

## What is decrofting?

**T**HE ALARM BELLS were ringing when it was noticed that the Crofting Commission website simply stated, "Decrofting is the term used when a crofter applies to the commission to remove land from crofting tenure."

It is not; or at least it never used to be. Decrofting was a legal process allowing a landowner (often a landlord) to apply to remove vacant land from crofting tenure, for instance when a landlord had been unable to find a tenant.

It became useful when a crofter wanted to decroft land for a reasonable purpose, such as commercial development, or for domestic security purposes, such as a house mortgage. This was because a crofter who purchased his croft lost his right to be tenant and was himself to be treated as the landlord of a vacant croft. He could then apply to decroft the appropriate part of his croft. He was also allowed to seek to decroft in advance of his purchase, so that he could know that what he was purchasing could be decrofted.

But when the Crofting Reform (Scotland) 2010 Act introduced the new category of owner-occupier crofter, it also explained that the owner-occupied croft was not to be taken as vacant. So decrofting no longer applied to any owner-occupied croft and the reformed legislation gave no other authority to the Crofting Commission to issue a decrofting direction to an owner-occupier crofter who is occupying his croft.

This is a problem to which the SCF has been encouraging the commission to find an early remedy. The commission has been working urgently with the Scottish Government to find a long-term solution. It is understood that this will require fresh legislation.

Environment minister Paul Wheelhouse

*Continued on page 3*

## The goose epidemic: conservation gone mad?

**A**SK ANY CROFTER in the Inner or Outer Hebrides what the bane of their lives is and they will say geese.

It is widely believed the goose epidemic is the biggest single threat to the continuation of island crofting.

Crofters' complaints about the goose problem are not new but it is now reaching devastating proportions in Tiree, Islay and the Uists and is fast becoming the same in the rest of the Western Isles, the Northern Isles and parts of the mainland – a significant proportion of the crofting counties.

Crofting agriculture is very important to the Western Isles, much of which is designated high nature value. But crops of cereal and grass are being ruined by the grazing and fouling of geese. A crofter will wait on tenterhooks for the crop to ripen, balancing this against the risk of the geese coming. If unlucky, just when the

crop is capable of being harvested, they move in and completely destroy the field in hours.

A 1986 report estimated that there were around 700-800 breeding pairs in the UK, of which around 150 were breeding in the Outer Hebrides. At that time, North Uist crofters were seeking to control the spread of greylag geese, an annual visitor. Now the Uists alone are year-round home to more than 10,000 greylag geese and that population is growing.

Yet, despite these vast numbers, geese are still protected by law. Crofters are told they can shoot marauding deer on their crofts – but not geese except at certain times of the year and at the will of the landlord. Crofters can't even sell wild goose meat. With robust annual counts and the cooperation of all parties on the islands in supplying shot figures, there

*Continued on page 8*



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## What now for the sporting rights on Raasay?

**S**INCE THE ALMIGHTY row over the sporting lease on the island of Raasay was temporarily halted by the decision of the Scottish Government to extend the Raasay Crofters Association's lease until November 2013, the matter disappeared from the news agenda for several weeks. It made a re-appearance just before *The Crofter* went to press, with the government beginning a consultation exercise on the island which is open until 7th June.

The background is that the Raasay Crofters Association has, for around 18

years, leased the sporting rights on the island. The association successfully developed a business shooting and dealing in Raasay venison and venison products, but their lease bestowed on them no security of tenure, so their investment in its business was threatened when the government decided to put the sporting rights out to tender. When the tender was won by a party other than the Raasay Crofters Association, they were left high and dry.

The new tenant was to be a syndicate of

*Continued on page 5*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Inside this issue

New commission CE  
Croft house grants scheme  
Alternative food production  
Cattle health  
Training  
Croft tourism

and much more ...

## Message from the chair...

Derek Flyn



*What does the Federation want for crofting?*

**C**ROFTING must retain its rightful place in the national scheme of land management and livestock production.

Crofters' best practices should be remunerated for their capacity to deliver the basic public goods desired by a modern society. But public financial support can only sensibly relate to the proper stewardship of land and any such incentives should

be related to the husbandry methods practiced and the category of the land used.

This highlights the need to map and measure the land we occupy. Whether or not one agrees that crofters should have to produce plans showing their own boundaries, that is how the matter was decided by the Scottish Parliament when setting up the Crofting Register. To justify this to crofters and their advisers, I find myself repeating, "It can hardly be the mark of a mature system that boundaries are uncertain or left open to challenge," for it cannot. In the future, this new national register will be able to provide certainty for crofters as well as much-needed ammunition to justify our claims on behalf of crofting.

That is why we at SCF encourage crofting communities to get together and map their crofts collectively. We aspire to help all those who wish to do so, for we strongly believe that

this information is needed now and will avoid a more costly piecemeal approach later.

It is not necessary to employ expensive methods to produce boundary maps and we have said so at public meetings throughout the crofting areas. As proof of legal boundaries, IACS maps are not sufficient and care must be taken, especially where it is known that ineligible areas have been removed. SCF alone has argued successfully that base plans be made available to crofters at reasonable cost, on which they can themselves mark their boundaries. We shall be monitoring closely how the forthcoming requirement to provide boundary maps is applied.

But it is going to need more than boundary maps to protect the future of crofting. To nurture and protect crofting communities, a statutory duty of residence has been placed on everyone with a croft by the Scottish Government. In turn, the government must

recognise the need to act more responsibly when opportunities for local employment become available. We demand that where local resources in the crofting areas are within state control they should be made available to the crofting communities to provide employment and to sustain the population.

Yesterday, whilst I awaited the arrival of my daughter at the bus station, in the rain, I found myself in the reading room of the adjacent Inverness public library. There, where I have spent many an inclement hour, in volume IV of the evidence to the Napier Commission, I read again about the Highland Land Law Reform Association in 1883. Its object was to bring about by constitutional means a better system whereby the people might be enabled "to live comfortably on the land by their own industry". Members of our Federation would surely subscribe to that.

## Our man in Brussels

Norman Leask



**S**INCE THE LAST Crofter many strange things have come to light.

One is how important traceability is until the heads come off. I remember Allan MacRae so wisely say that when the head comes off then traceability goes out the window. Crofters are punished if one ear tag is missing on the croft, even if it is the only cow owned. In fact this becomes 100% failure on cross compliance.

I was at the EC beefmeat advisory group meeting thanks to European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC). The commission, along with big farmers and food manufacturers, tried to hide any problems with beefmeat – although thousands of tons of meat were of unknown origin or species in Europe. SCF's membership of ECVC has opened many opportunities within the EC

which we would lose if we did not continue to look outwards. It provides the opportunity to influence decision-makers in their preparation of new legislation which could badly affect crofters if we were not there.

Via Campesina is a worldwide organisation for those who believe in local food, normally small family farms. The SCU was influential in the formation of the European union of small-holder unions known as CPE; in fact we had a seat on their management committee. CPE always had a close relationship with the worldwide organisation Via Campesina and eventually made a more formal alliance, now known as ECVC, whose office is in Brussels. Gérard Choplin has been their policy advisor ever

since the concept of CPE and is a font of knowledge on people, policies and principles around anything to do with agriculture in Brussels. Some changes in the Brussels office have been forced because, like everywhere else, there are severe financial constraints on all member-led organisations. But I look forward to working closely with Gérard for as long as we are both able and required.

I represent crofters throughout Scotland and in Brussels. I am on various advisory groups through the auspices of ECVC and was voted onto their new governing committee at the recent general assembly. The assembly is where members of ECVC get the opportunity to point staff and committee to where the major

problems for family farms and local food production lie. The effects of CAP reform on farming were high on the agenda, with various delegates concentrating on the quality of local food and its health-giving properties. One thing I believe we should emphasise is that the shape of fruit, vegetables and animals is not as important as the food value.

