

## Alice through the looking-glass model for direct payments

**A**S MEMBERS will be aware, it is being suggested in the government CAP reform pillar 1 (direct payments) consultation that Scotland will have two regions, 1: rough grazing and 2: the rest – arable, permanent grass and temporary grass, the land with higher production capability. This land, which is capable of higher production and therefore greater market reward, deserves public payments ten times higher than support to rough grazing, it is claimed.

However, to distract from this peculiar looking-glass logic, a more sinister discussion is taking place that is stranger still. It is focussing on what happens to rough grazing, the greater part of Scotland's agricultural land, and sets hill grazers against hill graziers. It is being argued that hill farmers on the greener hills of southern Scotland should get a higher payment than the crofters and farmers on the browner hills of the north – that same perverse logic about production. But furthermore, rather than suggest a small percentage is taken from the grain and intensive grass farmers' ten-fold higher payments, it is declared that an uplift to the

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## Doing better – the proposal to dissolve the Crofting Commission

**I**N DECEMBER last year Brian Pack handed the government an interim report called *Doing Better* which seeks to improve the effectiveness of, and reduce costs in, the government's administration of rural affairs and environment.

At the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Crofting (CPGoC) in January, a question was raised on the implications for crofting of Mr Pack's report. Unfortunately Mr Pack has been unable to attend the two subsequent meetings to inform upon the question.

As regards the crofting interest, the *Doing Better* report proposes amalgamating the Crofting Commission (CC) with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Division (SGRPID). This proposal raises a number of issues regarding the analysis on which it is

based and on the understanding of crofting governance that underlies it.

For instance, the *Doing Better* report neither acknowledges the multi-agency nature of crofting governance nor outlines the particular roles and responsibilities of each agency involved. Questions about whether, in the interests of improving the financial administration of rural affairs, it is the functions of the CC that need to be amalgamated – or whether the relevant functions in fact belong to other bodies – are left unasked and unanswered. The facts that 1: the relevant grant and loan awarding functions for crofting already lie within SGRPID rather than within the CC; 2: the responsibility for holding croft boundary information lies with Registers of Scotland (RoS) rather than the CC; and 3: the

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## Message from the chair...

Derek Flynn



**A**S WE APPROACH another annual general meeting, it is right that we at SCF have undertaken some self-examination.

This is important, for we must be constantly striving to deliver the best service for our members and to provide full value for their membership dues. This issue of *The Crofter* will give some indication of the activities we undertake on behalf of our members and the extent of the brief we have set ourselves. It is a daunting task. You are invited

to participate.

Crofters must themselves be alert to what is happening locally and what is taking place nationally. Membership of SCF is a major step in keeping in touch with recent developments.

That crofting law is too complicated is a constant complaint. SCF is presently active in having problems resolved. We have endorsed recommendations to reduce the amount of bureaucracy which crofting legislation imposes on crofters and landlords. We are supportive of the efforts of the Crofting Commission in their role as regulators of a more transparent system.

The Shucksmith Report of 2008 urged new legislation to replace, simplify and clarify the accumulated laws which set the framework for crofting today. We concur, but meanwhile we are working with the Crofting Law Group to deal with the law as it currently stands, for that is what

affects our members.

We also agree with the Shucksmith Report that no change should be made to those rights given to individual crofters in the 1886 Crofters Act, namely security of tenure, succession, fair rents and the value of their improvements. However, these rights should only be enjoyed by those resident on or near their croft and using the land beneficially. We also acknowledge that crofters who own their own land must abide by similar rules.

But crofters themselves can do more to make crofting stronger. Not just by being members of, and continuing to support, SCF.

Writing a will is one way of dealing with the future of a croft. But whether or not the crofter leaves a will, unless the crofter has registered his boundaries, it will fall on the person who succeeds to a croft to do so. It is for that successor to know his boundaries and his grazing

rights. I know from personal experience that it is not easy for croft boundaries to be identified.

What should an individual crofter do to make his successor more secure? He should be able to identify his land on a map for his own use and for his successor. That is simple common sense, even if it is not easily done. But it can be done and need not involve great expense.

Recently, I highlighted this need to map and to measure all the land we occupy in crofting. These are basic elements necessary when dealing with officialdom but without this information, crofters themselves are at risk of not being taken seriously. It has become clear that only the crofters on the land can provide this information.

Nonetheless, it is going to need more than boundary maps to protect the future of crofting.

**Crofting needs the  
Scottish Crofting Federation.**

## Crofting law sump Multiple ownership problems

**P**ROBLEMS IN THE existing legislation which are causing difficulties for crofters, landlords and others are to be brought to the attention of the Scottish Government.

Last September, the Crofting Law Group (CLG) announced details of its Crofting Law Sump, which has been set up to assist the government in this process. The purpose of the sump is to gather together the issues causing problems within existing crofting legislation – and there are many.

These issues were to be discussed at CLG meeting on 30 May in Inverness. The sump is being administered by retired crofting lawyer Derek Flynn (presently chair of the SCF board) and Keith Graham (formerly principal clerk of the Scottish Land Court). After allowing interested parties the opportunity to raise and consider the issues identified, Derek and Keith will prioritise them on behalf of the CLG and indicate how they might be resolved.

Derek explained, "The sump is meant for existing problems. We are not aiming to change the present system, just to make it work better. In 2008, the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting recommended new legislation to replace, simplify and clarify the accumulated laws which set the framework for crofting today. That may also be the CLG's view."

A final report will be made available to the Scottish Government after the CLG's annual conference in October.

*Problems have recently been experienced by persons who have acquired the ownership of part of a croft when the whole croft is in multiple ownership. This article seeks to explain the difficulties that have arisen and why. It is not intended as legal advice.*

**C**ROFTING LAW has been providing security to crofters and their crofts since 1886. This has meant that the rights of landlords of crofts, for good reasons, are strictly controlled by the crofting acts. Despite recent reforms, these controls remain firmly in place.

Anyone who acquires ownership of part of a croft might therefore find their rights severely curtailed. If they have acquired only the rights of the landlord in their part of the croft, they may not even have the right to occupy the land they have acquired.

However, where a croft is vacant the landlord can apply to the Crofting Commission to let the croft or to decroft the croft in whole or in part. But problems arise where an application is submitted by only one of the

croft owners when the croft is held in multiple separate ownership parcels. The Commission has sought to make its position clear.

Since their board meeting on 14 December 2012 the commissioners have, following legal advice, adopted a policy that all decrofting and letting applications in respect of crofts with multiple owners must be submitted by all the owners, in their capacity collectively as the 'landlord' of the croft, even in those cases where the application relates to a part of the croft held in title by only one of their number.

Now, when such an application is received from one of the owners of a croft held in multiple ownership, that application will be considered invalid and returned to the applicant on the basis that the application has not been submitted, as required, by the landlord of the croft.

Despite the matter being placed in the crofting law sump, there may be no simple solution available to those who acquire, unwittingly or otherwise, only part of the rights of a landlord in a croft.



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## Alice through the looking-glass model for direct payments

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southern uplands should be paid for by a reduction in payments to the extensive systems of the north.

So to take our eye off the fact that 61% of Scottish agricultural land will only get 15% of the total budget anyway, it seems that the Scottish Government is willing to entertain the idea being put forward by the production lobby for splitting the rough grazing into two and giving an uplift in payment rates to the better quality sector at the expense of the extensive sector – for example common grazings.

In other words, large areas of extensive grazing would remain at very low rates. It was suggested by the NFUS, in their evidence to the Scottish Parliament rural affairs committee, that payments should start at 15 euros per Ha.

The other part of this unexpected suggestion is to use coupled (ie headage) payments to provide a production-based uplift to the farms on better land. There seemed to be the assumption that this would get past the European Commission; but it now looks like the EC is putting the brakes on how much of the budget can be used for such payments. No surprise really that the EC would not be happy with increased headage payments when the over-all ethos since 2003 has been to move away from a coupled system, away from production subsidies which have been outlawed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

So extensive graziers should pay a large percentage of the small share of the budget they get to the more intensive graziers – instead of the more privileged region paying a small percentage of their much higher payments?

The justification given is that the agro-industrialists are set to lose a higher percentage overall as the system gradually moves to being area-based, instead of headage-based.

So what?

They start off with much higher-producing land, closer to the markets that can give them higher rewards and then complain that getting ten times higher payments of public money than those in the rough grazing areas isn't enough for them to help out their colleagues on the southern hills.

How this inequitable position is being justified, on the basis that payments of public money must be linked to production and squares with the WTO, I have no idea.

*Patrick Krause  
SCF chief executive*

## Doing better – the proposal to dissolve the Crofting Commission

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development of crofting as part of the broader rural development processes is now a function of Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) rather than the CC, were ignored. Neither was the fact mentioned that the CC now has an essentially regulatory function only.

The logic of the interim report's amalgamation proposal is also out of kilter with the Scottish Government's proposals on SRDP delivery, which were provided for the January meeting of the CPGOC. The proposals demonstrate that the government envisages that only three of the four bodies proposed for amalgamation by Mr Pack (namely SGRPID, SNH, FCS) will be involved in the Rural Regional Delivery Partnership which will distribute CAP funds. While this model may provide an argument for the amalgamation of these three bodies, there is nothing in it to suggest the CC should be involved.

There are two further, broader reasons for concern with this proposed amalgamation. This regards the constitution of the CC itself and the connection between Mr Pack's

proposals and the government's pre-existing policy position on crofting and the CC.

According to a Scottish Government statement made on commencement of the second part of the 2010 Crofting Act, the changes to the constitution of the CC made in that act were intended to "change a failing system" and give the CC greater authority to maintain the distinctive aspects of crofting tenure which would help make crofting "a model for sustainable development". How does Mr Pack's proposal relate to and address the government's agenda here?

Secondly, as the CC is now constituted as a majority crofter-elected body – unlike the SNH and FCS boards which are still wholly appointed by government – it will be important for Mr Pack to demonstrate how the new amalgamated organisation will respect this important principle of democratisation that has been introduced within the CC.

Does he wish to propose, for instance, that those who carry responsibility within the new body for the functions currently exercised by SNH and FCS should also be democratically elected?



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## Our man in Europe

Norman Leask

**A**S ONE OF the coordinating committee of the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC), I was sitting in the Romanian Parliament preparing to defend small-scale and extensive livestock production to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, when a person close by said "You used to be a thorn in the flesh of my former bosses at NFUS". Praise indeed.

I continue membership of NFUS to allow me to stand up for their members in the Highlands and Islands, which is necessary every time there is a decision to be made as to whether support should be given to their members in the uplands of Scotland or their members in the more affluent areas.

There were no representatives from the UK sharing our discussions in this Year of Family Farming, although EU states were well represented. Delegates from Spain and Belgium were interested in our forthcoming referendum. Depending on what side of the argument they were on in their own country, they were either concerned or delighted as both countries have areas that wish also to become independent.

In Norway, at the ECVC general assembly (really an extended AGM), it was explained how Norway cares for its people in the periphery, properly funding poor and less-accessible land to make family farming viable. They accepted all EU legislation but as they were not dependant on drawing back money from Brussels which they had already given to Brussels, their cross-compliance was local and more tailored to local needs.

Norway has no sea eagle problems, as they had attended properly to their fishing stocks. So these beautiful birds live on their natural food, not lambs etc as in areas where they have been reintroduced without appropriate food availability being considered.

At a conference on the global agenda for sustainable livestock in Paris, we were told by some pressure groups that livestock are a waste of the world's resources, as they live on cereals that humans could eat. A colleague from the foothills of the Alps and I explained that vast areas of Europe could not grow cereals, but were very able to produce an extremely good human food by using livestock to convert rough pasture into red and white meat.

One chap, a big-business representative, explained how in his view traditional hens are a



Norman at the Romanian Parliament

waste of time. His company has developed a breed that lays an egg almost every day for many, many months. However, he admitted that they only bought eggs from these hens and if anybody tried to cross-breed them they would be sued, as they were patented.

