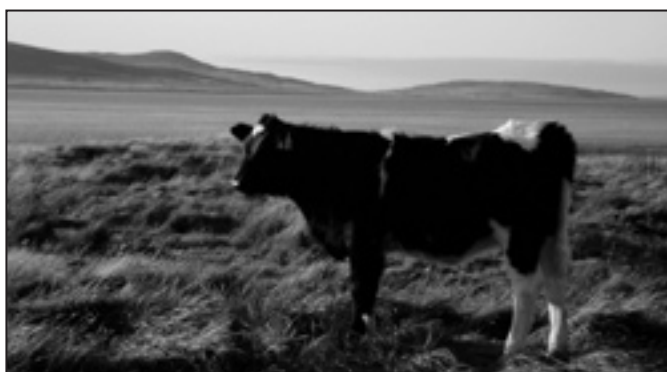
We are grateful to the following veterinary practices for sponsoring our event:

- Rhona Campbell Vet Practice
- Old School Vet Clinic
- O'Connor-Pierce Vet Practice

The area committee office bearers for the forthcoming year are:

chair – Donald MacDonald, Eynort treasurer – John Bannister, Kylesheha secretary and council representative Sandra Holmes, Plockton

For further info on the Skye and Lochalsh area committee contact Sandra on 01599 544203, or [skye@crofting.org](mailto:skye@crofting.org)





## MEMBERS' PAGES

## Update – induction courses and other training matters

**S**CF IS enormously grateful to HIE for stepping-in at the last minute to give financial support of this year's crofting induction courses.

Without this there would have been no such courses. So, with a sigh of relief we were eventually able to run the courses in five locations: Skye, Wester Ross, Barra, Speyside and Easter Ross.

The initial funding problems meant a late start and whereas we usually start at the beginning of January, the commencement of the courses was delayed; some of the courses are only now coming to an end. Despite the short lead-in time and consequent rushed arrangements, the courses have, as usual, all been well supported by eager students.

With the ever-changing face of agriculture in general, legislation and remits of agencies, it is more important than ever to be able to keep up to date with all the latest goings-on in crofting. Changes within the Crofters Commission in particular have been significant as they have been an enthusiastic and constant supporter of this course since its inception.

After all, it is only with the continued help and support of ALL agencies involved in crofting that we are able to deliver these courses. And, as usual, students continue to enquire about further training to take them on to the 'next stage' of crofting know-how.

These courses do not just happen of their own accord – local course directors organise and facilitate them and SCF is most grateful for their efforts to make the courses the success that they are.

SCF has risen to students' demands for further practical training and has spent a great deal of time and energy over recent years with its partners on the training panel to put together an appropriate training programme. Much of the progress to date has resulted from input by Lantra and its staff members Morag Holdsworth and Liz Paul in particular. Sadly, both these stalwarts have moved to pastures new but their contribution to the crofting training cause has been very considerable. Their help in preparing an SRDP funding bid is just one area of expertise for which we have been very grateful.

SCF is attempting to make our much-talked-about crofters and small landholders training programme a reality by making a funding bid under the SRDP for an initial programme followed by a further three years delivery. The crofting induction courses are now included in this programme. We hope to report positively on the outcome of this bid in the next issue.

*Calina Macdonald*  
SCF Training Co-Ordinator

# giftaid

### Gift Aid reminder

Thank you to all those members of who returned the gift aid postcard enclosed with the December edition of *The Crofter*. We now have more than 60% of our members signed up to the scheme.

If you still have the card and haven't returned it, please do so and remember to tick the appropriate box. This will help prevent further mailings.

Gift Aid means we can get back £12.60 from the Inland Revenue for every member who signs up.

Thank you!