ECVC invited a speaker from DGAgri to explain how he saw the reforms affecting small-scale food production. He spent the whole evening with us, advising where we could still influence change. One extremely important advisory group for the next generation is CAP post 2020, which I attend.

At the last meeting of the cross party group on crofting in Edinburgh

*Continued on page 3*



ECVC Committee



## What is decrofting?

*Continued from page 1*

announced: "By bringing forward a bill as soon as possible after Easter, I hope this provides some comfort to crofters that a solution is on its way. I look forward to receiving parliament's support in the coming months to resolve this issue."

SCF believes this is the correct (and only) way forward.

### UPDATE FROM THE CROFTING COMMISSION

Concern over the ability of owner-occupier crofters to apply to the Crofting Commission for approval to decroft land has been prominent in the press over the last two months. This is as a result of the commission acting on legal advice, which holds there is no provision within the Crofting (Scotland) Reform Act 2010 for it to issue a decrofting direction to a resident owner-occupier crofter.

Commissioners understand that this is a situation which needs to be resolved urgently, but once the legal advice was confirmed, the commission would have been acting without authority, as set out in the current legislation, if it had issued decrofting directions to owner-occupier crofters. Since the issue was first highlighted, the Commission has been working hard with Scottish Government colleagues, exploring the most expeditious solution to the problem.

In response, Paul Wheelhouse has announced that the Scottish Government will bring forward a bill shortly to address this issue, which requires amendments to the current legislation.

Work on the draft bill is now underway and to aid the process a member of the commission's legal team, Joseph Kerr, has been seconded to work with colleagues in Edinburgh until the end of May. This will help ensure the legislation is developed with direct input from the commission. It looks likely that there will be cross-party support in parliament for this measure, to help to resolve the situation as quickly as possible.

Meantime, the commission is holding all current applications for decrofting from owner-occupier crofters in abeyance. Applications from landlords of vacant crofts and tenants are unaffected and the urgency with which this matter has been treated confirms that it was the intention of both the government and parliament that tenant and owner-occupier crofters should be treated equally under the act.

For convener Susan Walker the way this issue has been dealt with reflects the determination of the commission and government to work together on a swift resolution. "I hope this provides some reassurance that a solution is at hand and we will be sure to provide further updates as the bill progresses."

## New chief executive for the Crofting Commission

*Ms Catriona Maclean has been appointed as new chief executive of the Crofting Commission.*

CATRIONA IS FROM a crofting family who still live in Tong on the Island of Lewis. Born in Glasgow, her family returned to Lewis where she completed her secondary education at the Nicolson Institute. As well as her family ties to crofting, Catriona previously worked with the Crofters Commission for over 14 years in various roles, including head of regulation.

Commenting from her home in Inverness, Catriona said: "I am delighted to have been appointed chief executive of the Crofting Commission. It is 25 years since I first worked in the Crofters Commission and while both the organisation and I have evolved and progressed, crofting has remained a key element in my life. This is an exciting time for crofting and I am looking forward to working with everyone at the commission and our partners, to ensure that the Crofting Commission is modern, relevant and makes a real difference to crofting and the people of Scotland."

For convener Susan Walker this completes a year of transformation for the organisation. "The Crofting Commission has experienced a lot of change over the last year, with a new name, a new act, new commissioners, new convener, new assessor panel and the retirement in November 2012 of chief executive, Nick Reiter. The appointment of Catriona MacLean completes the renewal and change process. In her current post within the Grampian and Highlands criminal justice board, Catriona has demonstrated an ability to work innovatively and collaboratively on various projects to develop better, more efficient ways of team working.

"As we approach a new chapter in the life of the commission, I wish to express our gratitude to David Balharry, who worked tirelessly and diligently as acting chief executive during the last six months. Under his guidance, the Commission has made progress on a number of important and also challenging issues and he has shouldered his responsibilities over this period with good humour and dedication."

Catriona hopes to take up her new position in mid-May.



Catriona Maclean and Susan Walker at the new Knocknagael Stud

## Our man in Brussels

*Norman Leask*

*Continued from page 2*

the minister faced our concerns on the decrofting of owner occupied land. He assured us he would fix this anomaly.

At the sheepmeat advisory group meeting in Brussels I will be interested to find out if curried old dairy cows sold as lamb will be mentioned. In late June I will be attending the European Parliament on an event organised by ECVC when the final votes on CAP are expected.

Meeting with small-holders from throughout Europe and the Middle East, I realise that the problems crofters are facing are the

same worldwide. I originally believed it was government but I now realise that it is big businesses manipulating governments.

ECVC is the only vehicle we have to gain direct access to decision makers before policies which can affect us so badly are written.

My interest is to see things get better for our younger people – or at least not get any worse. The doors that have been opened to us via ECVC make me feel that we are now at the top table and not on the menu.

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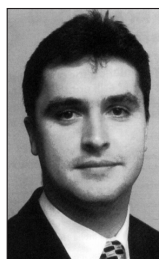
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# What now for the sporting rights on Raasay?

*Continued from page 1*

sporting interests, South Ayrshire Stalking, a group of people who found themselves in the middle of a political storm due to the widespread feeling that the government had been extraordinarily short-sighted by allowing (indeed, encouraging) home-grown, natural, sustainable, ethical and dignified development to be lost – all for the sake of less than £2,000 (the difference in the winning bid and the association's bid).

Environment Minister Paul Wheelhouse, having initially defended his government's decision, then announced that the government has in fact managed to remove itself from its agreement (in whatever form that took) with

South Ayrshire Stalking – at some considerable expense to the taxpayer – and visited Raasay to impart the news that the sport would remain theirs until November 2013. This represented quite a climb down for the government; yet only a small and temporary victory for the Raasay Crofters Association because the question now, of course, is what is to happen in November.

The consultation launched on 25 April gives everybody on the electoral roll on the island three options:- (1) granting a long lease of up to 175 years; (2) putting the lease on the open market with bidders being required to demonstrate community benefit, or (3) purchase of the land, which could include the sporting rights.

The first option is interesting because if the lease was granted for longer than 175 years, the tenants under that lease could convert it to ownership under the Long Leases (Scotland) Act 2012, which the government clearly does not want. This long lease could be a useful solution, but only until it terminates in 2188.

The second option sounds something like a repeat of what has already taken place. Originally, the lease was put out to tender and although the government was entitled to look at factors other than level of the bid, they did not do so. Had they done so the crofters association would surely have won the tender. Perhaps second time around the minister would ensure that such benefits were taken into account.

However, even if the association (or other community group) wins the tender the second time around, the terms of the lease would also need to protect the association and its investment.

The third option, of a purchase under the 1997 Act, is something for which it seems the people of Raasay have no appetite, judging by the press coverage over the last few months. But the consultation is yet young and much can happen in six weeks.

As we went to press SCF chair Derek Flynn and chief executive Patrick Krause were due to meet with the minister to discuss issues of concern, including community ownership of local assets.

*Eilidh Ross, Inksters Solicitors*



Glam gathering in for the North Raasay Sheepstock Club



Tigh an Achaidh at Kyle Rona at the north end of Raasay

**Commenting on the consultation in a letter to the West Highland Free Press, SCF Raasay branch member Anne Gillies said that the minister's actions are dividing the community in Raasay. The rest of Anne's letter follows.**

The minister insisted he was legally bound to consult the community in Raasay before reaching a decision for the longer term, although there are already instances where sporting leases are extended rather than put on the open market. He has chosen to make an issue of this where none need have been made.