At the beef-meat advisory group meeting in Brussels, the Directorate General for Trade had been invited to explain how the free-trade negotiations were proceeding, but they declined. Their refusal to attend shows how little they respect livestock production. Somebody from the EC presented a paper on cloning. When she and other EC representatives opened the floor to questions, we enquired if cloning and the offspring of clones was on the table at the global trade negotiations. They admitted that if the EU wished it to be discussed, nations such as the USA would walk away immediately – so they chose to ignore the issue.

Growth hormones, precautionary antibiotics, genetic modifications and insisting on traceability where no traceability exists at the moment were also not on the table. Why should all EU producers be under such stringent rules? After all, producers from outwith the EU can produce food under no restrictions or checks to the produce before they are presented for human consumption within the EU. The EC's concern for the health of EU citizens is questionable, yet they continue to resist any minor alterations to electronic tagging which has no human health or traceability issues. What is the true price for EU citizens' health; just to be known as a free-trade area?

The EC has burdened farming with impractical regulations that are driving older people from the hills – and hindering young people from committing to the hills – such as insisting on electronic tagging when animals

are on the farm of birth.

A group of us from SCF, led by Derek, had a very interesting meeting with cabinet secretary Richard Lochhead in Edinburgh. He appears to care about all agriculture in Scotland and he and his officials probably would like to be fair to us in the Highlands and Islands, but they have pressures from other organisations. We will know how committed the Scottish Government is when we see the new LFASS and whether there is a realistic scheme for the Highlands and Islands. I know what is possible because I was at the negotiations in Brussels.

I am very concerned that the British Government showed its lack of care for Scottish agriculture in its resistance to discuss the EU rebate. Nothing has been done in the recent CAP negotiations to help, so it would appear that we are going to be the poorest-paid farmers in the whole of Europe.



Norman addressing the ECVC general assembly in Norway



# The Cross Party Group on Crofting

SCF is secretary to the Cross Party Group on Crofting (CPGoC) in the Scottish Parliament.

Its purpose is to discuss issues affecting crofting and to take action within the parliament or Scottish Government, primarily in the form of letters to those who make policy decisions. Instigated at SCF's recommendation at the outset of the Scottish Parliament, this is a very powerful means of informing government and influencing policy.

The group is convened by Jamie McGrigor MSP and deputy convenors are Jean Urquhart MSP and Rhoda Grant MSP. Other MSPs in the group are: Angus MacDonald, Claire Baker, David Thompson, David Stewart, John Finnie, Liam McArthur, Mary Scanlon, Rob Gibson and Tavish Scott.

In the past year the topics covered have included:

- control of wild geese
- targeting of SRDP spend
- CAP/SRDP reform 2014
- Crofting Reform 2010 Act implementation
- affordable housing on croft land
- crofting development
- consolidation of the crofting acts
- the Torridon planning decision
- the Crofting Register
- the Crofting Legislation Sump
- historic environment and crofting
- duty to report
- sea eagles

Standing items on the agenda are progress regarding crofting law (including the sump and consolidation of acts), crofting development and CAP reform.



Scottish Parliament

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## Progress made with SCF goose petition

**R**EADERS WILL recall that we put in a petition to the Scottish Parliament last August "Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to address the problems created by increasing populations of wild geese in the crofting areas as a matter of priority; reassess its decision to stop funding existing goose management programmes; and assign additional resources to crop protection and adaptive management programmes to ensure this threat to the future of crofting is averted".

After 429 people signed it and registered their comments, SCF defended it in front of the Petitions Committee who took the unusual step of referring it directly to the Rural Affairs, Climate Control and Environment (RACCE) Committee. This committee took evidence from many organisations including the Crofting Commission, RSPB, local authorities and SNH.

Having read these responses, it is gratifying to note that our petition seems to have widespread support and that it is acknowledged that geese, particularly greylag, are a serious threat to crofting and to some of the world's most-valued and

unique ecosystems.

However, the Scottish Government response does not bring comfort and does not lay out a tangible approach to the problem. In particular, the lack of funding for control programmes having been at the root of the escalation of numbers, there is still no pledge to commit adequate funds to this problem. It is estimated by those with far greater expertise than SCF that it would take £75,000 per year for the next three to five years to hope to bring the Greylag

population in the Uists under control. The Scottish Government suggestion falls far short of this at a potential £40,000 per year.

We are also concerned with the approach being taken. The Machair Life project in the Uists was very successful, according to evaluation, but it will not be funded to continue and Scottish Government has nothing in place to replace it; indeed the overall budget apparently falls short of what is needed because it is deemed that the work done by Machair Life is no longer necessary.

The petition is still live and under consideration of the RACCE committee, who will take further evidence before making recommendations.

There has been a suggestion to place goose management under a competitive SRDP scheme. We do not agree with this. It is a national problem that needs to be addressed by the Scottish Government as a matter of urgency in order to avoid catastrophic results for remote populations and internationally-valued environments.



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The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Bliadhna air adhart – ag obair le cheile

## One year on – working together

Catriona MacLean, CEO of the Crofting Commission, reports

**W**ELL, I'M NOT SURE where the last year has gone.

It's been a busy and enjoyable one but it is hard to believe I have been chief executive of the Commission for a year.

So what's been happening over the last year? We had a lot of housekeeping or internal systems to update, but one of the main areas which might interest crofters was establishing short-term working groups. One group was set up to review our policy and procedures, to ensure they are robust, meaningful and relevant for crofting and make it easier for crofters and their agents to understand how regulation of crofting works.

With our policy and procedures brought up to date we were in a position to revise our policy plan and are now finalising a corporate plan. Many may think "So what?" But having a corporate plan in place is not only essential for the Commission itself but it also allows crofters, partner organisations and others to see what our priorities are for the next three years. I think that level of clarity and openness is essential for creating strong foundations,

if we are to be a first-class regulatory body.

Another working group looked at how to improve our services to crofters, including updating our application forms and guidance to incorporate changes in the legislation. We are working on introducing a new system which will ultimately mean we can receive and process applications electronically and improve efficiency.

Our complaints procedure has also been modernised to ensure that when things go wrong, as they sometimes do, it is straightforward for the complainant to let us know. That way we can respond to and monitor issues so short-falls can be readily identified and resolved.

There has been a lot of activity with the introduction of croft registration. The Commission has been working with Registers of Scotland to embed this process – which is new to crofters, agents, the Commission and Registers of Scotland – and unfortunately there are still teething problems to sort out, but we are getting there.

We are also working on how best to ensure crofters understand the requirements of the annual notice and the duty to report compulsory requirements, which are laid down in the 2010 Act and which the Commission

must administer. The annual notice will come first. It will be issued to every crofter and owner-occupier crofter later this year asking them to provide information on their crofting activity, but we will be starting a publicity campaign soon to help recipients with the process.

Grazings committees have a duty to report once every five years and we will be issuing a form for them to complete late 2014, early 2015. We recently carried out a consultation on the duty to report, which included the form that will be used, to various people and all grazing committees. We are currently analysing the responses to that consultation and hope to publish the results shortly; but we were pleased that 53 (50%) of all grazing committees who submitted a response didn't find it a problem as they filled in the form!

The annual notice and duty to report will increase information gathered from crofters, owner-occupier crofters and grazing committees, enabling us to work together, to highlight crofting issues to ministers and the Scottish Parliament. It will let us make the case for crofting and show its value to Scotland as a whole and the threats which are facing it.

One of the strengths of the crofting system is the fact that



crofters have a broad range of interests and activities and we should not forget that much of the landscape of the highlands and islands was formed by generations of crofters breaking in hard and grudging ground in order to provide food for both man and beast. Nor should we underestimate the importance of the crofting system to rural communities. So the Commission must get it right, but we believe that working together we can create a Commission that is modern, relevant and makes a real difference to crofting and the people of Scotland.

I know we still have a way to go to be a first class regulator but be assured I am committed to ensuring we get there.

## Comhairle nan Eilean voices concern on duty to report

**T**HE VICE-CHAIR of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's sustainable development committee has called on the Scottish Government to set aside the duty on grazings committees to report unworked crofts under new crofting legislation.

In a letter to Paul Wheelhouse MSP, minister for environment and climate change, Councillor Donald Crichton stated: "I am very concerned in regard to the main substantive change proposed: the introduction of the duty to report falling on crofters. In Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's response to the 2012 consultation document, and previously in the Comhairle's response to the final consultation on the 2010 Act itself, the Comhairle strongly advised against the introduction of the duty to report. Elected members were opposed to the proposed

new duties falling on both common grazings committees and on individual crofters.

"In the Comhairle's response to the Commission's initial plan (2012) consultation, the Comhairle highlighted the fact that a third of common grazings committees were out of office at that time and was highly concerned that the proposals would discourage active participation in grazings committees. Unfortunately, and as predicted, that scenario has now materialised, with reportedly almost half of committees now out of office. This is a serious impediment to the effective regulation of crofting and has to be addressed if the Commission is to succeed in its stated aim of more effectively regulating crofting.

"Given the current lack of engagement or desire by crofters to become involved with regulating other crofters, I believe

it is now essential that the Scottish Government instructs the Crofting Commission to set aside the duty to report falling on common grazings committees and on individual crofters. In the present circumstances, proceeding with that element of the act would

be reckless and would have the serious consequence of setting crofter against crofter and friend against friend.

"At the very least the Scottish Government should postpone this element of the act to allow a detailed rethink and review."



Scottish Crofting Federation

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



## SCOTTISH CROFTING ENTERPRISE

### Enterprising crofters showcase their goods

**R**ECENTLY, the Scottish Crofting Federation launched its new website [www.scottishcroftingenterprise.co.uk](http://www.scottishcroftingenterprise.co.uk) – which showcases food, crafts and holidays available from crofts throughout the Highlands and Islands.

Patrick Krause said “We are proud of the range and quality of produce from our members’ crofts and believe it should be better known. This website enables consumers to get in contact directly with crofters who are producing high-quality, sustainably-produced food and crafts and our members get an opportunity to add value to what they are producing.

In addition, we are highlighting crofts which provide holiday accommodation so that holiday-makers can stay on a genuine working croft and, if they want, learn about the crofting way of life and why it is still relevant.”

Russell Smith, a crofter from Sutherland who helped set up the website, said “People who buy croft produce or stay on a croft in the scheme are not only getting a top-quality product but are also helping to support a way of life that has proved successful in retaining population in some of the most scenic and remote areas of the country.

“Crofting also helps to maintain the landscape through its low-impact farming methods and preserves much that is good in the culture and heritage of the Highlands and Islands. Visitors can be a part of that.”

The scheme includes producers of meat and other food stuffs, crafts and holiday accommodation. All crofts in the scheme work to high welfare standards and espouse the aims of good environmental management. The holiday accommodation is run by the people who live on and work the croft. The produce advertised ranges includes rare-breed mutton and lamb, pork, beef, vegetables, eggs and knitwear. These can be ordered for delivery or visits can be arranged as part of a holiday.

To date there are 64 entries on the website and, already, we need to further split the holiday accommodation pages as they are getting too long. But we always need more entries as this is a good and low-cost way of promoting your own business.

Jamie McGrigor MSP lodged a motion in the Scottish Parliament welcoming the launch of the website and commending the efforts of the crofters involved. The motion encourages many more crofters to use the website to promote their businesses.



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Culkein cottage



## SCOTTISH CROFTING ENTERPRISE

## Fresh from the croft

*Clive and Marianne Ward who croft in Sutherland explain how the SCF's croft produce scheme has helped them market their croft produce.*

**F**RESH FROM THE CROFT came from a passion to have local top-quality produce on our own dining table and the desire to make maximum use of Marianne's croft.

It was also a therapeutic way for Clive to return to work after a life-changing accident at sea in 2010. Our original idea was to produce a selection of meat and poultry for our own use and to grow our own vegetables. We started out with a small flock of chickens and a couple of pigs then added Daisy and Biscuit, our goats, to provide us with a supply of milk and cheese.