## Useful acronyms

BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BLF	Big Lottery Fund
BRN	Business Reference Number
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CBGLS	Croft Building Grant and Loan Scheme (replaced by CHGS)
CC	Crofters Commission
CCAGS	Crofting Counties Agricultural Grants Scheme
CCDS	Crofting Communities Development Scheme (doesn't exist anymore)
CLU	Community Land Unit
COSHH	Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations
CPH	County Parish Holding Number
CPS	Countryside Premium Scheme
ECS	Energy Crops Scheme
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Areas
ESF	European Structural Funds
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland
FID	Field Identifier
FIS	Field Identification System
FOI	Freedom Of Information
FUCC	Ferry Users Consultative Committee
FVP	Fruit Vegetables Potatoes
GAEC	Good Agricultural & Environmental Condition
GFP	Good Farming Practice
HICES	Highlands and Islands Croft Entrants Scheme
HIE	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
HIPP	Highlands and Islands Partnership Programme
HISTP	Highlands & Islands Special Transitional Programme (European funding)
IACS	Integrated Administration & Control System
LAG	Local Action Group (Leader - part of SRDP)
LFASS	Less Favoured Area Support Scheme
LMC	Land Managers Contracts (replaced by LMO)
LMCMS	Land Management Contracts Menu Scheme (replaced by LMO)
LMO	Land Managers Options (Part of RDC)
NFUS	National Farmers Union Scotland
NVZ	Nitrate Vulnerable Zone
OAS	Organic Aid Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCP	Protein Crop Premium
RDC	Rural Development Contracts (Part of SRDP) RDR Rural Development Regulation (European)
RP	Rural Priorities (Part of RDC))
RPAC	Regional Proposal Assessment Committee
RPID	Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
SAC	Scottish Agricultural College
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SAF	Single Application Form
SBCS	Scottish Beef Calf Scheme
SCLN	Scottish Community Land Network
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SFGS	Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme
SFPS	Single Farm Payment Scheme
SGRD	Scottish Government Rural Directorate
SGRPID	Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
SMR	Statutory Management Requirements
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SPA	Special Protection Area
SRDP	Scotland Rural Development Programme
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TSAS	Technical Support for Access to the SRDP (replacing CCDS)
TSE	Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy
UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands, otherwise known as UHI Millennium Institute
OFT	Office of Fair Trading
SHEP	Scottish Historic Environment Policy
SEARS	Scotland Environmental And Rural Services

# Sùil air Fàire

Le Eòin Dòmhnallach

**D**ÌREACH NA mo shealladh bho uinneag a chidsin againn, far am bi mi a' cuir seachad a mhòr earann de gach latha, chì mi mum choinneamh da bhaile bheag bhòidheach; fear dhiubh ris an canar Peighinn a' Ghobhainn agus am fear eile, ris an can sinn Heiribusta.

Tha eachdraidh ag ràdh gur iad Clann Ic Artair a bha a' fuireach air tùs anns a' chiad bhaile a dh'ainmich mi agus gum b' e gobha a bha anns an fhear dhiubh a chaidh air son a' chiad uair gu taigh an uachdarain a phàigheadh a mhàl. Chòrd an duine ri ceann-feadhna nan Dòmhnallach agus 's e bun a bh' ann gun d'fhuair MacArtair coir am baile airson aon sgillinn ruadh de mhàl gach Bliadhn' a thuilleadh air port pioba ur nodha a chluich anns a' chaisteal ann an Duntuilg gach latha Bliadhn' Uire. Theinnich Clann Ic Artair gu math anns a' bhaile bheag seo fo sgàil nan cnoc agus cha b' fhada gus an robh iad nan luchd obrach aig a' Mhorair agus fear dhiubh na Phìobaire oifigeil sa chaisteal.

An ceann beagan ùine chuir fear an Duine, Teàrlach am Pìobaire, a-null do Dhùn Bheagain airson ionnsachadh ann an cèol mòr fhaotainn o Pàdraig Mòr MacCruimein, a bha cliùiteach air feadh Alba. A-rèir eachdraidh, chaidh gu math do Teàrlach agus air dha tilleadh dhachaigh chuir e air chois sgoil phìobaireachd aig Cnoc Phàill ann am Peighinn a' Ghobhainn. Bha cliù is urram a-nis aig Teàrlach còir agus thathar ag ràdh gur tric a thug Fear an Duine leis am pìobaire aige gu Galldachd gu bhith a' coinneachadh ri uaislean is luchd-clìuil. Bha e air aithris gun do choinnich Teàrlach gu tric ri Rob Burns agus gun tug e don bhàrd iomraiteach seo iomadh fonn Gàidhealach ris an do chuir Burns bàrdachd a bhithear ag aithris is a' seinn "cho fad sa mhaireas gaol is cèol." Tha Teàrlach air adhlacadh ann an cladh Chille Mhoire; dlùth don bhaile anns an robh e fhèin is a chuideachd a' tàmh. Gu mì-fhortanach, chan eil duine den fhine seo an-diugh beò, anns an sgìre.