The issue is not community, but crofting. If he has chosen community over crofting in such a straightforward case – and he is minister for crofting – where the crofters were doing a good job, where it was running smoothly, when no one else on Raasay had shown any interest in taking on the lease, then it bodes ill for crofting. Why has he created divisions

between the wider community and the crofters where none existed before, by inviting competition for control?

Crofters are given grants and subsidies that are not available for their non-crofting neighbours because, if they are doing their job properly, they manage the land by keeping cattle and sheep out on the hill grazings. Does it matter if there are sheep and cattle on the hill? Yes, it does! Areas of land with no stock are gradually increasing and the resulting wilderness is of little use to man nor beast. Apart from anything else, uncontrolled ticks and long, ungrazed heather offer poor walking conditions.

Crofting is not a high-earning occupation. Even with subsidies

the income is poor and without them it is unsustainable. The work can be hard and unrelenting and the weather and the bureaucracy are worse. The various schemes, which come and go, have become increasingly complicated and at times seem to be devised to trip you up. Whole booklets on penalties are now the norm.

Crofting is a way of life and skills are passed from generation to generation. If the cycle is broken it could be lost forever. Bureaucracy and regulations have already discouraged droves of crofters who previously kept a couple of cows and 20 sheep. Those who are left have to be more dedicated, as fewer people share township work. Year after year more leave

and few want to encourage their children to take on such hard, uncertain work. Far better if they can get employment that pays a decent wage and can be left behind at five o'clock.

This issue is not about how many venison burgers can be sold in the shop. It's not about how many holiday cottages can be let out to visitors. These are extras – which the Raasay crofters managed to add on. The issue is whether anyone in the Scottish Government is prepared to support active crofting and those doing a service for their community by managing the land around them.

So far, the answer appears to be "No!"

# New entrants group update

**T**HANKS TO ALL those who responded to the invitation to be part of a new entrants' working group. The working group has been set up following the establishment of the New Entrants Advisory Panel (NEAP), created to advise the Scottish Government on issues affecting new entrants to farming and crofting.

The panel was set up in September and it is chaired by Scottish Government head of agriculture, David Barnes. Members include a number of other government officials, representatives from the new entrants group, Scottish Tenant Farming Association, Scotlands Rural (University) College (SRUC), NFUS new generation group and the Buccleuch Group. The panel advises on a range of topics, but mainly focuses on CAP support – pillar 1 direct support and pillar 2 support provisions through Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Following a request by the cross party group on crofting, an SCF representative was invited to join the panel to ensure that crofters' voices were also included.

At the first meeting SCF's Karen MacRae attended there were updates on four main topics: **CAP reform; talent; skills and mentoring; land and finance.**

David Barnes gave an update on the progress of CAP reform discussions. The main points which were identified, particularly in pillar 1 (direct payments) relevant to new entrants follow.

Council and parliament texts allow new entrants into the new basic payment scheme (replacing single farm payment) and as much of the national reserve as needed can be used as a top-up for those who have a low historic payment.

The parliament text allows for annual top-ups of the national reserve. However there is

not yet agreement on this.

All payment should be area based by 2019. The speed of this transition can be decided by the member state.

The Scottish Government (SG) has been engaging with stakeholders on regionalisation. Once a decision has been made on this, trading of entitlements will be allowed within a region, but not between regions.

Under pillar 2 (SRDP 2014-2020) there will now be a sub-programme specifically designed for new entrants.

To simplify the process of application, there is an intention to remove the need for regional proposal assessment committees and decisions will be made at local SG principal agriculture officer level, with possible ministerial approval over a certain threshold.

More lobbying is needed to ensure that new entrants are defined irrespective of age.

There were also updates on the Land Reform Review Group and the SRUC new entrants programme.

The main item of discussion was the new entrant scheme. £2 million has been pledged by the cabinet secretary as an interim measure to help those who are not currently in receipt of single farm payments. The panel had been asked to advise how the money would be best spent and see that it was allocated fairly. There was a long discussion on this topic and SCF is working hard to ensure that crofters will get a fair share of this payment.

Details of the scheme have not yet been announced but if you would like to be kept up to date with this please let us know – karen@crofting.org – or register directly by sending an e-mail quoting your business reference number and main location code to the SFPMailbox@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.



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# New young crofters need opportunities

**N**O ONE CAN disagree that, if crofting is to have a future, young people must be attracted, encouraged and enabled to take over crofts.

When so many crofts are neglected and abandoned there should be plenty of opportunity for those with energy, skills and enthusiasm to gain a foothold on the land, a place to build a home, the opportunity to start a business and the chance to return a once-precious piece of ground to productivity. The results of a new generation of crofters taking over can be spectacular. However, as very many young, would-be crofters know, it's not so simple.

Back in 2006, SCF became aware of a township where all the crofts were in abandonment, where a few individuals were ruthlessly carving up the land for speculative development, mainly of holiday homes, where absenteeism stood at seventy per cent and where there was expressed demand for crofts for bona fide purposes. SCF revisited the case during our Crofting Resources Programme and uncovered a shocking history of regulatory failure and lax planning procedure.

We are delighted to be able to report a silver lining to this particular cloud. This is how a resident of that township puts it:

**If you want to croft don't be put off by the often seemingly insurmountable obstacles that you may face. It has taken six years**



**from an initial enquiry to getting that tenancy. Surrounded by holiday homes and neglected crofts in a village with an ageing population, my daughter expressed an interest in crofting and followed the advice given by the Crofters Commission – approach a crofter and see if he or she will consider a sublet or assignment.**

**Having done so and getting a positive response, things were looking good. However, family intervention based on understandable but unrealistic nostalgia stopped the process in its tracks.**

The encouragement and support of the Scottish Crofting Federation and the local landowner meant that the search continued. Objecting to an absentee proposing assignation to another absentee did progress things a bit further. Finally, six years later, she has a tenancy.

**If crofting is to have a future there have to be young people getting involved. So if you know a young person who wants to croft, encourage them, support them and don't give up.**

We don't want to embarrass this family by exposing them to the glare of publicity, but we congratulate them for their determination and persistence which has finally brought about a successful outcome and we send our warmest good wishes to the new crofter.

We would remind readers that SCF keeps a register of demand and supply of crofts. Those seeking a croft and those seeking a tenant are invited to contact the office at Kyle of Lochalsh.



# England and Wales leave Scotland trailing on common grazing support

**R**ECENT DATA on the uptake of agri-environment on common land in both Wales and England reflects very badly on Scotland's performance on its common grazings.

Though Wales's new Glastir scheme has only been available since January 2012, by December 32% of all common land was signed up, with Welsh Government minister Alun Davies predicting uptake of over 75% by the end of 2013. Common land is currently four times more likely to be in Glastir than sole-use farmland, though uptake in previous schemes was very low, at only 2%.

Meanwhile, in England Defra figures suggest that around 74% of commons are in agri-environment agreements. The numbers are not directly comparable to Scotland, since entry-level schemes (roughly equivalent to LMO) have replaced LFA support in both England and

Wales but, significantly, in England most of the commons are also in a higher level scheme (like ESA or Rural Priorities).

English law has nothing which corresponds to Scotland's Common Grazings Regulation Act which allows for government-backed grazings committees with primary responsibility for the management of the grazings. Each commons has to create not only an association, but has in effect to reach unanimous agreement between the rights-holders. It is ironic that Scotland, with its apparently strong legal framework and long tradition of common grazings governance, should find itself so far behind.

Figures from the Scottish Government show that only 4.8% and 5.6% of common grazings are in LMO and RP agri-environment measures respectively. In stark contrast to Wales, common

grazings are three or four times less likely than sole traders to be in the schemes.

The Welsh Government was so concerned at the possibility of poor uptake by commons, partly reflecting a lack of commoners' associations (corresponding roughly to grazings committees), that it allocated some of the technical assistance funds from its Rural Development Plan (RDP) to the appointment of 18 commons development officers to work with commons to prepare them for the new scheme.