We soon found out that there was a demand for home-reared local produce when people started to approach us and

ask if we would supply them with a selection of the items we produced on the croft, including Clive's other passion: real bread and baked goods. After talking to another crofter, we secured a supply of local soft fruit to produce jams.

From that point it was a short step to attending our local craft and produce fair in Elphin and, discovering that the products we produce are in high demand, we also managed in fairly short order to land Grosvenor Estate in Sutherland as a customer for our pork and eggs. At this stage we made the highly significant decision to join the Scottish Crofting Produce Mark Scheme. This has already paid dividends for us as late last year we were approached by a chef from a London venue to supply goat and lamb and we are currently in the final stages of signing contracts with them for supply for year 2014/15.



We are now in our second year of trading. Thanks to Marianne's parents we have access to another family croft, where we have planted potatoes and are adding other root vegetables as well as having more land for our expanding flock of Boreray sheep, as the home croft is now taken over by our milking goat herd.

As with all new ventures it's been hard going these first years but very worth-while. Thanks to the SCF and some of the courses we have attended with them, our knowledge and ability to deliver high-quality, affordable produce continues to grow.



## Shulista croft wigwams and camping

*Adam and Sally Williams share their experiences of entering crofting and developing their croft.*

**A**FTER HOLIDAYING on Skye for several years, we had the opportunity to take over tenancy of a croft in Shulista at the very northern tip of the island.

We both gave up successful careers after getting fed up of the rat race and daily commuting, so decided to take a leap of faith. A refreshing change of direction in life, which some may look upon as crazy!

We quickly re-established a small croft flock of Cheviots, whilst working closely with the other three members of our sheep stock club on the common grazings. We had the opportunity to purchase a Texel ram, called Ringo, who we crossed with our Cheviots. Our lambs were sold at Dingwall for the first time in 2013. We also hand-reared some orphan lambs last year, which was a lot of work but an incredible experience. Our son was born in

February 2013, so it was a case of getting up in the middle of the night to feed our little "lamb", then heading out to the fields to feed our other ones! We also have three varieties of chickens which roam all over the croft. Our eggs are sold locally and carry the Scottish Crofting Produce logo.

However, we had to find a way to diversify and to look for opportunities for the croft to work harder so we might earn a living from the land in more creative ways.

Since February, after much consideration and huge support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, we began work on our lower field to create a site for our four ensuite wigwam wooden cabins. We opened on Easter weekend and so far the feedback has been excellent. It's so lovely to share this incredible location with visitors and share our stories about the croft.

In one of our other fields, we are just putting the finishing touches

to our motorhome site, which will accommodate five vehicles.

With no grants available for diversification into tourism on croft land, we have worked hard to make our dream a reality.

Life is busy, but we find it so rewarding to be working for

ourselves and to live on Skye in such a stunning location. The local support has been invaluable. We cannot begin to thank those around us who have been such a great source of help, advice and good humour.

[www.shulistacraft.co.uk](http://www.shulistacraft.co.uk)



# A Rural Parliament for Scotland

**T**HE CREATION OF a Rural Parliament for Scotland is a unique opportunity to enable a stronger, more coherent voice for Scotland's rural communities, inspired by the success of rural parliaments in other European nations.

A successful Scottish Rural Parliament must be firmly rooted in Scotland's rural communities, developed by and for the people who live and work in rural Scotland. It is supported by the Scottish Government to enable more effective engagement with Scotland's rural communities.

A rural parliament is not a formal part of government, nor is it a parliament in the sense of a legislative or decision-making body. It is a 'bottom-up' process of involvement and debate between the people of rural Scotland and policy makers to enable better understanding, improved policy and action to address rural issues.

It is a process which takes place over a two-year period, culminating in the rural parliament, which brings together all sectors of rural society to highlight rural issues and to discuss rural priorities with each other and with government. It is focused on achieving practical and policy-based outcomes relevant to the challenges and opportunities facing rural people.

These outcomes are monitored and further developed in the period between rural parliaments.

Scotland does not have a single mechanism for enabling a collective rural voice, inclusive of all interests and geographical areas. There are few opportunities for the collective interests of rural communities to be raised, debated and communicated to government. The lack of such a mechanism often results in issues being addressed sectorally or geographically, with no clear process for gaining a comprehensive, grass-roots view of rural issues.

Evidence from other parts of Europe has revealed the benefits to rural areas of their rural parliaments in achieving this. All rural communities face similar challenges and opportunities and the rural parliament will provide the opportunity for communities across Scotland to come together for mutual benefit. It is hoped that the proposed biennial gatherings of the parliament will be just one element in the growth and development of a process of increased engagement and connection between Scotland's rural communities.

The Scottish Rural Parliament aims to:

- be open to and inclusive of all who live and work in rural Scotland;
- raise awareness and understanding of the rural parliament and its potential benefits;
- gain the support and involvement of people living in rural communities in the process;
- build its agenda and themes from the bottom up;
- enable those who are not able to attend to contribute to the agenda;
- facilitate active involvement of people and communities representative of the geography, interests and characteristics of rural Scotland, showcasing their issues, achievements, skills and produce;
- develop a sense of ownership and enthusiasm for taking the process forward beyond the inaugural event into the development of a longer-term rural movement – a continuing process of engagement between Scotland's rural communities.

A seminar in May 2012 was the first opportunity for representatives from across rural Scotland to hear directly from the European Rural Parliaments and to discuss the opportunities that this initiative may present for Scotland. The event was attended by representatives from rural communities, rural networks and third-sector organisations, local and national government.

SCF is one of the many NGOs and rural

bodies which form the parliament's advisory forum. The Federation was represented by Patrick Krause at the inaugural rural parliament event in Oban last November. The event was a gathering of 400 people, with 75% from the community and 25% from other organisations, decision makers and international representatives. The engaging and involving process included plenary debates, issue-based workshops, field visits, cultural events and a marketplace of rural communities, organisations and produce.

The remit of the advisory forum is to:

- provide advice and act as a sounding board to Scottish Rural Action (set up to manage the inaugural Scottish Rural Parliament) on its implementation;
- advise on specific interests and issues related to the rural parliament;
- ensure inclusivity and a broad spread of rural interests in the rural parliament process;
- provide connection and links into the relevant interest groups and stakeholders;
- build interest and assist in disseminating and gathering information to/from rural stakeholders;
- support implementation in various ways through their own organisations and networks;
- contribute to the evaluation of the inaugural rural parliament.

If you have any views you'd like to be imparted to this new body, get in touch with SCF HQ.



© Martin Benson – Ness, Isle of Lewis

## Second round of payments made to new entrants

**P**AYMENTS totalling almost £925,000 will be paid to 640 new entrants as part of the Scottish Government's New Entrants Scheme.

In May 2013 the scheme opened to new entrants and deer farmers who were excluded from Single Farm Payments under the current EU rules. This is a one-off scheme to act as a bridge until the new CAP regulations come in effect in 2015. The second instalment of the payments should have arrived in bank accounts at the end of April. The first was in

October 2013.

Rural affairs secretary Richard Lochhead said "New entrants are the key to revitalising Scotland's agricultural sector and this Scottish Government is committed to helping them enter the industry. By introducing new talent and ideas we can build on what is already a key sector to rural Scotland and the Scottish economy as a whole. "This money is no substitute for direct support and Single Farm Payments should be accessible to new entrants. This funding does, however, act as a bridge until the new

CAP arrives and the current flawed EU policy is corrected. Clearly, this can't happen soon enough for many and we will continue to provide this additional support in the meantime rather than nothing at all."

The CAP 2014-2020 should see a better deal for new entrants with a more robust National Reserve with a number of different categories of new entrant and also an opportunity for those who have been at a specific disadvantage to receive a fairer level of entitlement.



## CROFTING CONNECTIONS

## Aspiring crofters in Argyll

*The Gàidhlig medium P6/7 class at Sandbank Primary School in Argyll has been working with Crofting Connections this year. Class teacher Catriona MacPhail tells us about the exciting work the class has done so far and their plans for the remainder of the year.*

**L**AST TERM we did some very exciting work in conjunction with Argyll Mausoleum in Kilmun on the shores of the Holy Loch

We researched what domestic lives in the last 200 years were like for local people, what their occupations were and also found out about the Campbell clan dynasty.

We took part in workshops on thatching a house, making rope from rushes and making sheep hurdles from willow. We learnt how important basket-making was for the home, fishing and farming purposes – where peat creels, pony panniers, lobster pots, quarter-crann eel traps were all made and used by local people to enable them to catch and carry the food which contributed to their healthy and very locally-produced diet.

The research led to an exhibition of our

work in the Burgh Halls, Dunoon which was open to the public for one weekend. Some of the children came along and acted as curators of our own temporary museum.

This term we are continuing the work by measuring the ruins of an abandoned crofting township which has an actual corn kiln. In spring we will be planting our heritage and modern cereal seeds (black oats, bere and modern oats and barley) supplied by Crofting Connections. We hope to join a local farmer to help with shearing so that we can learn more about sheep and wool.

Our children's experience is reflected in these quotes:

"Rinn sinn proiseact a bha gle inntinneach agus sporsail. Dh'ionnsaich sinn moran mun laithean a dh'fhalbh agus tha sinn gu math taingeal gu bheil dealan agus innealan san taighean againne nach robh acasan." P7

"Chord an obair rinn agus tha sinn a'coimhead air adhart airson barrachd rudan a dheanamh an teirm seo cuideachd." P6

*Catriona MacPhail  
P6/7 class teacher, Sandbank PS, Dunoon*



Willow workshop



Willow workshop



Making rope from rushes



Research from graves



Sheep hurdle



Cutting reeds



Thatching a model roof



## TRAINING

### Fencing in the rain



**D**ESPITE PERSISTENT wind and rain, the strained wire fencing course at Little Assynt nursery took place in early March.

The finer points of placing corner posts, attaching strainer wire, tightening using monkey chains and radishers were learnt. Coigach-Assynt Living Landscape teamed up with the Scottish Crofting Federation to deliver their practical skills level one training. Tutor Brian Denoon was excellent and encouraging.

Everyone had a go at attaching the wire,

hammering in staples, twisting the ends to finish off and attaching lashings. By the end of the day despite the very damp weather everyone was reasonably proud of their attempts at strained wire fencing.

The course gave an insight into the logistics of radishers and lashings, amongst other things, and how to use them. The students may not become full-time fencers but will now have a good idea about how to repair and maintain their own fences.

*Romany Garnett, CALL outreach officer*



Dyking course



Wool brokers



Dyking course



Fencing course

## Training courses

### Lewis

Dates still to be confirmed for:

**Polytunnel course**

**Fence erection and maintenance course**

**Drystone dyking course**

**Woodland management**

**Poultry keeping**

Contact Iain Macmillan on 01851 703103 or FBSSStornoway@sac.co.uk

### Shetland

**Sheep health and welfare, Quendale Farm: Sat 14 June**

**Grassland management with Graham Fraser of SAC; venue and date tbc**

For more information and to express your interest in other training courses, contact David Smith on david@crofting.org

### Kilmartin, Argyll

**Horticulture: Sun 22 June**

**Livestock and animal husbandry: Sat 5 July**

**Woodland management: Sat 30 August**

**Conservation environment: Fri 22 November**

**Drystone walling – TBC**

**Land pasture management – TBC**

Contact Julia or Sally on 01546 510278 or email: education@kilmartin.org

### Newtonmore

**Sheep shearing (hand shearing) and management with Peter Ross: Mon 18 August**

**Cheese and butter making with Christine MacIntyre and Glynnis Ross: Sat 6 September**

**Thatching with Peter Gibbon and Hannes Schnell: Sat 13 September**

**Fencing with Gordon Kennedy: Sat 20 September**

**Introduction to drystone dyking: Sat 25 - Sun 26 October**

Contact graham.cross@highlifehighland.com or joann.hopkins@highlifehighland.com or 01540 673 551

### Forthcoming entry level induction to crofting courses

Price £60 (£120 if employer paying) £50 for SCF members/concessions, free to under 18s and those on certain benefits.