A-nis, 's e ainm an ath bhaile Heiribusta agus a-rèir eachdraidh, 's e ainm Lochlannach a tha

seo agus tha an t-ainm a' ciallachadh Baile Uachdrach (Haerr ibustadr). Am measg gach nì eile a ghabh àite o sheann anns a' bhaile seo, bha ùpraid agus mòran troimh-chèile ann aig am strì an fhearainn aig deireadh na bliadhna 1886. Bha craitearan Heiribusta am measg an fheadhainn a dhiùlt an cuid mall a phàigheadh air sàilleabh gun robh iad gu làidir den bheachd gu robh an t-uachdaran a' cuir àrdachadh ro mhòr air màl an cuid fearainn. Dhiùlt iad sgillinn ruadh a phàigheadh agus chum iad oirre len cuid strì, gus mu dheireadh thall thàinig oifigear siorram (Alasdair Mòr Dòmhnallach) don bhaile le sumainnean gan gairm gu cùirt lagha ann am Port Rìgh. Is ma thàinig, cha b' e am fàilte a b' fheàrr a fhuair e, oir chaidh a choinneachadh anns a' Ghrogaire, taobh a-muigh a' bhaile agus chaidh gabhail air gu borb le pocan is poll, is gach nì eile a bha rin làimh. Bha fir is mnathan a' bhaile a' cuir an cèill an diomb agus aig a cheann thall b' fheàrr don Dòmhnallach tilleadh dhachaigh gun litir a' libhrigeadh.

An ath latha thàinig Siorram Ivory agus sgioba de mhaoir sìthe is iad den bheachd gun cuireadh iad na ceannaircich an greim. Thug cuid de na craitearan oirre don mhonadh ach chaidh Seonaidh Peutan agus bean Alasdair Ic Mhaoilein a ghlacadh. Bha deireadh an Dùbhlachd ann mus deach an còrr de na fir a ghlacadh agus thugadh iad do Dhùn Èideann far an do sheas cùirt aig toiseachd na bliadhna 1887. Chaidh seachdnar dhiubh a chur don phrìosan. Chaidh binn da mhìos air Dòmhnall Peutan, Alasdair MacMhaoilein agus Seonaidh Dòmhnallach. Chaidh binn mìos air Uilleam MacArtair, Uilleam Peutan, Teàrlach Mac an Toisi ch agus Iain MacCoinnich. A-rèir eachdraidh, bha iad air an deagh dhòigh anns a' phrìosan agus am feadh a bha iad ann, rinn fear dhiubh, Uilleam Peutan òran anns an robh ceathramh do gach neach a bha siud còmhla ris.

Saoil gu dè a thachradh ann an Heiribusta, nam b' e an-diugh an-dè?

Seo an t-òran mar a chuala mise e o fhear de mhuinntir a bhaile o chionn leth chiad bhliadhna is còrr.

*'Smuladach mi 'n-diugh 's mi 'g èiridh  
Le Uilleam Peutan, nach maireann*

'S muladach mi 'n-diugh 's mi 'g èirigh  
Anns a' phrìosan an Dun Èideann;  
'S muladach mi 'n-diugh 's mi 'g èirigh.

A Dhòmhnall Ruaidh ud ann a Hàise,  
Walkigeadh air feadh a' ghàrraidh,  
'S olc a thig an deise bhàn dhut,  
Ged bu shràiceil air an fhèill thu.

Uilleam MacArtair 's e cho gòrach,  
'S eagal aige roimh na bòcain;  
Cha tig gin dhiubh tron a' chòmhlaidh,  
'S cha tèid bòrd dhith as a chèile.

Tha Iain Ceannaidhe nas fheàrr dheth,  
Pailteas aig 'de Bheurla 's gràmar;  
Nì e stòraidh ris a' warder  
Feuch an ann as fhèarr a ghrèidheadh.

Uilleam Peutan 's e cho seòlta,  
Ged nach eil a Bheurla dòigheil;  
Abraidh e 'Sir' riutha an còmhnaidh,  
Mar bu chòir a bhith sa Bheurla.

O, a Thèarlaich 'Ic-an-Tòisich,  
'S maig a chunnaic ort an còmhdach;  
'S snasail rachadh tu 'nad fhòram,  
Dol Di-dòmhnach don èisdeachd.