In Scotland the lack of a real incentive to join schemes, combined with the extra difficulties of doing so and the poor chance of success in many cases, are probably the main reasons for low uptake. But the low proportion of grazings which have committees in office and the large number of grazings which have never been

regulated raises concerns as to the capacity of grazings to respond to any improvement in the measures available. Action by the Crofting Commission to address this has so far not been proportionate to the scale of the issue.

Meanwhile, calculations show that the advisory provision to crofting areas is at a much lower level than that to more productive areas of Scotland. Shetland is particularly badly off, with only one SAC advisor for almost 1200 potential clients, compared to a Highlands and Islands average of one per 326 and an average of one to only 180 in the rest of Scotland.

All of these issues can be addressed in the next RDP – Shetlanders need to get directly involved in the debate!

Gwyn Jones  
gwyn@efncp.org



Rackwick, Hoy – One of Orkney's few remaining common grazing areas

© Bob Burke



Rackwick – another perspective

© Bob Burke

## Croft house grant scheme

**S**CF HAS FOR SOME time been concerned about the future of the Croft House Grant Scheme (CHGS).

This arises from a steady stream of complaints from members being refused the grant. There appeared to be a change in the criteria for awarding the grant and there were questions regarding the administration of the scheme and the appeals procedure.

We have met with the Scottish Government officials responsible for the grant and the meeting was very informative.

The administration of CHGS continues to be based in the Tiree office; but oversight, policy matters and appeals are conducted from the SGRPID office in Oban.

The reason, we are told, for grant refusals is almost always that applicants do not submit plans for purposeful use of the croft, or that a new croft has been created, usually by division, which is too small to have any such purposeful use. The latter is clearly an issue for the new Commission to consider. We were told of crofts being created as small as 0.2ha which were then the subject of a CHGS application.

Members applying for CHGS should therefore be prepared to demonstrate that a new house on the croft is necessary for the working of the land. It may well be that the Scottish Government will ask for a business plan showing how crofting activities (or other purposeful use) will be developed within a given time scale. Also, crofts created by division must be of sufficient size to have a genuine crofting use (or other purposeful use), possibly when combined with a common grazing share.

SCF has successfully argued cases for members initially refused CHGS and we will continue to do so, but we would ask all members who might wish to apply to the scheme to be prepared to back up their application with a business plan; and those considering dividing a croft to ensure that the resulting new holding is genuinely a croft and not just a house site.

Any member who considers they have been unreasonably refused CHGS assistance should contact SCF head office.



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## Crofting debate in Parliament

**O**N 12 MARCH 2013 Jean Urquhart MSP secured a debate in the Scottish Parliament on crofting. To read the transcript please go to the Scottish Parliament website and search the official report under 'Crofting' or go to the SCF website for a link.



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## Mapping crofts: important advice

**As with any new legislation, rumours and mis-information abound.**

To refute one such; boundary maps submitted to the Crofting Register do NOT have to be digital. Registers of Scotland (RoS) will accept hand-drawn boundaries on a base map that they can provide for a small charge.

SCF and RoS have worked together to make this possible so do not be duped into paying a lot of money to have a digital map produced. RoS officials will be present on the SCF Royal Highland and Black Isle show stands to answer any queries about the Crofting Register.

## The goose epidemic: conservation gone mad?

*Continued from page 1*

the islands in supplying shot figures, there seems no reason to not change the law so that geese can be controlled year-round and wild goose meat and products can be sold.

Two very effective projects have been working together to control numbers – the Machair Life+ project (run by RSPB and partnered by SCF) which is due to end this year; and the SNH adaptive management trial which is under pressure due to government cuts. It is clear that if the Scottish Government does not provide more funding for goose control it will not be possible to keep the flood at bay.

Biodiversity is of course important, but the

key to this is to safeguard the livelihoods of the people who live here, whose croft-work nurtures a balanced ecosystem. There is a catastrophe unfolding and officialdom appears to have failed to recognise this and to take action. Crofters and their families are now the endangered ones.

*Note: A paper petition has gone up in public places in North Uist and an on-line petition has been submitted to the Scottish Parliament. It can be found on the Scottish Parliament website. Please take the opportunity to sign these.*



# Registering a croft

*The new Crofting Register:  
a brief guide to applications*

**W**HETHER WE like it or not, the new Crofting Register is here to stay.

The Scottish Government has invested a million pounds in it so it's not going away. Most people would agree that an accurate, map-based register of crofts is long overdue. If the old Crofters Commission had started the process back in 1955, the crofters of today would not be faced with the bother and expense of supplying the information required for a definitive register of all the land subject to crofting tenure.

The following is a brief guide to the process of registering a croft in the new Crofting Register. For full instructions and forms see [www.ros.gov.uk/croftingregister/guidance](http://www.ros.gov.uk/croftingregister/guidance).

## 1. Do you have a good map of the croft and any apportionment(s)?

The principal mapping requirement is that Registers of Scotland (RoS) must be able to identify the land to be registered on their master Ordnance Survey map. The map presented should preferably be at 1:2500. Beware the IACS map, which may not show the actual boundaries of the croft. Maps can be obtained from RoS for £16 plus VAT each. Contact them at [croftenquiries@ros.gov.uk](mailto:croftenquiries@ros.gov.uk). An agricultural consultant or mapping specialist (see adverts in *The Crofter*) will also be able to supply maps but these will usually cost more than from RoS.

It is important to ensure that the croft boundaries are projected to reach the public road, the sea-shore or any other important feature so that there is no opportunity for landlords, other crofters or anyone else to create ransom strips; and that no odd pieces of ground are left out of crofting registration.

## 2. Complete the form.

This should not be too hard if you know all adjoining owners and occupiers, your common grazing share and details of any decrofting within the last 20 years. Decrofted areas should also be shown on the map and highlighted to distinguish them from the croft. You may need to use additional sheets for the information requested on the form.

## 3. Submit the form, map and fee of £90 to the Crofting Commission.

They will check the application against the information they hold. If all is correct they will forward the application to RoS. If not they will return the application with a letter stating reasons and the action you need to take before they can forward to RoS.

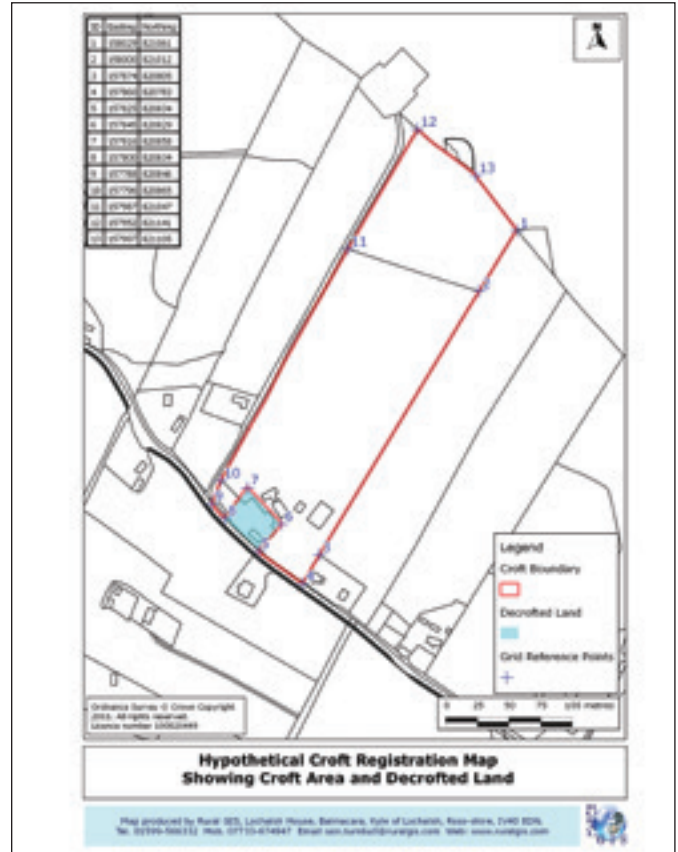
In due course you will receive a certificate and map from RoS and your croft will appear in the on-line register. This is not the end of the matter though.