**Newtonmore: 2-day intensive course, 22-23 August.**

Contact highland.folk@highlifehighland.com or 01540 673 551

**Kirkwall, Orkney: 2-day intensive course, 20-21 September.**

Contact edwina.lloyd@vaorkney.org.uk or 01856 872 897

**Inverness: 2-day intensive course, 17-18 October.**

Register your interest with Toni Clark on 01463 871544 or email toniclark2@gmail.com

**Shetland: 2-day intensive course, 1-2 November.**

Register your interest with David on david@crofting.org





## TRAINING

# Sustain, Diversify and Grow

**T**HIS TWO-DAY SEMINAR at Am Fasgadh, Newtonmore's Highland Folk Museum, on 13th and 14th June, is organised as part of SCF's training programme.

The museum is a very appropriate venue for a crofting event. The recently-opened state-of-the-art building brings to life the domestic and working conditions of earlier Highland people, with a large collection illustrating subsistence farming and small-scale agriculture. Restored vernacular buildings include a smoke house, school, church, clockmaker's workshop, croft house, post office, railway halt and joiner's shop.

The seminar aims to show how modern-day crofters can diversify in a number of ways which bring added value to croft produce and increase the croft income. The varied presentations cover many ways that crofters might choose to expand their crofting activities. Visits at the end of day two will show some croft-based croft operations in action.

Given the need to make the most of every opportunity to increase the viability of your croft enterprise, this is an event not to be missed. There is still time to book a place.

SCF chief executive Patrick Krause will introduce the event and pose the question:

### Why diversify?

Hazel Gordon of Food Industry (North) Development Services will look at food law, packaging, labelling, weights and measures in a presentation titled Presenting your Produce.

The role of social media in supporting your business will be introduced by Rene Looper of Tuminds Social Media.

Crofting communities working together to promote renewable energy as a means of diversification is the subject to be addressed by Jon Halle, director of Dingwall Wind Co-op. Irene Warner-MacKintosh, digital participation co-ordinator of Citizens Online, will talk about an approach to digital inclusion that can be both powerful and sustainable, giving consideration to the concept of cyber-crofting.

Marketing croft holidays effectively will be addressed by Russell Smith, SCF council member for East Sutherland and Caithness, who will share his experience of running a successful self-catering cottage and introduce SCF's new croft holidays website.

Douglas Watson will talk about marketing produce collectively. He is development manager with the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society and is the national

development officer for farmers' markets.

Care farming promotes mental and physical health through giving people the opportunity to spend time working on the land. Toni Clark suggests how this can be a diversification opportunity.

The history of the Highland Folk Museum and how it has developed will be explained by museum operations manager Graham Cross.

Graham, along with SCF training managers Lucy Beattie and Tina Hartley, will take participants to view and possibly have some hands-on experience of three croft-based crafts.

Graham commented: "We are very excited to be starting what we hope will be a long and fruitful partnership with the Crofting Federation and we feel that we are an excellent fit. We have a working croft here and now we have the educational facilities to complement it, along of course with a huge collection of artefacts and literature illustrating the development and importance of crofting to the Highlands."

The event will conclude with a question and answer session.

Places are still available, so don't delay, get in touch with SCF HQ to book your place now.



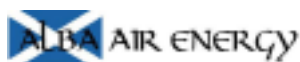
Am Fasgadh – Highland Folk Museum's brand new museum, store and educational facility at Newtonmore



Dairy equipment from times gone by – still useful on a croft



At work on the museum croft



## Renewable Heat Incentive is here (RHI)

From April 2014 RHI is available to householders who install an air to water heating system. This world first scheme encourages the use of renewable energy in the home. The domestic RHI is designed to give a large financial incentive to people who install renewable energy technology in their homes. RHI is paid every three months into your bank account for a period of seven years. For air to water heat pumps the amount is 7.3p per kilowatt produced from the heat pump. Full details on how to claim RHI and who is eligible are available on request.

Recently added to our portfolio is the Panasonic range of Aquarea air to water heat pumps, delivering a full heating and hot water solution for the home. Enjoy great savings on your total energy bill. The Panasonic range is fully accredited to deliver RHI.

**Commercial RHI** will come into effect this year and is retrospective – the payment amount for air to water heat pumps will be 2.5p for a period of 20 years based on the number of kilowatts of energy produced. Available on any commercial property, farm buildings, commercial B&Bs, church buildings, community halls, shops and office premises.

**Air to Air Heat Pumps** Supplying this highly successful heating system across the Highlands remains the cornerstone of our business. Using air source heat pump technology eliminates the need for expensive ground works as the units are self-contained. Installation typically takes less than a day to complete, with minimal disruption to the property. All at an affordable cost of around £3,200 including installation (+VAT rated at 5%). The good news is that energy savings can be as high as 80%. Alba is currently working on projects in all areas of Scotland. Please ask for a FREE survey. Installation references are available on request.

For further information, contact Bill Hall  
on 01320 366 808  
or email [bill@albaairenergy.co.uk](mailto:bill@albaairenergy.co.uk)  
[www.albaairenergy.co.uk](http://www.albaairenergy.co.uk)

# inksters

Inksters can provide you with specialist advice on all aspects of crofting law throughout the Crofting Counties from our offices in Inverness and Glasgow.



Glasgow  
Brian Inkster  
Solicitor + Notary Public  
0141 229 0880  
[brian@inksters.com](mailto:brian@inksters.com)



Inverness  
Eilidh Ross  
Solicitor + Notary Public  
01463 210 333  
[eilidh@inksters.com](mailto:eilidh@inksters.com)

[croftinglaw.com](http://croftinglaw.com)

SAC Agricultural & Conservation Consultants combine local knowledge with extensive experience and are supported by our team of renowned specialists. We can assist crofters with business advice on a range of topics to improve profitability including:



- Agricultural and rural business advice
- Enterprise planning
- Comprehensive assistance with IACS, LMO, RP, CHGS and CCAGS (agricultural buildings, hard standings, drainage, grassland improvement, handling equipment, fences and access tracks are examples of eligible expenditure under CCAGS)
- Completion of Assignations, Decrofting and Sublet applications
- GPS croft maps for Crofting Commission or SGRPID
- Operational Needs Assessment to support planning applications
- Livestock record keeping and pre-inspection checks
- Grassland and crop advice including soil analysis, fertiliser and reseed
- Livestock feed analysis, rationing and animal health planning
- Horticultural advice
- Agri-environment advice
- Forestry scheme implementation and management
- Diversification opportunities
- Marketing advice
- Renewable energy feasibility studies including wood fuel heating systems

### Contact your local SAC office:

Balivanich 01870 602336  
Campbeltown 01586 552502  
Inverness 01463 233266  
Kirkwall 01856 872698  
Lerwick 01595 693520  
Oban 01631 563093  
Portree 01478 612993  
Stornoway 01851 703103  
Thurso 01847 892602

*Leading the way in Agriculture and Rural Research, Education and Consulting*



## ON THE CROFT

## New stock clubs – opportunities for young crofters?

*"We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations." Charles R Swindoll*

**I**MAGINE A YOUNG 25-year-old man named James who decides he would like to get started in crofting.

He has the skills to become a very successful crofter who could contribute significantly to his local community, representing a potential new generation of crofters. But, all is not as rosy at it may seem. The barriers he will face are so significant that he might end up giving up entirely before he has even started.

Firstly, he will likely struggle to find croft ground, either through assignation or sub-let. It can even be difficult to find seasonal grazing although crofts are unused. The second challenge he will face is to find start-up capital so that he can purchase stock and invest in equipment.

From a social perspective, many townships have few active crofters now, reducing the opportunities for informal learning or mentoring. Not to mention that the lack of like-minded peers can be isolating and difficult,

especially when problems occur.

Even if James manages to overcome the initial challenges of getting started, he will also have to cope with the challenges that all crofters face now, such as low profitability of livestock enterprises. Moreover, the challenges of combining crofting with other paid employment can be very difficult for a young person starting out both in crofting and their career. The uncertainty created by this year's CAP reform could seem like the final nail in the coffin for the next generation of crofters.

However, this seemingly impossible situation could create the opportunity to consider new models that would support a new generation of aspiring crofters like James and make better use of the croft inbye land and common shares.

In fact, the indications are that the new CAP reform will create opportunities for both young crofters (under 40) and new entrants, through a form of national reserve. There has also been an increased emphasis on collaboration in rural development policy. Bearing all this in mind, now could be the time to think

about setting up new generation stock-clubs.

#### Proposed model

All members of the club would be under 40, allowing them to access young farmers' funding under EU schemes, (basic payment scheme support and access to capital funding). The group would also be eligible for 60% CCAGS assistance. The new generation stock-club would lease ground through a variety of seasonal leases or sublets of croft inbye and common grazings shares. Each club would have mentors to help with different aspects of flock management and marketing.

The purchase of the club's stock could be partly funded through a model of community-supported agriculture, similar to crowd-funding. Funders could be rewarded with updates on the club's progress and creative gifts such as a cut of Easter hogget or Christmas mutton. If the club invested in cattle, steaks and mince could be offered.

This model would have several benefits for the crofting counties. Firstly, it would help bring unused crofts back into use, especially if the Crofting Commission

supported it as a short-term response to absentee crofters who intend to return in a few years. Secondly, it would give young crofters an opportunity to understand animal management and the business side of crofting with access to mentors.

The pooling of risk would also be a benefit, especially at times when credit from banks is difficult for young people to access. In addition, members would get valuable skills and connections to use in their own future crofting enterprises or enrich existing stock clubs. If successful, they could also help mentor future generations of the stock club. The crowd-funders would benefit by feeling connected to crofting agriculture and enjoy some great produce whilst supporting young people.

Our current sheep-stock clubs evolved to meet the needs of previous generations. Can we devise new structures that will meet this generation's needs?

If this is of interest, please contact [janette.sutherland@sac.co.uk](mailto:janette.sutherland@sac.co.uk) to discuss possibilities of funding such as LEADER when it becomes available.

*Janette Sutherland, SAC*



Common grazings

© Ross MacKenzie, SAC Portree – Glendale, Isle of Skye

## Cow and calf reunited

*I had a day-old calf in the byre one night in early spring as the weather was bitter cold and snowy, writes Joe Curran.*

**T**HE MOTHER COW refused point blank to go in so I left the door ajar so as she could see the calf and retired for the night. In the morning, still dark, dogs barking had me

looking out of the kitchen window. There was the cow in the back garden looking back at me. She had jumped two fences to get where she was. She followed me back to the byre, I freed the calf from its snug pen, the cow mooed, the calf mooed and promptly ran out of the door to join its mother.



## ON THE CROFT

# Healthy produce from the croft

*June already, and it's a slightly in-between time for the crofting horticulturist, as it is for other crofting activities, so maybe an odd time to start a regular column in The Crofter on the subject of fruit and vegetable growing on the croft, writes SCF's Donald Murdie in the first of a new series.*

**I**N EACH ISSUE I will try to give a seasonal update based on our growing experiences on a good, volcanic-basalt-based soil in a relatively sheltered location in the north of Skye. What I hope to avoid is a gardening column. A crofter once said to me, "Horticulture? That's just a hobby. It's nothing to do with crofting." Well, if crofting is anything to do with food production, horticulture will always be a part of that – as it was for earlier generations of crofters. I will endeavour to write about growing a variety of fresh, healthy produce on the croft for the family, friends and neighbours, and the wider community, doing so with the techniques and equipment now available to crofters and hopefully boosting the income of the croft as well.

Anyway, as I've said, it's an in-between time in that our major crops are planted out or at least at seedling stage. Tomatoes are established, growing in the soil of one of our two polytunnels which has been prepared over the winter with a good dose of fresh seaweed incorporated; likewise cucumbers and courgettes. The tomatoes in particular need an early start, sown in early February on a south-facing windowsill. Cabbage, sprouts, broccoli and also leeks were started four to six weeks ago in trays in a polytunnel and are



Asparagus



Tomatoes planted out in polytunnels

hardening off in a cold frame to be planted out anytime now.