Facal beag mu bhean mo nàbaidh –  
Thug iad i don chùirt as àirde;  
Nuair a chunnaic iad a h-àilgheas,  
Cha bu dàna leo a h-èigheach.

Seonaidh MacAoidhein 's e cho brònach,  
A' caoidh Anna Nic-an-Tòisich;  
Chan fhaigh ciobair i no Nòrman  
Chaidh ri bheò gu am faigh e fhèin i.

## Skills to tackle climate change

**O**VER A three year period, Soil Association Scotland's Climate Change Programme will deliver training, technical information, and support to equip farmers and crofters with skills and knowledge to make their businesses more resilient and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Day-long training courses look at practical and cost-effective ways to improve soil management, reduce dependence on inputs and increase carbon sequestration. Hosted by a variety of farms across Scotland, the courses cover topics including nutrient budgeting, use of farmyard manure and conservation of soil organic matter. Participants will receive ongoing technical updates and one-to-one support over the life of the programme.

The programme has been developed to have wide relevance and is open to anyone. Some of the techniques covered are commonly used by organic farmers, but the programme

is designed to benefit also those with little or no interest in organic farming or certification.

Dates and farm visits for the soil management training courses:

**August 13 – Mid Coul Farms, Inverness**  
**September 16 – Rainton Farm, Castle Douglas**

**September 24 – Great Glen Cattle Ranch, Achindaun Farm, Spean Bridge**  
**October 1 – Scottish Agricultural College, Craibstone Estate, Aberdeen**

The cost to attend the day-long training course is £40 + VAT. For more information, or to book a place, contact Lyn Matheson, Agricultural Development Officer on 0131 666 0847 or [lmatheson@soilassociation.org](mailto:lmatheson@soilassociation.org), or visit [www.soilassociationscotland.org](http://www.soilassociationscotland.org). The day will run from 9.00am to 4.30pm. Technical sessions in the morning will be followed by lunch and a farm visit to see theory being put into practice. The Soil Association is a membership charity campaigning for a

healthy food culture and a future where all farming is planet-friendly. Established in 2002, Soil Association Scotland is the devolved national office for Scotland.





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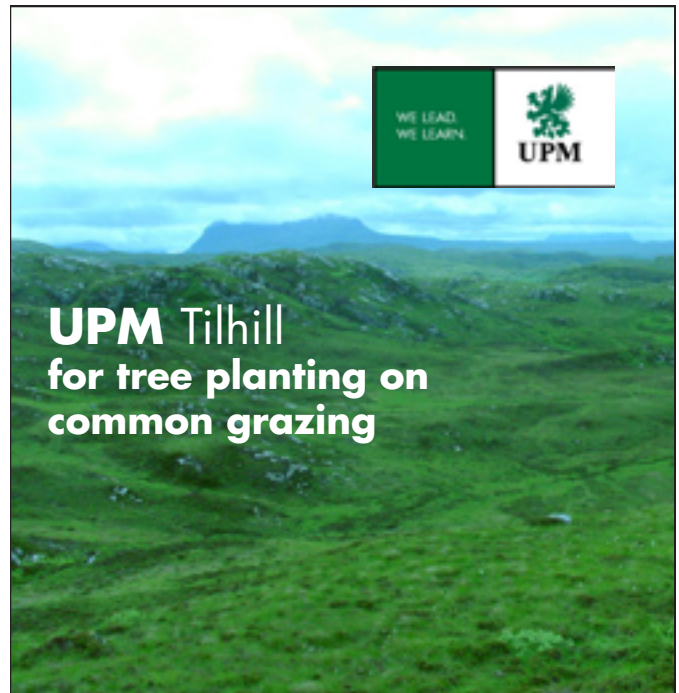
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## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## Promoting resilience in Scotland's rural economy

**F**ACED WITH grim headlines within the deepest, most protracted global recession since the 1930s, it is difficult not to feel despondent in today's economic climate.

But one clear certainty – perhaps the only genuine certainty – is that Scotland will emerge from the current recession. Recessions force us to re-assess where we're heading: we should use this opportunity to make sure Scotland's rural economy is focused on grasping current and future growth opportunities.

What was barely imaginable only a year ago – an insolvency crisis crippling the global financial system – has now rippled out across the real economy. Recessions caused by financial crises tend to be more deep-seated than others and the global inter-connectedness of the world's financial markets mean that this recession will be particularly challenging.