You will get a letter from the commission and so will all your neighbouring owners and tenants. They will have nine months to challenge your registration in the Scottish Land Court. Basically this will be if they disagree with the boundary you have registered.

Now the sting in the tail. The Commission will enclose a notice which you must display "in a prominent position on the croft" for nine months and you must advertise the registration for two successive weeks in a weekly, local newspaper. The Commission will supply a suggested form of advertisement. As with other crofting notices, this may appear in a community newspaper if there is one, eg *De Tha Dol* and *Ullapool News*, so long as it is a weekly. Make sure you ask for the cheapest available size and format.

**Why do it now?** In November, registration will become compulsory at trigger points. A trigger point is any of the usual transactions carried out through the Crofting Commission. These include assignation, bequest, decrofting, division, letting and apportionment. If you anticipate any of these events taking place it is worth registering now, as there may well be delays once the system has to deal with a large volume of possibly complex applications. It will save time and money if townships can map all their crofts co-operatively. This is being done at Badrallach (Wester Ross) and in the Strathfleet townships (parish of Rogart).

SCF can advise on what is required.



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GRAPHIC DESIGN AND  
PRINT SERVICES

## TRAINING

# New brooms sweep in for training post

*John Bannister reports on the appointment of SCF's new training managers.*

**P**ARDON THE PUN but the brooms in question are from the Loch Broom area and they take up this appointment as a partnership – a relatively new experience for SCF.

Any connotations associated with brooms, however, could not be further from the truth. Here we have Lucy Beattie and Tina Hartley, two highly qualified, professionals with a wealth of experience in teaching and training, including course director and tutor on our SCF induction courses, happy to join us after former manager Su Cooper left us for pastures new.

Applications for this post were advertised and we had a good response from a number of very competent people. Qualifications alone, though, were not enough and the selection panel looked further for chalk-face experience, which subsequently led to a short-list. The interview panel met with the various short-listed applicants, all of whom gave a remarkably good account of themselves on the day. Finally, the successful candidate was chosen unanimously after an impressive partnership bid from Lucy and Tina, whose personal profiles speak so winsomely for them (see below).

By the time you read this, the partnership will already be in post and coming to terms with the challenges of the task ahead.

A new training management takes us into another era of crofter training. Some fifteen years ago we saw the first crofting entry level induction course (then called the foundation course) on the Isle of Skye. Since then the popularity of the course has exceeded all expectations and it has been run throughout the Highlands and Islands. It is our aim to broaden this and provide training for all crofters, irrespective of experience. And to extend that commitment to the furthest reaches of the crofting areas, where local resources and a critical mass of students can be identified.

We welcome Tina and Lucy to our team.

### Tina Hartley – partner training manager

I originally come from Lancashire. With my husband and young family I now live in Ullapool. Having purchased land in 1996 we settled permanently in the area during 2003, with dreams of a quieter, safer and much slower pace of life. Previously I had worked



Tina Hartley



Lucy Beattie

as a senior manager in social services and decided to put these management skills to good use and become an independent business advisor and trainer. Working locally, I helped set up Made in Ullapool, a social enterprise, and my most recent achievement was to assist the people of Drumbeg and surrounding townships achieve their aim of total renovation of their village hall.

In 2011 I was asked to become the SCF's local training director for Ullapool and I then went on to successfully run two entry-level courses. I employed Lucy Beattie as a tutor on each course and we found SCF's concept of training to be quite innovative. I had no prior knowledge of crofting but found that I enjoyed the work and certainly recognised the potential for future development in that sector.

Like many folk, living and working in a rural location means that one sometimes has to be creative about employment opportunities. This new post allows Lucy and I the opportunity to create a working partnership and combine our joint skills in project management, training and agriculture.

I very much look forward to the challenge of running the various levels of this training programme. Our aim is to further develop existing links with crofters and small landholders; to promote the opportunities that training can bring to new entrants and established crofters alike; and indeed to promote training as an important step in the personal development process.

### Lucy Beattie – partner training manager

I was brought up at Leckmelm estate near Ullapool and have always had a fondness for farming and rural issues. From an early age, I would spend my spare time fishing for trout or feeding orphan lambs at the farm. I spent my gap year working on farms through the WWOOF scheme in the USA, which eventually led to me study at Harper Adams Agricultural College. After gaining my degree I worked my placement year with RICS Accreditation as a trainee valuer for Severn Trent Water at their Lake Vyrnwy estate in Wales.

Following the loss of both of my parents, I returned to the Highlands in 2000 to run Leckmelm estate. Today I operate a mixed tourism, forest and farming enterprise with 150 head of sheep, a small number of cattle and I also rear and process turkeys for Christmas.

As a lecturer for UHI West Highland College, I teach the SVQ rural skills programme which links to Ullapool High School. I have worked with Tina on college projects and together we are studying for our teaching in further education qualification – continuing our professional development. I also worked with Tina on the previous SCF training programmes. We are excited by the opportunities that lie ahead for promoting crofting skills to new entrants and creating training opportunities for promoting best practice in crofting.

With a young family, I feel exceptionally fortunate to be supported by friends, family and a great team of staff at Leckmelm as Tina and I move into our new role with SCF.

## Making your subscription go further

### Training discounts

Following the recruitment of the training managers for next the phase of our crofters skills training programme, we are pleased to announce that members will be able to receive a discount on training courses.

Members are entitled to a discount on the entry level crofting induction course

and also a 10% discount on a package of practical courses.

There is a very high demand for these courses so please make sure you register your interest to ensure that you receive notifications about any upcoming courses. This can be done by emailing [training@crofting.org](mailto:training@crofting.org) or by phoning HQ.



# Agri-environment uptake by crofters: report raises serious questions

**A** RECENTLY-RELEASED analysis of agri-environment uptake by crofters shows that uptake is not only much higher in Scotland in general, but even in some intensive agricultural areas with low nature value and much higher farm incomes

The report draws lessons from a number of sample parishes; the figures for Shetland are used here to illustrate the findings. While the Scottish uptake amongst potential non-common grazings applicants is around 21% and 17% for Land Managers' Options (LMO) and Rural Priorities (RP) respectively, the figures for Shetland are only 2% and 10%. Strangely, even Lewis's LMO uptake rate is three times higher than Shetland's!

The contrast with intensive non-LFA Aberdeenshire is stark. 18% of farmers are in LMO agri-environment and 28% in RP. At the detailed level, things are even worse. Even in the basic LMO scheme, 17 out of the 23

Shetland parishes have no participants. And for RP, while the best uptake per parish is comparable with the national average, seven parishes have no participants at all.

In lowland Aberdeenshire, while some parishes did have poor uptake, 39 of the 76 parishes have an uptake higher than the national average; 18 have more than twice the average; eight are over thrice the average and five are over four times the average – the highest participation rate is 80%.

This all raises the question of what uptake should be. Agri-environment is different from the Single Payment or LFASS, which more or less every farmer or crofter is expected to claim. Policy-makers must consider what an appropriate rate of participation might be to deliver their goals, for example the conservation of biodiversity.

In the 1990s, Shetland's agriculture was considered to be of sufficiently high nature

value for the islands to be designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), receiving targeted funding for low-intensity farming when no such schemes were generally available. Given that, it might be assumed that uptake rates for the current agri-environment offers should be substantially higher than the Scottish average, not significantly lower.