We are held back slightly from this as the torrential rain of the winter and spring kept us off our outside cropping ground for many weeks, even though our soil is very free-draining. However, early potatoes are now well through the ground and carrots and beetroot, sown a month ago, are showing well and will very soon need to be laboriously weeded by hand. Peas are climbing well on their supports made of old Rylock fencing and have already set some pods, as have the broad beans. Inside one of the tunnels, the overwintered garlic crop has been lifted and is drying off.

Two crops are currently in production: strawberries and asparagus, both polytunnel grown. The outdoor strawberries will produce about a month later and the raspberries, in a sheltered place in a fruit cage, will start a couple of weeks after that. Asparagus can be cropped up to the solstice and must then be left to grow the tall ferns that will produce the plants' energy and nutrition for next year.

What to do now? It's not too late to sow carrots; and any spare ground can be used for quick-growing salad crops.

Finally, here's a thought. If you'd planted early potatoes inside a polytunnel at the beginning of March, you could be eating them now. Worth thinking about for next year, especially if you've invested in a large polytunnel and want to see a quick return.

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

## Island biosecurity scheme: working together to protect livestock health and welfare

**S**CIENTISTS FROM Moredun Research Institute visited the Shetland Islands in March to learn about farming in this remote part of Scotland and what lessons can be drawn in livestock disease prevention from this island community.

Shetland has been very progressive in the prevention and control of livestock disease and there is much we can learn from their example of the community working in collaboration to achieve a high-health status for their livestock, resulting in significant economic and welfare benefits.

Hilary Burgess and Lyall Halcrow, who work for Shetland Island Council, outlined the system used to protect livestock on the islands. Shetland has one point of entry for importing livestock which is the port at Lerwick. When animals arrive they are blood-sampled and in the case of cattle, are tested for BVDV and Johnes. Sheep are tested for Maedi Visna, Caseous Lymphadenitis (CLA) and enzootic abortion. Livestock are also treated to help prevent sheep scab and gastrointestinal worms. Imported livestock are then quarantined on farms for a couple

of weeks until the test results come back and the vets can work together with the farmers to decide on any further action required. This scheme is subsidised by the Shetland Island Council using revenue from the oil industry.

Shetland farmers and crofters see huge benefits from the health scheme, where the prevention of disease results in substantial economic and welfare benefits compared to the costs of treating. BVDV has been eradicated from Shetland since the early 1990s and livestock on the islands are also free from Maedi Visna, sheep scab and enzootic abortion. The islanders are currently working on a control programme for Johnes which involves a test and cull approach combined with herd management schemes. Hilary is convinced that the success of the scheme is due to the good collaboration between the farmers and the vets, the port authorities and Shetland Island Council – all working towards common goals.

They also recognised that the success of any biosecurity scheme relies on the application of sensitive and specific diagnostic tests and the strategic use of vaccination to

prevent disease. They were very interested to hear more about Moredun's research programme to develop new and effective diagnostics and vaccines.

This highly-effective livestock health scheme is a great example of the real benefits that can be achieved from effective disease prevention and is the envy of many on the mainland.

*For further information about the work being conducted at Moredun Research Institute visit [www.moredun.org.uk](http://www.moredun.org.uk).*



Shetland north west coastline



## ON THE CROFT

## Keeping it correct

SCF's agriculture working group chair Joyce Wilkinson considers the importance of conformation and type

**A**S ACTIVE CROFTERS the bulk of us produce store calves and lambs to be sold in the autumn for fattening on further east and south, looking to get a good price to make the crofting job viable.

With competition from other beef-producing countries in the EU like Eire and Poland, it is important to do our bit for the Scottish quality beef label by making sure we sell healthy, well-shaped stock that can finish cost-effectively for the finisher and butcher/supermarket. As a guide to how conformation and type can affect the efficiency of the carcass, I asked Iain Anderson, butcher and plant manager at Mull Abattoir, a few questions about the side of things we rarely deal with unless we finish animals ourselves.

**How does a high-grade/high-**

**finishing percentage carcass translate into how an animal looks on the ground?**

Grading of livestock is a very specialised job and takes lots of experience, both on the farm and in the abattoir. If you judge animals live, you really need to see them dead too to make sure you are making the correct on-farm decision. Good butchers want to maximise the profit by having more meat to bone. Bones are a total loss and proportionally cost more to remove from small breeds or small carcasses.

Continentalers have been favoured by catering butchers due to size, as price is per kg either live or dead. They produce more saleable meat, ie less fat, although this can impact on the taste and quality. It depends what the market is, retail or catering.

**How does all the extreme muscling in Limousins and Belgian blues convert into meat? Do you get more on the carcass then for the size, and how would you get more of the expensive**

**cuts like fillet and ribeye?**

Yes, extra muscling is all lean meat, hence money and better meat-to-bone ratio. You see the same in sheep with Beltex and Texels. With fillet and ribeye there is only a small percentage of each in each animal, whether big or small, and there is no way of increasing it, only the size of fillet and sirloin – but the bigger the animal, the more fillet and ribeye. Small breeds and small carcasses are things the butcher wants to avoid. The bottom line is profit; it matters to all businesses.

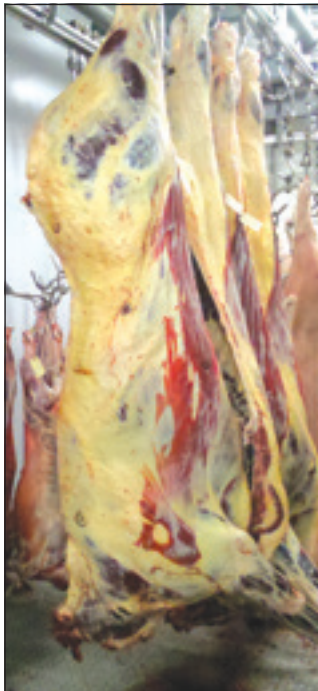
A correct frame will carry flesh easier and food will be converted to give a rounded shape. This then provides roasts and sirloins that look better for the butcher. The better the frame then the more meat it can carry. This is not down to the amount of bone but to the design of the skeleton that the muscles are laid down on; and only breeding from correctly-shaped cows and bulls can change that.

Finding out more about how the calves and lambs you sold

finished, and what age they were before they reached finishing weight, is a good way to decide if you need to make any changes.

The bull scheme has kept good cattle in the crofting counties. Latterly the £1300 cost of the bull hire, and fewer active crofters in townships, has led to some crofters buying in or leasing bulls that maybe have not gone through the same selection process. The quality of the calves and the retained heifers should always come before any small difference in profit margin.

Doing our bit to look after the rest of the industry will ensure butchers and finishers stay afloat. Let us not forget that we are all in it together. Scotland's reputation for quality beef and lamb starts from the ground, whenever we put the bull or the tup into the field. Other countries would love to have our reputation and kill price. Let's keep them out by producing healthy and efficient carcasses with muscling, size, length and a correct frame.



Well-shaped 3-year-old Highland heifer



Carcass of a 4-year-old



This photograph was chosen by Charlie Munro of Munro, Dingwall, to illustrate an example of a muscley carcass. An animal with more fat cover would not show the muscling so well. "A 20m x heifer with a carcass deadweight of 320kg at 20 months, graded as R2. The resulting carcass is well-formed and muscley but lacking in a few millimetres of fat cover, making the difference between good and excellent."



A carcass from a lean cow with poor conformation and no shape

Photos © Graham Frazer of Munro, Dingwall and Iain Anderson of Mull Abattoir

## Skye and Lochalsh abattoir project moves forward

**T**HE SKYE and Lochalsh abattoir steering group has been working to take forward the report *Preliminary Study for Micro-abattoir in Skye and Lochalsh* received last year from SAC Consulting. The report is available on the SCF website.

The report envisages a service-only abattoir and

concludes that such a facility can be viable – and would show a modest profit if fully funded.

In order to take the project forward, the steering group has joined with the established and constituted Skye and Lochalsh Meat Supply Group and has been successful in securing funding for a limited-life post of project worker.

The worker will be employed for eight to ten months to bring the project to a shovel-ready stage, including of course a funding package. This will involve obtaining estimates, identifying a site from the options in the report, determining the best business structure, starting discussions on planning issues,

waste management and meat inspection, as well as establishing contact with operators of other remote and island abattoirs.

The steering group gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of Edinbane Community Company, Struan Community Trust, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and The Highland Council.

## ON THE CROFT

## Iomlaid Chroitearan

## My crofting holiday

**T**HACHAIRE O CHIONN goirid gun d'fhuair sinn cuireadh dol gu taigh nàbaidhean far am faca sinn film ùr-dhèanta.

Chan e murt no marbhadh a bha mar chuspair aige, ach "Iomlaid Chroitearan" le ban-fhrangach Caroline le Crouhennec. Chunnaic sinn mar a chuir dithis chroitear bhon Fhraing seachad trì seachdainean còmhla ri dithis chroitear ann an Transylvania (Romania). Bha e inntinneach na dòighean obrach fhaicinn anns gach dùthaich agus cluinntinn mun fheallsanachd obrach aca. Bha naoi mairt bhainne aig a' chiad chroitear, Nelutu, ann an Transylvania agus bha e gabhail pàirt ann an sgeimichean àrainneachdail a chuir casg air feur a gheàrradh gu an dèidh a' chiad latha den luchair. Ach nuair a bha e ga gheàrradh, 's ann leis an speal a bha e ga dhèanamh agus 's ann leis an fhoirc agus an ràcan a bha am feur ga thionndadh - uidheamachd a tha glè shaoir a cheannachd.

Agus bha beachdan làidir aig Nelutu mu nàdar àiteachais. Bha e den bharail gur ann eadar-dhealaichte bho ghnìomhachasan eile a tha obair an fhearainn, gu bheil ceanglaichean eadar daoine, lusan agus beothaichean a' toirt dha àite sònraichte ann am beatha. Bha e cumail a-mach gun robh daoine pàigheadh prìsean fada ro

iseal air biadh "Gheibh thu biadh airson mìos air tuarasdail aon latha, chan eil sin ceart, bu chòir a' phrìs a bhith mòran nas àirde gus an cuir daoine luach sa bhiadh".

Thug na Romanianaich seachad trì seachdainean anns an Fhraing, far an robh na croitearan Frangach gu mòr an sàs ann a bhith reic glasraich agus measan - a' mhòr chuid dheth tro bhùth a bha na co-chomairn ga ruith leis na croitearan fhèin. Bha tòrr co-obrachaidh ann ach bha an fheallsanachd aca beagan eadar-dhealaichte; Bha na Frangaich airson maisinichean a chleachdadh, gus an obair a dhèanamh nas luaithe agus mar sin ùine dheth airson rudan eile. Bha cosgais mhòr na lùib ge-tà. Chuir e iongnadh air na Romanianaich gu robh tractar aca a chosg £50,000, agus bha sin a' sealltainn san ìre san robh iad an eisimeil air taic-airgid Eòrpach cuideachd. Bha na Frangaich a' faighinn còrr is 80% den teachd a-steach aca bhon CAP ach cha robh na Romanianaich a' faighinn ach 20%. Leis an ath-obrachadh a tha ga dhèanamh an dràsta, feumaidh sinn a bhith ann an dòchas gum bi gu leòr taic airson na croitearan san Aonadh Eòrpach air fad san àm ri teachd, chionn tha fhios againn gur ann bhuapasan a tha na buannachdan a' tighinn, sa h-uile dòigh.

*Gabhan Maca'Phearsain*

*Kirtsy Waddell enjoys a working break on the family croft*

**D**RIVING THROUGH Fort William, I feel a tinge of sadness to be travelling back to the big city once more.

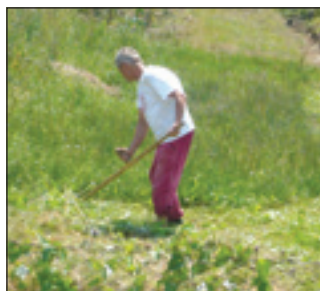
My family have been crofters in the north-east of Skye for generations, although I live in the rather less scenic surroundings of Glasgow. Currently studying for a degree in agriculture at SRUC in Ayr, I spend much time working on and visiting the large commercial farms of Dumfriesshire and Ayrshire. With rotary milking parlours and tractors that cost more than my house, it's a world apart from where I have spent the last week of my Easter break.