The effects of economic slowdown are widespread:

- to varying degrees, all industries are affected with the financial services, construction and retail sectors being particularly impacted to date;
- Scottish unemployment is forecast to rise to over 8% of the workforce, with greater impacts expected among young people;
- one in five businesses is expected to become insolvent;
- the value of trade from the UK and EU has fallen by around 20% over the last year;
- while the effects are being felt across Scotland, the slowdown seems to be impacting on urban areas most owing to their concentration of vulnerable sectors; and
- UK Government borrowing has now reached around £600bn, with a projected budget deficit of £175bn during 2009/10 placing a strain on public finances for many years to come.

Scotland's rural industries are feeling the effects of recession in a variety of ways:

- along with other industries, the food and drink sector is experiencing reduced access to credit facilities, with capital investment decisions often being delayed or cancelled. Turnover growth expectations have been slowing, especially in the whisky industry;
- a reduced oil price, combined with weak access to credit and lower capital expenditure, has lowered confidence in both the oil and gas and renewable energy industries;
- construction firms are concerned about reduced contracts, increasing redundancies, late payments and access to bank credit; and
- there is a mixed picture in tourism with some firms managing to maintain turnover by reducing room rates and tailoring their offers. Whether the relatively weak value of sterling, combined with the "Homecoming" effect and more UK residents holidaying at home, will outweigh the trend for consumers to cut back on spending remains to be seen.

While the recession looks set to be the deepest for decades, it is also clear that the public sector response has been more significant and better coordinated than in previous recessions. Government – at all levels – is providing a range of support not only to restore confidence in financial

markets but also to offer direct support to businesses, support industry-led action plans and accelerate major capital infrastructure projects, all in an effort to get the economy moving again.

Recessions can typically be sub-divided into four distinct phases: slowdown, recession, recovery and expansion. Most commentators are currently suggesting that Scotland is around one year into the process with a further year, perhaps by spring 2010, until confidence starts to rise (ie the recovery phase). However, since labour markets tend to lag changes in output, unemployment is not likely to peak until 2011, with the economy slowly returning to growth from 2012 onwards (ie the expansion phase).

Deep recessions deliver more than just an economic shock: they can also shock an entire system into new ways of thinking and organising. Josef Schumpeter, the Austrian economist, once declared that economic downturns are "a good cold shower for the economic system". Not only do they stimulate "creative destruction" by increasing efficiency, cutting waste and forcing firms to do things in smarter ways, but they also prompt a re-assessment of the kind of economy we are planning for.

In the context of the current recession, a key uncertainty is the extent to which it will result in either cyclical or structural changes. In other words, are we likely to return a familiar, 'business as usual' world or will it offer new opportunities and challenges?

Certainly, recent shifts towards greater powers for the G20 nations, signs of a stronger regulatory environment and the need for a global financial re-balancing between 'saving' and 'spending' countries suggest that once the upturn comes, the economic environment will look slightly different. Rather than assume the rural economy "will return to normal", now is a good time for us to debate and explore our aspirations for Scotland's rural economy in the future.

Strong business leadership and innovation, combined with public sector investment to provide the enabling conditions to encourage enterprise to thrive, will be key building blocks for future growth when the upturn does come. A clear focus on the new niche opportunities for Scotland's rural businesses within a global context – in renewable energy, quality food production or tourism service and products – will also be vital.

Within the context of the Government's economic strategy, individual businesses and industries might usefully pose some key questions:

- how can we further reduce costs to increase business efficiency and retain (and better use) the current skills we have?
- how can businesses more effectively listen to their customers to gain real-time market intelligence about emerging growth opportunities (both at home and overseas)?
- can we turn the economic shock provided by the recession to our advantage by increasing our adaptability to change or by accelerating plans for business diversification?
- what opportunities are there for investing in innovation just now, sowing the seeds of

future business growth?

- can we take some bold steps to accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon economy?

While answering these questions might be involve some difficult conversations, how we respond in the midst of recession might just make the difference to how successful we might become once the upturn comes.

Ewan Mearns  
Policy Development Team  
Scottish Enterprise

## Draft Crofting Reform Bill

A consultation on the draft Crofting Reform Bill was launched by the Minister for Environment, Roseanna Cunningham MSP, on 19th May 2009.