In any case, serious questions need to be asked – one lesson from the ESA is that lack of interest in such payments is not an issue in itself. That suggests that the problem lies squarely with the policy and its delivery.

*The European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism report, published online, is based on Scottish Government data and is intended to inform the debate on the current CAP reform process.*

Gwyn Jones



© Gwyn Jones

## A crofting heroine

**M**URDINA (ENA) CAMPBELL, Clisham, Rhue was elected clerk to the grazings in 1979 and served continuously until September 2009. She then became chairperson until August 2012 when she retired to become a committee member.

In 1979 crofter meetings were convened



under the A835 Strathan Burn bridge – a neutral point between the three crofting communities of Morefield, Rhue and Ardmail. Since then neutral locations have given way to meetings in more comfortable surroundings.

When Ena was asked to attend a meeting at Mairi and John Mackenzie's house at Morefield to consider a proposal, she did not question the arrangement. Everyone knew she would come as she never missed croft meetings.

When she arrived she was surprised to see some younger members of her own family there. Her surprise was complete when Joe Stewart, her neighbour, presented her with a framed certificate signed informally by all our crofters as a gesture of our appreciation of her 33 years of conscientious service. A bouquet of flowers, tea, coffee, home baking and reminiscences contributed to an enjoyable afternoon.

We are very fortunate that our crofts have remained basically in the same families for several generations. We have no absentee crofters or indeed absentee landlords. Our two landlords at Strathan and Rhidorroch reside here on a permanent basis and are very supportive and accessible for consultation. In the Highlands many estates seem to be

administered from solicitors' and factors' offices in places like Chester and absentee landlords cause as much difficulty as absentee crofters.

Traditional shared duties of stock and land still exist, but on a much reduced scale, and many of our meetings revolve around forestry schemes; deer control; radio and telephone mast rentals; support for the fox club and things like fence maintenance.

Ena's meticulous minute book formed the foundation for Avril Scott, our current clerk, to make the transition to computerised accounts and typed minutes. Currently we are working on the maps for apportionments and preparing for croft registration.

When we first got involved in forestry one of our crofters was very much against it and stated, "Planting trees is forfeiting the heritage of our forefathers – and no good will come of it." When the cheques started to come in he could not believe it.

Crofting used to be an occupation and a way of life, but has now become a business with shareholders. It still requires conscientious individuals like Ena to set an example of dedication.

KJ MacDonald (Ian)

# Making your subscription go further

## Scottish Crofting Produce Mark

With increasing consumer awareness of where food comes from, crofters are being offered more opportunities to sell their produce locally.

We can help with this through our Scottish Crofting Produce Mark. If you produce beef, pork, lamb, mutton, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, eggs, dairy produce, honey, preservatives, wool, knitwear, or craft products and sell them either directly to customers or through retailers, then the

produce mark can help you do this.

The mark is only available to SCF members and it signifies that the produce comes from a croft as well as meeting certain laid-down standards of quality, animal health and welfare, hygiene and total traceability. If you would like more information or the application forms for the mark please contact HQ or visit our website.

You will get promotion on our website, use of our exclusive Scottish Crofting Produce logo, a certificate to certify your subscription

and leaflets to let people know about the brand. There are also opportunities to attend events which will help with the promotion of your produce.

We are also investigating ways of integrating with other projects and organisations, such as the Plunkett Community Shop Network and SAOS (Scottish Agriculture Organisation Society) to help with the promotion of Scottish Crofting Produce.



## Scottish Crofting Produce

### Highlands and Islands Croft Origin

Às a' chroit anns a' Ghàidhealtachd 's na h-Eileanan

## Take your business further with Business Gateway

If you're working in the non-agricultural or horticultural sectors, have an 'off croft' business enterprise or are looking to develop an 'off croft' diversified enterprise in the Highlands and Islands, our industry experienced advisers can guide you through the issues which matter to keep your business healthy and take it forward.

Business Gateway – free, local support that's right up your street.



[www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)

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## ON THE CROFT

# The joy of potatoes

*My interest in potatoes began about sixty years ago, writes Neil MacGillivray, when during the Easter holidays I helped my father plant potatoes on our Camuscross croft.*

**T**RADITIONALLY, the weekend of the Sleat communion in early July was when they would be first lifted and I believe that no potatoes I have eaten since were half as good. Memory lends enchantment – not only to the lifting and eating but also the pleasure a young lad experienced in the work.

We did not plant in lazy beds – my father had taught gardening as a schoolteacher and maybe that method was looked on as old fashioned! My father was born in 1883 and I am sure that he helped with potato planting as

a boy, learning from his father who was born in 1843 – and so the tradition has now lasted into a third century. I still use dung and seaweed just as we did sixty years ago but now I plant some of my potatoes in lazy beds and find it a very good method. The term lazybeds is a misnomer, there being nothing lazy about it. It is the way that the original potato growers in South America grew their crop.

Mention of my grandfather brings to mind the potato famine which he must have experienced as a small boy in the late 1840s when the blight destroyed the crop not only here but throughout Europe, most devastatingly in Ireland. The blight is still with us but there is hope, in that there are scientists working to develop strains of

potato which are blight resistant. For example, the Sárvári Research Trust (SRT) headed by Dr David Shaw (if ever there was a perfect surname for a potato scientist Shaw must be it!) produces several varieties and can be found on the internet: <http://sarvari-trust.org/>

Each year I plant some heritage varieties such as International Kidney, Home Guard, Craigneil, Pink Fir Apple, Arran Victory, Dunbar Rover or Edgocote Purple. I have grown all of these at one time or another and although yields vary, as does the taste, it is well worth experimenting and at the same time it helps to preserve these for future generations.

Diversity has to be preserved and encouraged.



© Claire Nicolson



## Crofting as a tourist attraction

**A**S THE RAIN lashes against the window, I sit wondering whether the last two ewes to lamb will choose this moment to start and so cause me to struggle into waterproofs again.

But for some people active crofting is actually an attraction and this can prove a useful marketing tool to get them into your holiday cottage or B&B.

In the last few weeks, we have had a family in the cottage who were down regularly to feed the lambs and were delighted to do so. It was a highlight of their holiday and a valuable education on crofting and farming in general. They left after every session with strict instructions to wash their hands thoroughly and not to suck their thumbs in the meantime.

We also had a couple staying on the caravan site, which overlooks one of the fields where we lamb, and they were fascinated by a ewe having twins in front of their window. Fortunately, everything went well and the lambs were up and sucking quickly.

I've also had a caravanner come and help stack bales and someone else who wanted to film lambs being rounded up, loaded onto the trailer and put through the ring at the Laig sales. He also filmed chickens

hatching and produced a DVD for showing at a children's hospice.

Farmyard smells and sights aren't to everyone's taste but, for many people, sheep in the distance and some ducks running around add to the charm of the place and are an attraction for holidaymakers. It is what the experts call authenticity and is an area where croft holidays can differentiate themselves from the competition. Certainly for us in the north Highlands business is down this year and any marketing angle needs to be exploited.

The working croft aspect is a key component

of the SCF's proposed croft tourism scheme that will sit alongside the Scottish Crofting Produce mark. The scheme is not prescriptive but the croft should be engaged in some form of active crofting and the person in charge should be prepared to explain about the history of crofting and about the work of the croft. This should give us an edge in promoting our businesses and generating repeat business.

If you are interested in taking part in the scheme, get in touch with HQ.

*Russell Smith*





## ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS

# Global issues, local solutions



**T**HE SCOTTISH Crofting Federation has embarked on a new project, Hungry for Rights, which aims to educate and raise awareness of alternative food systems such as short supply chains, direct sales and smallholder produce.