As usual, this was more of a working holiday than a relaxing week of sun and sangria in the Costa del Sol. Rather than sunglasses and shorts, I packed my waterproofs, pen knife, woolly hat and two pairs of wellies (just in

case). Put to work almost as soon as I have uttered my greetings to my Aunt and Uncle (and the dogs of course), we start by dosing and injecting sheep, then tagging calves, helping the vet with blood tests and inspecting a lame gimmer.

And that's all before I reach the poly-tunnel! Even my six year old son is drafted in, although I don't think he has yet realised that feeding cows, counting asparagus tips and digging vegetable patches are not generally seen as normal holiday activities.

But despite the aching legs and the bruises from an over-friendly bull, I cannot think of a place I would rather be. Spending a week with my family working on the land that holds such a strong attachment is a perfect vacation. With all the changes happening at the moment, perhaps it is time some of the large-scale farming operations start to look carefully at our sustainable, agriculturally-biodiverse crofting communities.



Low-tech small-holders in Transylvania shown in Caroline le Crouhennec's film *Small Farmers Exchange* receive much less from the CAP than high-tech small-holders in France, but any highly productive small units, including crofts, deserve that support.





## ON THE CROFT

# Sea eagles on the cross party group agenda

**S**NH representatives and a crofter from Gairloch attended the Cross Party Group on Crofting (CPGoC) in March to speak about sea eagles and their impact on crofting. This report summarises the discussion.

Sea eagles were once widely distributed across Scotland but became extinct in 1916. A reintroduction programme began in 1975 with birds from Norway released on the island of Rum. Since then their range spread, with 52 breeding pairs recorded in 2010 across the west Highlands and Hebrides. Further reintroductions were made in the east of Scotland over the past five years and the first birds from this re-introduction are beginning to establish territories.

SNH has operated several localised sea eagle schemes in the Highlands and Islands since the late 1990s, mainly on Mull, Skye and mainland Argyll and Lochaber. These were replaced by a single scheme covering all of the west Highlands and Islands, with the following aims:

- providing opportunities to undertake more projects for the benefit of sea eagles (for example, providing improved feeding habitat, nesting sites or roost areas);
- spreading the economic benefits of the presence of sea eagles to a wider section of the community (for example, through new projects which help people to view sea eagles

or create other tourism opportunities based upon the presence of sea eagles);

- assisting positive management of land and livestock which reduces the impact of the foraging behaviour of sea eagles on agricultural enterprises.

Crofters see sea eagles as a threat to their sheep, partly by direct attack and partly by the change in balance of competition for predators. Sea eagles eat a wide variety of things including fish, so if fish and other game such as rabbits are in short supply the eagles will look for other sources of food, including dead animals and livestock. The main source of information on what they eat is by looking in the nests, but this does not include adolescent eagles.

Crofters are giving up sheep due to eagle predation. Then hills go rank when not grazed by crofters' sheep.

"A crofter had 85 lambs to the hill but only 45 came back," one crofter commented. "Admittedly foxes take lambs, but not in big numbers. They tend not to go for large lambs. Eagles will go for any size of lamb."

It is a myth that they only go for small lambs. A recent report by a consultant shows an example of one taking a 20 kg lamb. Even ewes are attacked; there is proven claw damage. Septicaemia then sets in and the ewe is lost. Crofters in the Gairloch area

report losing on average 20 lambs a year and put them down to eagles.

Crofters feel that compensation is insulting. "It makes us feel like we aren't looking after the stock, but we are. We just can't do anything about this predator. We can control black-backs, crows etcetera – but not sea eagles. We lamb inside now and don't let the lambs to the hill until June, but older crofters can't do this, they rely on the hill. That large lamb I mentioned was killed in late July. We can't keep them in all summer. They should be out on the hill."

SNH admitted that eagles take light lambs and sometimes ewes. However the "black loss" is from other predators also, not just eagles. The eagle management scheme tries to help adapt the sheep system to mitigate. For example it can provide financial help with sheds, shelters etc. This is not compensation; it is management support.

Norway doesn't seem to have such a problem, but they have fish and also plenty of alternative game, much more so than Scotland. It is felt that Scottish Government didn't make sure that there was plenty for them to eat before releasing the eagles.

Apparently in Spain feeding stations are used, where dead livestock are left out for predators. This keeps them away from live animals. SCF has been asking Scottish Government to be able to do this for some time.



## ON THE CROFT

## Important changes to pesticide rules

**I**F YOU USE PESTICIDES then you will need to be aware of an important forthcoming change in the rules of pesticide use under the Grandfather Rights (GFRs) exemption.

The GFR exemption currently allows anyone born before December 31st 1964 to use pesticides authorised for professional use on their own or employer's land without having to hold a certificate of competence, as long as they are suitably trained and competent for their job.

However, this exemption will only continue until November 26th, 2015, after which time everyone who uses pesticides for professional use will be required to hold a certificate of competence. This change follows new legal requirements for the use of professional pesticides, introduced under the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, and affects all EU member states.

All current users of GFRs who intend to apply pesticides on their holding after November 26th 2015 will have to undertake one of the following actions.

Obtain the new certificate which has been specially developed for GFRs holders by City and Guilds – details at [www.nptc.org.uk](http://www.nptc.org.uk).

Obtain another type of level 2 safe use

of pesticide award offered by a designated awarding body and appropriate to the work and type of equipment used. This route must be taken if the pesticide operator intends to work as a contractor or apply pesticides to land he/she or his/her employer does not own.

Existing certificates from the safe use of pesticides suite, for example PA1 and PA2, will continue to meet legal requirements.

There are also further future legal changes which you should be aware of.

From November 26th 2015 anyone purchasing professional pesticide products must ensure that the operator who will be applying the product has a recognised certificate.

From November 26th 2016 equipment that is less than five years old, which is used to apply pesticide, must have a national sprayer testing scheme certificate. An approved examiner can be found at [www.nsts.org.uk](http://www.nsts.org.uk). Handheld equipment does not need to be tested but should be regularly examined against a checklist and a record kept.

Operators are strongly encouraged to read further information on these important changes on the Scottish Government's pesticide web pages at: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/Environment/Pesticides](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/Environment/Pesticides).



SCF's Skye and Lochalsh council member Yvonne White, pictured above, recently attended a course organised by West Highland College. Roddy Gillies of Sheil Bridge was the trainer on this course, which covered pesticide safe handling and knapsack spraying.

## Scottish Government support for advice in the crofting counties

*Sandy Ramsay of SAC on the work of SAC Consulting*

**T**HE SCOTTISH Government wants to see a rural Scotland that is sustainable, outward looking and dynamic – with a diverse economy and active communities, where rural prosperity can increase in ways that make best use of all resources.

As part of this commitment the Scottish Government provides funding towards the provision of the rural advisory service, delivered by SAC Consulting, in the crofting counties. This funding provides discounted fees for consultancy services for crofters, as well as a range of free advice and information through workshops and meetings supported by numerous publications. Within the next month Scottish Government will publish its annual report on the Veterinary and Advisory Services (VAS) Programme – the programme that provides this funding.

With offices in Lerwick, Kirkwall, Stornoway, Balivanich, Portree, Thurso, Inverness, Oban

and Campbeltown, delivery is local and the discounted service on a wide range of technical and business issues is seen as a major benefit of the VAS support to the crofting counties. Discounts of between 40% and 65% are funded for crofters and in the last year over 2,870 crofters benefitted from these discounts, with 1,907 taking out a crofter's subscription with the highest rate of discount. Scottish Government considers the impact of this to be significant. For example, these nine local SAC Consulting offices in the Highlands and Islands assisted 2,461 IACS applications in 2013 with 97% of these completed on-line to ensure accuracy and timeliness. In the last three years of the last Scottish Rural Development Programme a total of 959 Rural Priorities applications were assisted with a total approved projects value of some £50.8m.

The delivery of free advice and information covers a range of topics including animal welfare, biodiversity and conservation, as well as pollution control and new entrants. In 2013/14 thirty seven different events were held across

the Highland and Islands with over 740 attendees. Four notable examples were:

**Stornoway fluke event** This event was part of the nationwide Fluke Roadshow and included a practical session on fluke identification, sheep weights and handling, the examination of contaminated livers and a review of the findings from the Stornoway Abattoir. With additional information on the dangers of over- and under-dosing, practical and relevant guidance for the control of fluke was provided.

**Highlands and Islands bull and suckler cow management workshops** In August last year three well-attended on-farm events were held in Tiree, Bonar Bridge and Shetland, addressing topics such as welfare, cattle health and bull selection to avoid calving difficulties.

**Improving water quality in Orkney** Kibister Loch on Orkney was the venue for a pollution prevention meeting – one of a series of such meetings held across Scotland. By highlighting the value of slurry and manures to the farm business and

examining the options for alternative watering, practical win-win solutions were identified to address water quality concerns.

**Community retailing** The development of local food retail was supported through a joint initiative with the Plunkett Foundation. Community retailing workshops were delivered in Lewis, Harris, Skye and Shetland. These workshops highlighted best practice, allowed local producers to showcase their products and encouraged the development of local food procurement as a driver for sales.

In 14/15 there will be further meetings and events that are open to all, along with a continuation of the discounts on crofters' subscriptions and consultancy services, all funded through the Scottish Government's VAS programme.

For details of forthcoming events or a copy of the 2013/14 VAS report please contact your local SAC Consulting area office. Alternatively visit [http://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120415/scottish-government\\_vas\\_programme](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120415/scottish-government_vas_programme) for more details of the VAS programme.



## ON THE CROFT

## Where is Spike?

*Joe Curran describes his worries when one of his working dogs goes missing on a tricky hillside in north Skye.*

**WE WERE** gathering near the Storr, high on the Trotternish ridge, when the cloud came down with visibility near to nil.

Conditions worsened with the onset of persistent, driving rain. Sheltering in the lee of a large rock, I realised Spike was missing with only Lola left grubbing about. Spike and Lola are border collies, by the way.

There was nothing to be done. On the ascent some of the climb was extremely steep and I was in no mood to try and return that way through the swirling cloud and rain. Much too dangerous.

So I waited behind the rocks, getting wetter, colder and more miserable by the minute, pondering how strange it was that Lola was totally unperturbed by it all. She didn't seem to notice that

Spike was missing, never mind the cold and the wet.

But I did – and was worried. What if he went over a cliff? What if the sea eagle spotted on the way up had grabbed him in its talons and carried him away to feed squawking, giant chicks, in a nest full of the bones of wee collie dogs? My imagination was running away very fast.

In the end discretion and valour forced me to go straight down the slope of the hill in the direction of the Haultin river. Once down it was just a matter of following the watercourse to the start line of the gather. I halted at a quad bike left by another of the gatherers and waited again. After a while a man with a dog slowly appeared from the swirling mist. Then there were two of us bemused by the sudden change in the weather.

Another dog came from behind a rise chasing some sheep. I thought it was Spike. But it was just another gatherer, this time working at what



Spike and Lola

we had come so far to do. There was nothing for it but join in and we eventually managed to drive a fair-sized flock of sheep down to the field by the road end.

All this time I assumed Spike would have made his way back to the Land Rover and would be sitting patiently by the rear door. My assumption was wrong. There was no sign of the wee fellow.

There was nothing for it but

to go back up the hill, soaked through and cold, whistling and calling. I eventually reached the area where I had last seen him and was searching through the rock under some cliffs for signs of his lifeless body, still calling.

And then he materialised by my side, looking a bit sheepish but otherwise fine, like he had found a warm, dry, den and had a good sleep.