A series of public meetings are to be held throughout crofting areas in order to present and discuss the proposals in the draft Bill. All are welcome to attend. Copies of the consultation document on the draft Bill can be requested from your local agricultural area office or accessed online at:

[www.scotland.gov.uk/crofting\\_reform\\_consultation](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/crofting_reform_consultation)

## Public meetings (7.30pm – 9.00pm)

- 1 June** – Kirkwall, Orkney (Picaquoy Centre – Skerries Meeting Room, Muddiesfield Rd)
- 2 June** – Lerwick, Shetland (The Town Hall, Hillhead)
- 3 June** – Mid Yell, Shetland (Mid Yell Community Hall)
- 8 June** – Inverness (Craigmonie Hotel, 3 Annefield Rd)
- 9 June** – Lairg (Lairg Community Association Hall, Main St)
- 10 June** – Durness (Durness Village Hall)
- 11 June** – Poolewe (Poolewe Village Hall - 8pm start)
- 15 June** – Grantown-on-Spey (Ben Mhor hotel, 53-57 high St)
- 16 June** – Broadford, Skye (Broadford Hotel)
- 17 June** – Fort William (Lochaber Hall, High St)
- 18 June** – Connel, Nr Oban (Falls of Lora Hotel)
- 22 June** – Tiree Rural Centre (Crosapol, Isle of Tiree)
- 24 June** – Brodick, Isle of Arran (Brodick Community Hall, Lamlash)
- 25 June** – Bowmore, Isle of Islay (Ionad Chaluim Chille Ìle, Gartnatra)
- 29 June** – Stornoway, Isle of Lewis (Caberfeidh Hotel, 11 James St)
- 30 June** – Tarbert, Isle of Harris (Harris Hotel)
- 1 July** – Lionacleit, Isle of Benbecula (Dark Island Hotel)
- 2 July** – Castlebay, Isle of Barra (Castlebay School)

# Members discount scheme

These suppliers offer a discount to SCF members. Please contact individual suppliers for further details.

## Agricultural Supplies and Machinery

Hamilton Brothers Groundcare and Agricultural Equipment  
Bishopton 07771 577889

Linklater Engineering  
Stenness, Orkney  
01856 851 000  
Foyers Services Ltd, Foyers  
01456 486333

Animal Health, Dingwall  
01349 865425

CSC Crop Production Ltd  
Culbokie, Dingwall  
01349 877557

Dean K Gilfillan  
Weasdale, Shetland  
01595 830248

Horner Shearing Equipment  
Bolton by Bowland, near Clitheroe  
01200 441284

## Building Supplies

Highland Services Building Supplies  
Tobermory, Isle of Mull  
01688 302296

Wood-bees Hardware  
Thurso  
01847 894333

Highland Industrial Supplies  
Inverness 01463239160  
Fort William 01397 705159  
Elgin 01343 547561  
Orkney 01856 874325

Beaver Timber, Sheds, Garages  
Oban  
01631 720353

## Pumps, Tanks, Filters etc

Filpumps  
Inverurie, Aberdeenshire  
01467 623010

## Trees

Taynuilt Trees, Taynuilt  
01866 822591

## Bulbs etc

Evelix Daffodils, Dornoch  
01862 810715

## Office Supplies and Stationery

Point 1 Technologies, Stornoway,  
Isle of Lewis  
01851 703244

## Furniture, Carpets and Flooring

Harris Home Furnishings  
Edinbane Isle of Skye  
01470 582 255

## Register for a £250 Scottish biodiversity grant

**T**HIS YEAR Scottish Natural Heritage is funding 75 biodiversity awards, aimed at groups that will help support and encourage Scottish biodiversity through practical environmental projects.

### What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is simply the variety of life. Biodiversity is all living things all around us. It is in our forests and mountains, our rivers and seas, our gardens and parks. It is vital for our survival and is a key measure of the health of our planet. SNH Scottish biodiversity awards aims to conserve and enhance biodiversity for the health, enjoyment and well being of the people of Scotland.