In a nutshell this means all networks of producers, consumers and distributors which are not part of the standardised anonymous industrial food supply. A shortened

food supply chain means shorter distances between producer and consumer, making the origin of food more transparent; shortening the distance between consumer and area of produce origin (hence regional product brands).

The drivers of growth in these alternative food networks are well-known: on the one hand the price squeeze for farmers in the supermarket production model and on the other hand

consumer distrust of industrial food. Short supply chains can contribute significantly to rural development and have been seen as a good model for peripheral rural areas. It was estimated in 2003 that of a total of seven million farms in 15 European countries, some 1.4 million farms (20%) were involved in direct selling, 800,000 (12%) in quality production, while approximately

100,000 farms (1.5%) were engaged in organic production.

Development of short supply chains depends not only on producers, but also on consumers, retailers and local authorities. For this reason, the project will bring together representative of these groups.

Tim Lang, professor of food policy at City University, London, spoke recently of food democracy: people actively engaging in food affairs and being heard in their preference. Translated to Scotland, this would be croft produce rather than GMOs, nano and other o-foods that may be in the pipeline of food technicians and engineers.

The project will start assessing local needs and challenges, offer training in skills development and capacity-building towards the active promotion of short supply chains. The target area will be Western Isles and Skye and Lochalsh. Training courses will be developed on the basis of needs indicated by participants.

This forms an excellent chance to keep building on the SCF's Crofting Resources Programme which finished last year.

*If you are interested in attending the local needs assessments, please get in touch with SCF HQ*



## Community supported agriculture: a brief history

**O**NE OF THESE alternative food networks is community supported agriculture (CSA). Japan has a long history of co-operatives and nowadays nearly a quarter of all Japanese households belong to a food co-op. From the 1960s to 80s a series of food scares and fraudulent labelling led to consumer co-operatives being established to source safe foods. In 1965 a group of women created the Teikei system (literally translated as putting the farmer's face on the food), with a series of consumer-producer co-operatives designed not only to source safe food, but to reduce the food supply chain. Today there are 3,000 members of the Teikei movement.

In Germany in 1924 an idea took root to create small self-contained farms capable of feeding themselves and those

around them. The first official CSA in Europe was started in 1968 in Germany by followers of biodynamic principles. This was followed by CSAs in Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands.

The origins of CSA in the UK can be traced back to a period of decline in farming incomes in the early 1990s, while at the same time an interest in organic produce and local food developed. In the UK the Soil Association has initiated much CSA work and it provides farmers and communities with a range of support and advice, a toolkit, technical information, case studies and a comprehensive website: [www.soilassociation.org/csa](http://www.soilassociation.org/csa).

A very famous example is Scotland's first CSA, Earthshare, set up in 1994 as a result of a shared desire to have more food produced and supplied locally in

the wider community in Findhorn. They now provide 175 family shares.

**Further reading:** *Community Supported Agriculture. A teaching programme for degree students in agriculture and related subjects. Prepared by Plumpton College Soil Association, Tablehurst Farm*

*CSA, University of Brighton, downloadable from [www.soilassociation.org/csa](http://www.soilassociation.org/csa).*

*Understanding alternative food networks: exploring the role of short food supply chains in rural development, by Henk Renting, Terry K Marsden and Jo Banks in Environment and Planning A 2003, volume 35.*





## ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS

# Vegetable production supporting smallholders in France

**F**RANCE HAS A very good example of an alternative food system supporting small-scale farming, AMAP. "Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne" translated to the Highlands and Islands would be "Association for the preservation of crofting agriculture".

By joining an AMAP group, consumers deal directly with growers and commit themselves months ahead of the harvest to buy a selection of fruit and vegetables from a particular farmer. For the consumer it means fresh seasonal food, often organic, made from plant or animal breeds or ancient land; for both partners it means a fair price. Thirteen euros (£11) for a small box and 23 euros (£19) for large box seems on the expensive side compared to box schemes in Scotland which are usually around £7 for a small box and around £10-£15 for a large box.

Running for more than 10 years, there are now almost 1,600 AMAPs with regular deliveries of 66,000 boxes to some 270,000 consumers. Boxes contain mostly fruit and vegetables, but also cheese, eggs and meat. The movement was gradually structured by networking through mainly regional trade and, more recently, by the formation of an inter-regional movement of AMAP (MIRAMAP). These regional or inter-regional structures are essential for the exchange of experience, training designers and co-operation from official institutions (regions, departments, etc).

Visit [www.amap-france.org](http://www.amap-france.org) (in French) and <http://blog.urgenci.net/?p=1080> for a Welsh visitor's comment.



East camp volunteer

## Bogsa Uibhist vegetable box scheme on Uist



First Uist vegetable box team, SCF's Maria Scholten on the left

**L**AST YEAR a small-scale pilot box scheme was run on the Uists through an informal partnership of three growers – Bunait in North Uist; Ardivachar croft garden, South Uist; the Sustainable Uist vegetable trial site in Liniclate, Benbecula (thanks to Sustainable Uist making the site available); and East Camp horticultural and social project in Balivanich. With the exception of East Camp, all sites are on croft land.

By combining forces – especially five greenhouses – over a hundred boxes could be delivered during ten weeks without much extra planning and without one single meeting. Produce included a wide range of salad leaves such as baby spinach, rocket, oak leaf, mizuna, giant mustard, lettuces; vegetables, including tomatoes, French beans and many chard types; and a wide range of herbs and edible flowers.



## ON THE CROFT

# Worm control in cattle



**C**ATTLE IN THE UK are commonly affected by gastrointestinal worms, the commonest being *Ostertagia ostertagi* and *Cooperia oncophora*.

Gastrointestinal worms can impact on animal health, productivity and profitability and it is therefore important to adopt an effective and sustainable control strategy to help reduce the impact.

## Worms and your cattle

First-season grazing calves are most susceptible to gastrointestinal worm infection and may show signs of parasitic gastroenteritis (PGE). As well as reduced weight gains, PGE can significantly reduce milk output and affects reproductive performance and carcass quality in older animals.

In the UK, four roundworm genera are most often recorded in cases of PGE. Two of these live in the true stomach (abomasum) and two in the small intestine. The stomach worms are the brown stomach worm (*Ostertagia*) and the barber's pole worm (*Haemonchus*). The intestinal species are the thread necked worm (*Nematodirus*) and *Cooperia*.

*Nematodirus* often causes disease in very young calves from six to eight weeks of age, usually in late May-June.

*Ostertagia* can cause two types of disease syndrome. Type I is usually seen from mid-July onwards in first season grazing calves. Type II disease generally occurs in yearlings in late winter/spring. The latter results from the re-emergence of arrested larvae ingested during the previous autumn.

Outbreaks of haemonchosis tend to be commoner when the weather is warmer and wetter and therefore tend to occur in mid-summer to autumn.

## Treatment

Over the last 25-30 years, and with the advent of anthelmintic drugs used in combination with pasture management, producers have successfully negated the impact of parasites in their cattle to maximise profits. Unfortunately, although the routine use of effective anthelmintics has been shown to maximise productivity it is not, by itself, a sustainable solution with increasing reports of anthelmintic resistance in a number of cattle gut worm species.

In light of these findings it is becoming more important to consider sustainable control of roundworms in your herds. Moredun has developed the acronym ACME with the aim of reducing the risk of developing anthelmintic resistant worms on, or transferring them to, your croft:

- Adopt an effective quarantine strategy.
- Check efficacy of treatment.
- Monitor the need for treatment.
- Ensure best practice is followed.

More information on treatment strategies to control parasitic roundworms in cattle can be found in our 12 page news-sheet. Please contact the Moredun communications team on 0131 445 5111 or email [info@moredun.org.uk](mailto:info@moredun.org.uk) for your free copy.