## Workaway

*Natalie Rush from Shingle Springs, California, shares her croft work experience on SCF member Russell Smith's croft*

**SHEEP AND CHICKENS.** Not exactly what one generally puts on an itinerary – and yet here I am and here they definitely are in all their grazing, baa-ing, clucking splendor.

Ever wonder what sheep are thinking as their eyes latch on and follow you across the field? The sheep on Drumbhan croft are probably wondering what the funny two-legged creature with the American accent is doing on their croft and why doesn't she have a treat in those pockety things of hers. Well, this travelling girl may not have tucked sheep treats into her backpack, but she did bring know-how with hand tools, much to the pleasure of the resident chickens.

For two weeks I have been visiting Bonar Bridge as a 'workawayer'. This is an arrangement by which I help around the croft, according to my abilities and interests, in trade for accommodation, company and sightseeing by arrangement. In my case – oh frapitous joy – the benefits include never-ending rock buns and a bottomless cuppa.

A benefit of an entirely

different nature is... well... nature. Balanced atop a ladder, hammer in hand and mouth full of nails, I have an ever-changing view of a gorgeous valley, the Kyle of Southerland and Loch Migdale. Rain skitters across the landscape like a child lured by the siren call of a candy bag. The sun occasionally leans around a cloud and gives a warm nod as I work, then goes about its business. The wind, on the other hand, is ever present and ever social, constantly singing across every rock, stretch of heather and verdant field. Admittedly, these days it's more like a mud patch cleverly disguised as a field, but that doesn't roll off the tongue nearly so well.

Being on the croft has given me the opportunity to share my skills with others as they share their culture and home with me. I am very grateful for the genuine hospitality of my hosts and the opportunity to see life on a Scottish croft. We have shifted seamlessly from the first day, when I could barely set down my baggage before having my hands filled again with tea and a biscuit, to whoever gets up from the telly offering to make tea – including myself.

I will take home many pleasant memories and a slew of incredible photographs, both of which I will treasure for years to come.

**Workaway is a scheme like WWOOF and HelpEx, where people come and stay with you. They do a certain amount of work for you in exchange for board and lodgings, the occasional trip out and, in many cases, help with learning English.**

**You link up via a website which gives your profile and the profiles of people looking for placements.**

**Like all dating websites there is an element of uncertainty but, Russell comments, our limited experiences have been positive so far.**



Chicken house

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## Angus MacNeil MP



Constituency Office  
 31 Bayhead Street  
 Stornoway  
 Isle of Lewis HS1 2DU

Tel no 70 2272

E-Mail [AngusMacNeilMP@parliament.uk](mailto:AngusMacNeilMP@parliament.uk)

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*Caithness, Sutherland and Ross*

**Welcomes All Enquiries**

Constituency Office:  
 4 Grant Street  
 Wick, KW1 5AY  
 Tel: 01955 605016



Email: [Rob.Gibson.msp@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:Rob.Gibson.msp@scottish.parliament.uk)

## Dave Thompson MSP

*Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency (SNP)*  
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## HUNGRY FOR RIGHTS

# Hunger in the UK

*Project officer Maria Scholten comments on the SCF's topical Hungry for Rights project.*

**F**OOD IS A BASIC human right and there is a growing belief that the UK is in breach of international law, reports the e-newsletter of 23 April from the Scottish Community Alliance.

More than 20 charities, including the Trussell Trust, the Child Poverty Action Group and Church Action on Poverty have signed a statement accusing the UK of violating the basic right to food. The action follows a letter to the government from 600 Christian clergy and bishops seeking urgent action on the scandal of foodbanks and food poverty, a similar statement from Jewish leaders and the nationwide End Hunger Fast in solidarity, with 900,000 people going hungry or short of food.

At least two foodbanks have become operational in northwest Scotland: in Stornoway and on Skye.

This discussion makes SCF's Hungry for Rights project highly topical. In the training school at Sabhal Mor Ostaig on Skye in late March, a human rights approach to food was

introduced. Alternative approaches to local food were outlined by Angus Robertson of Sleat Community Trust, based on his tour of New England's local shops and also on the successful Skye Farm Shop.

Learning from alternative best practices is important in the project and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) as alternative production and distribution model was explained by two short videos about a meat and a vegetable box scheme. This video is also on YouTube.

Some trainees also 'attended' an international webinar organised by Community Food Canada networks. The webinar gave excellent information on diets and mental health and also detailed experiences of specific projects. These webinars are free, easily-accessible and excellent sources of information for people involved in community garden and food projects in crofting communities.

Alternatives to foodbanks are central in Community Food Canada networks. Community kitchens, cooking classes, markets, drop-in meals and community gardens not only gave people new ways

to battle poverty, they gave them a sense of belonging and a sense of power to make change.

Nick Saul wrote a history of Toronto foodbank The Stop, showing how food banks don't make food a right, they make it a charity. Charity is a gift – you give and the recipient is supposed to be grateful. And that can't be solved by community and social justice groups.

Governments must implement policies which ensure their citizens have a right to food.

Further information:

**Contact Community Food Centres Canada at: [christina@cfccanada.ca](mailto:christina@cfccanada.ca)**

**On Youtube: Chagfood CSA and Swillington organic pig and chicken**

**CSA Report: *Going Hungry? The Human Right to Food in the UK***

**[www.barrowcadbury.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Going-Hungry](http://www.barrowcadbury.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Going-Hungry)**

**More on End Hunger Fast from Ekklesia: [www.ekklesia.co.uk/endhungerfast](http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/endhungerfast)**



HFR trainees, SCF members and staff, community food organisations from Barra, Raasay, Uist and Skye, and one NGO representative

**Go online at [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org)**

## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

### Membership recruitment incentive

**A** BIG THANK YOU to all those who have been busy helping us recruit new members – and a big welcome to those new members and any other new members too!

All members can get paid for every new member they recruit. For every member you recruit we will give you £7.65 (15% of your annual subscription). The more members you recruit the more you will get paid. In the last edition of *The Crofter* we introduced the new scheme. As a reminder we have broken it down to four easy steps to get your reward and help build a stronger SCF.

Here's how it works:

- Download a membership form from the website, or request some copies from HQ.
- Add your own membership number to the form.
- Ask a neighbour, friend or colleague to join the SCF.
- When they return the form we will send you out a cheque or make a bank transfer for £7.65.

Remember there is no limit on the number of members you can recruit. New members may also choose to join online so make sure to ask the new member to mention your membership reference on application, to ensure that you receive your reward.

Word of mouth is the best way to spread knowledge of the work that we do; and now you can be rewarded for this. To help with your recruitment, on this page we list the political battles we have recently won and those we are currently working on, along with some of the main benefits of SCF membership.

#### Terms and Conditions

When a current paid-up member recruits a new member he or she is able to receive a reward for this. The reward is 15% of an individual membership subscription, currently £51, giving a reward of £7.65.

Payment will be made through your current method of subscription (eg cheque or bank transfer).

Recruitment of joint members will be counted as one application.

Recruiting associate members is excluded from this scheme.

This membership offer is subject to changes in terms or to cancellation at any time without notice.

And of course you don't have to receive the recruitment refund if you don't want to. It helps us even more if you sign up new members at no cost to the organisation. The choice is yours.

## Why have the Scottish Crofting Federation and why be a member?

Without the SCF, crofting would look completely different, if it still existed at all.

### Benefits for crofting

Strong political representation: SCF is the only organisation dedicated to the representation of crofters, helping to shape crofting policies for the benefit of future generations of crofters and our communities.

### Examples of what we have won:

- Home-kill was illegal until, under intense pressure from SCF, the Food Standards Agency relented and home-kill became legal again.
- Beef calf scheme – opposed by NFUS – won by SCF.
- A better deal on LFASS.
- Bull scheme – was to be closed due to state aid rules. SCF got the evidence from EC and the government had to reverse the decision.
- Croft House Grant Scheme – in the crofting development plan devised by the Crofters Commission, croft house support was to go – but SCF got a grant retained.
- CCAGS – a dedicated scheme for crofting within the SRDP has been retained under SCF pressure.
- Raasay crofters' shooting rights – our input helped to reverse the Scottish Government sale and the crofters got the rights back.
- Attention to the goose problem due to a parliamentary petition, as mentioned elsewhere in this issue.

### Battles we are fighting

- CAP P1 direct payments, minimum stocking density, common grazings support;
- CAP P2 SRDP – Areas of Natural Constraint, Crofting Support Scheme, appropriate agri-environment measures;
- the creation of 10,000 new crofts, getting tenants into existing crofts and the reinstatement of crofts;
- implementation of crofting regulation;
- implementation of crofting development;
- control of wild goose numbers;
- removal of the compulsory Crofting Register adverts;
- support to crofting community mapping;
- Numerous individual members are helped with issues such as grant refusals turned around, planning consent achieved, problems with landlord resolved and so on.

Should all crofters get all this effort on the back of those who are paying SCF subscriptions? SCF members should make sure all crofters they know are members of SCF.

### Benefits for individuals:

As well as the benefits from dedicated political representation, you get:

- The Crofter – a magazine full of useful resources and information for crofters;
- monthly e-newsletters, keeping you up-to-date with the latest news and policy developments;
- access to the SCF crofting advice service;
- a free dedicated legal helpline through crofting specialists Inksters;
- discounted training opportunities;
- the opportunity to promote your croft tourism business on the SCF website;
- free host membership of the WWOOF croft volunteers scheme for a year;
- the opportunity to brand and market your croft produce with our unique Scottish Crofting Produce Mark;
- a wide network of contacts for sharing experiences and sourcing information;
- a skills mentoring service;
- community mediation service;
- assistance and guidance for those wanting to enter crofting;
- product discount scheme;
- discounted attendance at the SCF Annual Gathering;
- the credibility of being a member of the UK's largest association of small-scale food producers!

### Cost comparison:

NFUS sub for crofters £81.60,  
STFA minimum sub £120,  
SCF only £51.  
A tank of diesel/petrol £70.





## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

## A letter from the chief executive

Dear member,

Times are hard. We are all feeling the pinch. The fact is that the prevailing financial situation is affecting us all. I appreciate that you will also be very aware of what you spend your hard-earned money on, as we are very aware in the SCF of how we spend membership subscription income.

Our aim is to give the best possible service we can to our members at the least cost. We don't cover all core costs from subscriptions and make up the difference through fundraising for specific projects. But fundraising is getting more difficult, as there simply isn't as much funding around.

We also cut our cloth to suit our means. We have four members of staff in HQ and of them I am the only full-time. We constantly monitor office costs to make sure we get the best deals. As you will recall, we have moved office several times over the years to have the most-value accommodation – which we are confident we have now in Kyle.

You will see from the article on page 24 *Why have an SCF and why be a member?* that we achieve a huge amount on your behalf as a representative organisation; and we also manage to offer you as an individual member many valuable benefits.

But the books don't balance. We can't continue to do so much on the money we get in, so we have to make a hard decision: do we cut back on what we do, or do we charge more to do it?

I don't think that we can afford to do less. Crofting is constantly under threat and it is only by having strong representation that we can help crofting not only to survive, but thrive.

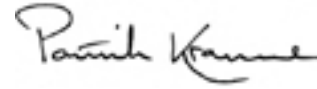
We are therefore minded to put subscriptions up this year by around 10%. Details will be discussed at the board meeting and AGM in June, as usual, and an increase won't take place until later this year.

I will remind you in the meantime of some comparisons. The NFUS, for example charges, £81.60 (inc VAT) for a crofter to be a member; and the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association subscriptions start at £120.

To fill your car up once costs more than the SCF annual subscription.

I hope that you will agree with this move to keep the organisation healthy and fighting. Put a tank of fuel into the only organisation dedicated to representing and promoting crofting.

Thank you and good wishes



Patrick Krause  
SCF chief executive



© Martin Benson – North Uist

## Why your vote is so important

*John Bannister, SCF company secretary, asks all members to participate in our crofting democracy.*

**Q**UITE APART FROM that other all-Scotland matter occurring in September, where your vote will also be vitally important, I need to persuade you, as a member, to attend and vote at the Federation's annual general meeting.