### Taking Action For Biodiversity

Everybody can get involved in conserving biodiversity. It is a shared resource and a shared responsibility. From the smallest individual action to a national campaign, every contribution helps! The Action Earth Biodiversity Awards are designed to help groups of volunteers take practical action to improve and create places for wildlife. This could include:

- planting nectar-rich flowers to attract butterflies and bees or fruit-bearing trees and shrubs to attract birds;
- making and erecting nest boxes;
- creating new habitats for wildlife ie deadwood habitat, hedgerows, wildflower meadows, and ponds which become a magnet for wildlife of all kinds;
- creating wild areas in parks and gardens;
- improving existing woodlands, ponds or marshy areas to make them more wildlife friendly.

### How can I help to achieve local biodiversity targets?

Local biodiversity action plans are already in place across Scotland. These identify local action to help protect Scotland's biodiversity. You can find out more by visiting the Biodiversity Scotland website and following the 'Who is involved' links. You could also contact your local SNH office for information and advice. To find your nearest office visit <http://www.snh.org.uk/scottish/ns-a00.asp>

### Funding Criteria

When planning your project, make reference to your Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP). You

can find out more by contacting your LBAP officer.

- Minimum of 10 hours spent on project (can be split over a period of days).
- Provide detailed expenditure.
- Must provide receipts to the value of £250 (once event is over).
- Open to all groups (eg community groups, residents associations and youth groups).
- Open to schools who work in partnership with local group/s on site (not school grounds – and site must be accessible to general public).
- Must provide details on how project will improve Scottish biodiversity.
- A press release has to be sent to local media (help and advice available).
- Only one project per organisation.

Before submitting your application, please check that your project meets these criteria. If you are unsure whether you qualify then please call 0131 622 7766 and ask for Robert Henderson, or email [rhenderson@csv.org.uk](mailto:rhenderson@csv.org.uk)

### How to register

- call the Action Earth hotline on 0121 328 7455
- email us for a project registration pack

Project registration forms need to be back by the following dates:

Projects taking place **22nd June-5th July** – deadline for completed forms **9th June 6th July-19th July** – deadline **23rd June 20th July-31st July** – deadline **7th July**

These are final deadlines. Send in your registration form as soon as possible.

### What happens next?

Once applications are received a decision will be made and you will be notified by post within three weeks.

If you have been successful you will receive a letter of confirmation with your own unique reference number (to be quoted in all correspondence) and the requested promotional material (stickers, tabards, certificates).

If you do not get a reply within this period then please call the Action Earth hotline on 0121 328 7455 at least one week before the start date of your activity.

**IMPORTANT** Please ensure project registration forms are completed fully as failure will cause delays in receiving a response.

## Meetings and more meetings

In the last issue we listed some of the meetings attended by SCF people.

Every week SCF staff and elected representatives make the case for crofting at the Scottish Parliament, in London, to the EU and to the various agencies and organisations which affect our communities.

Just think what would happen if decisions on all these issues were made without any representation for crofters. This is why it is so vital to have a vibrant organization with as many members as possible.

A selection of important meetings attended by SCF during March-May:

- welfare liaison meeting
- UHI climate change seminar
- Scottish sheep strategy
- Food Standard Agency (FSA)
- Cross Party Group on Rural Policy
- CAP and LFASS stakeholders
- SRDP council
- Sheep Meat Committee
- Crofting Cross Party Group
- sea eagle meeting
- GM animal feeds
- Training Panel meeting
- bluetongue stakeholders
- SAC advisory council
- SRDP monitor committee
- electronic identification (EID)
- meetings with MEPs
- meetings with MSPs
- LEADER meetings
- goose predation



# The last thing your children need when you're gone is your bills

Call us on **0141 225 3233** or contact  
your local NFU Mutual agent

for face to face advice on protection for you and your family

NFU Mutual Financial Consultants advise on NFU Mutual products and services  
and in special circumstances those of other providers



**NFU Mutual**

INSURANCE PENSIONS INVESTMENTS

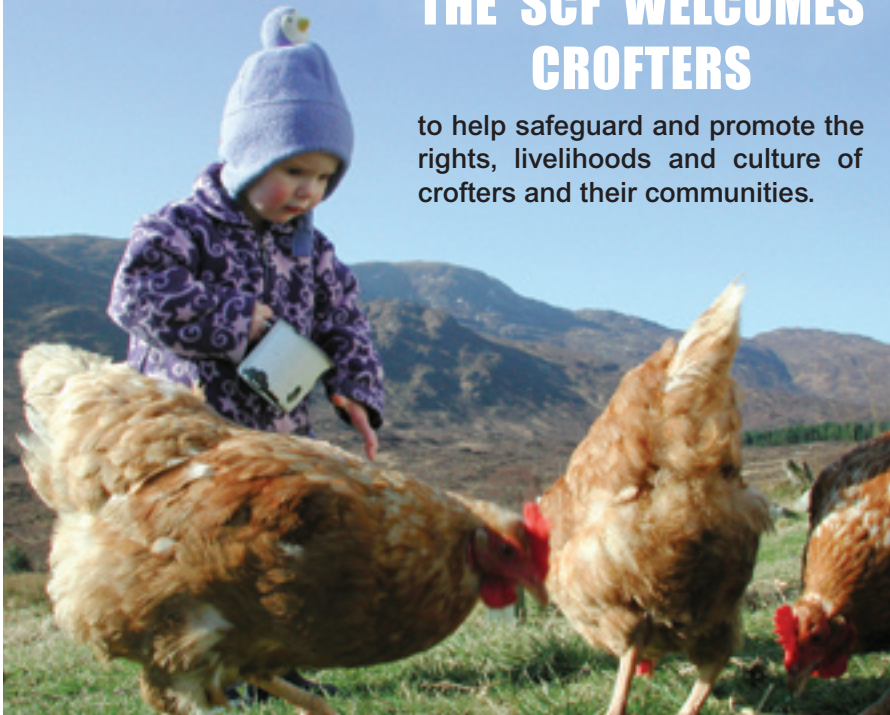
*It's an NFU Mutual understanding*

# CROFTERS NEED THE SCF

Rooted in our community, the SCF is the only member-led organisation dedicated to promoting crofting and is the largest association of small-scale food producers in the UK.

## THE SCF WELCOMES CROFTERS

to help safeguard and promote the rights, livelihoods and culture of crofters and their communities.



## Passing the word and joining in

**I**N THE LAST issue of The Crofter we drew attention to the concerted effort we are making to increase the membership.

You may recall we included a membership application form which we very much hoped members would pass on to a swithering fellow crofter (one who may think about joining but just doesn't quite get around to it).

In this issue we go up a gear with the inclusion of an attractive flyer. The picture portrayed touchingly speaks for itself by showing an upcoming new generation already absorbed in the culture of caring for the crofting family's livestock – member Andy Law's daughter Madeline feeding the family's hens. If we were in any doubt as to why we care so much about this crofting lifestyle then this picture surely says it all. But equally, if we care so much about this crofting lifestyle we must protect it – and do it in the best time-honoured fashion of working together and by joining the only member-led organisation dedicated to the promotion of crofting, the SCF.

The flyer is purposely printed in A5 format so that it can be displayed without being too intrusive in such places as community/church/village hall notice boards, clubs, shops and stores, doctors'/dentists' waiting rooms, garages, libraries, livestock marts and cafés; in short anywhere where the public has access and where crofters, in particular, visit in the normal course of their day. Additional flyers and membership forms can be obtained by calling Marion at HQ (01599 566365) or by email: [hq@crofting.org](mailto:hq@crofting.org).

**We very much hope that you will co-operate and help with this membership drive. There's a lot to be lost but so much more to be gained for so very little individual effort.**

## SCF AGM – a date for your diary

The eighth annual general meeting of the Scottish Crofting Foundation will be held on Tuesday 23rd June 2009 at Dingwall and Highland Mart, Humberston, Bailechaul Road, Dingwall at 2.00 pm.

There will be a presentation by Richard Frew of the Scottish Government's Future of Crofting Team on the Crofting Bill and ample opportunity to discuss the bill and its implications.

One key issue for the AGM is the proposal to modify the name of the organisation – from Foundation to Federation. Book your place at the meeting to ensure you have a chance to be involved in this important decision.

More information can be found on the centre pages.

### How to contact us

[HQ@crofting.org](mailto:HQ@crofting.org)

01599 566 365

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To advertise in The Crofter  
contact Claire Nicolson on

[ads@crofting.org](mailto:ads@crofting.org)

01471 833239



### SCF Notelets for Sale

**Support SCF** by purchasing these unique notelets depicting a crofting scene 'Home Fire Burning' by Susan Walker of Camus Cross, Isle of Skye.

**£5 for a pack of 10 including envelopes**

Contact HQ on 01599 566 365  
or buy online at [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org)

**find us on-line at [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org)**