The details are on a separate insert with this issue. If it's impossible for you to attend, then I hope you will send in your proxy nomination form – to nominate someone to vote in your stead. The proxy form is also included separately and has a FREE POST address to make it easy for you to return it.

This may sound trifling and dreary – and a not-infrequent reaction tends to be, "There are always other members who can do this, so why should I bother?"

Since there is no way a member can know how many proxy nominations have been submitted, this inevitably leads to a relatively small number of proxies being put forward. If you

feel this way, may I plead the importance of the case?

A proxy vote is not simply a tiresome procedure but necessary to comply with the Federation's constitution, which requires thirty members to be present in person – or, a proxy for such a member. The Federation likes to engage with its members on many issues and its AGM is no exception.

Meetings are often held at different venues each year to make it doable and convenient for our members to attend, but clearly this is not possible in every case. Time and distance to travel from remote locations to the AGM may not be at all practical for you. If that is the case then it is another very good reason to nominate a proxy who you know will be attending the meeting.

Your proxy can be anyone you name. It can be another named member, a named board member who will be able to vote how you want him or her to vote, to vote on all or some resolutions, or none at all, giving the power to vote according to his or her personal discretion.

This year's AGM not only

includes the usual recurring resolutions but also resolutions affecting procedures contained in our Articles of Association (details inserted separately with this publication).

I do hope I have been able to persuade you to attend the AGM or, at the very least, to send in your proxy nomination form. We all look forward to seeing you there – but if that's not possible please give the alternative (proxy) your serious consideration.

Thank you!

Send your proxy nomination by email to: [hq@crofting.org](mailto:hq@crofting.org) or by FREEPOST to:

**Scottish Crofting Federation, FREEPOST RRAG-HGBK-XERY  
Kyle of Lochalsh IV40 8AX**




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# Tudge's challenge to the dangerous ideas that dominate our lives

I HAVE ALWAYS LIKED a challenge to the system, particularly when you sense in your bones that it is based on fallacy.

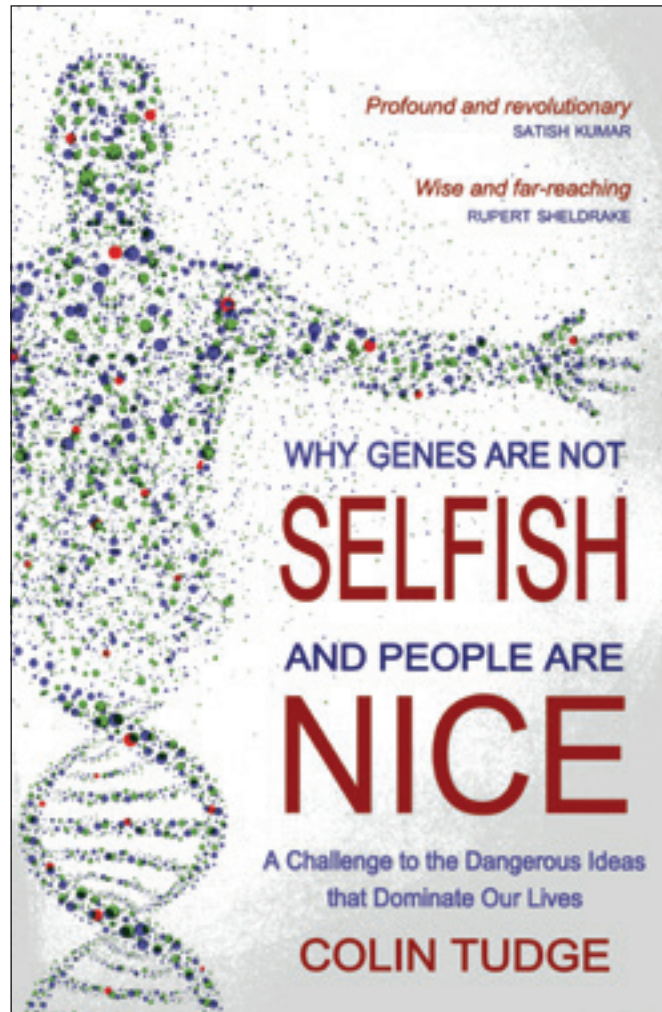
Colin Tudge has never been shy of de-constructing paradigms – he did this with his series of books on the global food system – but now in *Why Genes Are Not Selfish and People Are Nice* he takes his same logical analysis far wider and looks at, well, life, the universe and everything, to use Douglas Adams' words.

Colin says he has been writing this book for more than sixty years and it is a just reflection of a lifetime's exploration. He exposes how some of today's big notions, that not only are stealing the joy of life but are threatening existence itself, are built on misrepresentation of the work of some of history's greatest thinkers.

I spent last week in Sunart. Between walking in the hills and in the ancient Sunart forest, I read this book. I felt that I travelled through other ancient spiritual landscapes, as beautiful and inspiring as the Sunart forest, as I read it. It is a rare and lovely experience to read something that truly connects.

I think many crofters will identify with this wise work. And take heart: the book's cover omits one important point. Written in Colin Tudge's familiar style and wit, this book is a really good read.

Patrick Krause



## Survey

We are always looking for ways to improve our membership services, so in the next edition of *The Crofter* we will be including a membership survey leaflet. Please make sure you look out for it as it is vital that we keep up to date with what members want, to ensure the best value for money for your subscription.

We will be asking about things like communications and our areas of work. The survey will also be emailed out with our monthly newsletter. If you have not already given us your email address, or would like to update your contact details, you can do this at any time by getting in touch with HQ.

## Larch die-back disease

Can all members please look out for larches in their locality and if they see any looking obviously not well let Forestry Commission Scotland know.



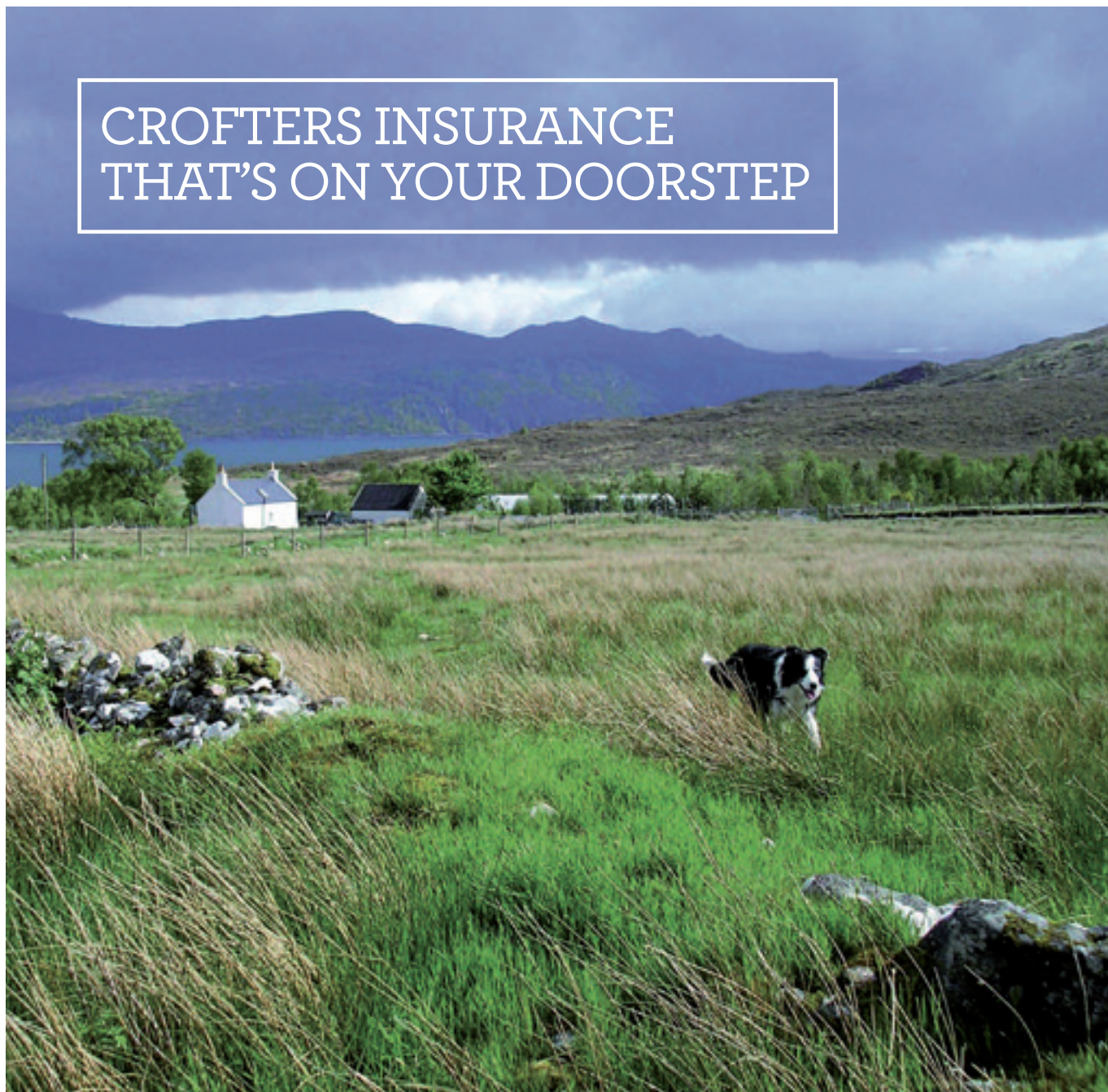
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# Crofting 20:20 – a gathering of young crofters

A vision for crofting: access to land, homes and work

2nd, 3rd, 4th October 2014, Glencanisp Lodge, Lochinver, Assynt

*An event hosted by the Scottish Crofting Federation and Crofting Connections*

**A**GATHERING OF young crofters and aspiring young crofters to have meaningful conversations with each other, elders and policy-makers on the future of crofting, to address the question "What do we want crofting to look like in 2020?"

The aim of the gathering will be to facilitate the formation of young folks' aspirations and a plan of wise action to go forward. This will be the first time young folk of crofting will have gathered together like this – the start of a conversation that will be going on to 2020.

#### Crofting 20:20 will:

- bring 70 young crofters and aspiring crofters together, with 30 elders and government representatives, in an inspiring location and, using participatory methodology, will give them opportunity to formulate their vision for crofting in 2020 and to identify what needs to be put in place for this to become reality;
- document young crofters' views for publication as a manifesto for crofting to inform policy makers and for use in future project design;
- sow the seeds of a network of young crofters who will have each other as a support in future, to exchange ideas and participate in the design of a movement to help all young crofters;
- strengthen links between young crofters and policy makers;
- give young crofters experience of using participatory methodology;
- celebrate crofting and young people's role in the future of crofting, thriving communities and sustainable food production.

#### Who will be involved?

Young crofters and aspiring young crofters from 14 to 40 years of age; the Scottish Crofting Federation; Crofting Connections; Hungry for Rights; Assist Social Capital; Art of Hosting Scotland group; Glencanisp community-owned estate (Assynt Foundation); Carnegie UK Trust; Foundation Scotland; MSPs; Scottish Government: communities and land tenure groups; Highland Council; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Crofting Commission.



Glencanisp Lodge



Canisp and Sulven

Thanks to Glencanisp Lodge for these photos



## How to contact us

Postal address and registered office  
**Scottish Crofting Federation Head Office**  
 Kyle of Lochalsh IV40 8AX

**General enquiries and membership:** [hq@crofting.org](mailto:hq@crofting.org)  
 Tel: 01599 530 005 Fax: 01599 618 038

**Training:** [training@crofting.org](mailto:training@crofting.org)

**The Crofter:** [fiona@crofting.org](mailto:fiona@crofting.org) – Fiona Mandeville, editor

**Advertising:** [ads@crofting.org](mailto:ads@crofting.org) – Yvonne White, Tel: 01470 532 729

**SCF legal helpline: 01599 230 300**

visit [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org) for full contact details

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