## Scottish kye: a future key?

*This article introduces a new series, where issue by issue we will take a fresh look at our traditional breeds.*

**T**HE TRADITION OF THE CROFT and the kye as part of survival in a demanding environment goes back a long, long way.

A mixed, low-intensity system is sustainable in difficult environments because no single component becomes dominant and thereby the risks of failure are spread. The slow evolution of such systems also means that many complementary relationships are built up between the individual components. The financial, environmental and societal links are extensive.

However, a variety of pressures in the minute window of the past three decades has virtually eliminated the hill cow from the Scottish uplands and we can increasingly see the value of what we have lost. The value of the Scottish hill cow needs to be re-evaluated and placed in the 21st century.

The breadth of that value needs to be measured in greater terms than the price at the mart. The traditional upland cow was part of the family banking, providing annual income and a final fillip when times were desperate. The impact on the environment was immense, from the wealth of invertebrate species that thrived on the dung to the plants that benefited from the impact of their feet. And some species did not benefit, such as bracken. The impact of hill cattle on vegetation is such that they are being reintroduced in the Pyrennees



in an attempt to reduce the risk from heath and forest fires.

And we have not even touched on the provision of high quality genetics and food raised on herbage to help sustain a massive and growing population. Let us look again at the Scottish kye.

Jamie Robertson  
Livestock Management Systems Ltd,  
Aberdeen



## ON THE CROFT

# Cattle health planning for townships

*Beef from Scottish crofts and farms has a great reputation. Protecting this reputation through health planning is crucial and can also improve herd profitability. However, this can be problematic in a township where several herds are mixing both for grazing and use of the bull. In this article SAC's Janette Sutherland looks at the two most important diseases to tackle and ways to start a township health scheme such as SAC Premium Cattle Health Scheme (PCHS).*

## Building on BVD eradication scheme

All herds should have been tested for Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) under the Scottish Government BVD Eradication Scheme, so you already will have an indication of the status of your herd. If selling suckled calves or breeding heifers, being able to guarantee them as BVD free could be a valuable marketing point.

The effect of BVD can be felt at all stages of the production cycle – from bulling all the way through to calving and into the rearing stages of the calf. It is spread by persistently infected animals (PIs) which have become infected whilst still in the womb. Infertility, extended calving periods, abortions, dead calves, malformed or weak calves are all signs of BVD infection. Because the immune system can be suppressed by the disease, calf scours and pneumonia are also common. Often the PI animal will die with mucosal disease in which the digestive tract is severely ulcerated – an animal welfare issue. Often these deaths will be in finishing units so buyers will become more discerning in where they buy their stores.

Breeders should test for evidence of PI animals and remove them. As a result the herd will be healthier and animals sold from the herd can be classed as BVD-free.

Testing for BVD will involve blood sampling of five calves (over nine months old) per management group. Two clear tests at annual intervals will confer accredited status to the herd. For accredited status, appropriate bio-security measures are also necessary – eg a 3m boundary between your cattle and any neighbouring cattle. If you cannot create 3m boundary fencing you can get vaccinated and monitored free status, in which you still have to sample the five calves per management group but you also need to vaccinate the breeding animals and the bull.

The result from the initial screen of calves will determine whether there is evidence of a PI in the herd. If PI is present, it has to be tracked down and this will necessitate testing more cattle – cattle to test will be determined in discussion with your vet.

To maintain accredited or vaccinated monitored free status an annual screen of five calves per management group has to be undertaken.

## Categories of freedom from BVD

1. **Herd accredited** – bio-security measures in place including a 3m boundary between your cattle and neighbouring cattle. Cattle can be vaccinated if required.

2. **Herd vaccinated and monitored free** – a

lesser status as the 3m boundary is not required, however, bio-security is vital. Cattle must be vaccinated prior to being exposed to the bull. Many suckler herds should aim to be in this category and this could be very useful for townships without fenced bio-secure boundaries.

3. **Cattle virus-free and vaccinated** – This category is available to vendors of bulling heifers, in-calf heifers/cows and heifers/cows with calves at foot. All stock have to be screened free of BVD virus and breeding stock must be vaccinated prior to sale. If you are selling these classes of stock, speak to your vet and start testing.

If a producer tests and finds out he has no BVD in his herd, he needs to source clean replacements; so it is necessary that adequate supplies from the above categories are in the market-place. There is likely to be a growing market for stock showing freedom from BVD.



© Martin Benson

## Johne's disease

Johne's disease is frequently diagnosed and can cause substantial financial losses due to depressed fertility, reduced milk yield and shortened breeding life. It is also a disease which impacts on animal welfare and is fatal. All cattle over two years of age need to be screened. Although this appears costly, identifying an animal at an early stage may save money.

If infected animals are kept, they could lose a lot of condition and be worth little while spreading disease around the croft. Identification of the disease at an early stage means that the animal has a decent cull value and this can pay for the cost of testing the whole herd.

If keeping home-bred replacements there is a need to show freedom from Johne's disease under the PCHS rules.

## In a township

Individual producers may become members

of PCHS and test for one or more diseases. However, if cattle mix across various producers, as in townships, it is essential that all producers join together for testing purposes so that all cattle can be monitored. It is crucial that cross-fence contact (especially for BVD) is avoided among cattle outwith the township group. Fencing works are not required if aiming for vaccinated and monitored status.

Always start any proposed scheme with an information meeting for all cattle keepers so they understand the costs and the benefits of tackling disease at a township scale. Local SAC consultants may be able to attend committee meetings.

Once people are willing to proceed, contact your local vet to ensure a practical testing programme is created. Consider when you normally handle cattle and fit in testing and vaccination (if undertaken) at those times as

much as possible

If the committee agrees to plan for health then township regulations can be altered to either: i) segregate an area for accredited and non-accredited cattle if, for example, the common grazing is in two distinct areas or ii) only allow tested cattle to use the common grazings. Non-tested cows would need to stay on individual crofts. This would be similar to previous dipping regulations.

If you are using a Crofting Commission township bull then it will have been tested for these diseases. If you have your own bulls or hire privately ensure they are part of the programme.

Freedom from disease is a great way of differentiating your product, especially if selling animals suitable for breeding. Healthy home-bred replacements will also be more productive and profitable.

*For further information about cattle testing schemes contact your vet and SAC office. Please note, other health scheme providers are available.*

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## ON THE CROFT

## Seann tractor no tractor ùr

**T**HA MI DÌREACH an dèidh tractor ùr a cheannachd – tractor ùr dhomhsa bu chòir dhomh ràdh – tha an tractor seo leth-cheud bliadhna dh'aois, ach ann an deagh òrdan, agus mar sin chosg mi beagan mhiltean de notaichean air. Cha robh a' phrìs ge-tà faisg air an ochd mìle a dh'fheumainn pàigheadh airson fear ùr mu 40hp, gun guth air na miltean mòra a phàigheadh tu air na feadhainn mhòra a tha cumanta an-diugh.

Airson chroitean beaga, far nach eil ach beagan acraichean de thalamh àitich, chan eil teagamh sam bith gu bheil a' mhòr-chuid de chroitearan – an fheadhainn a tha ri àiteachadh – air fada cus airgid a chur sna h-innealan aca an coimeas ris an obair a tha iad a' dèanamh.

Bha mi coimhead air film o chionn ghoirid mu thuathanach ann an Northumberland a tha ag obrachadh fearann le eich agus seann innealan. Tha e dèanamh beò-shlàinte as 50 acair de thalamh àitich agus gu leòr a dh'ionatrachd airson 100 mart. Tha esan a' cumail a-mach gure a' phrìs bheag air eich seach tractaran a tha ga chumail comasach air bith-beò a dhèanamh bho fhearann cho beag. Chan eil aige ri ruith

don bhanca airson iasad, gu dearbh a bharrachd air eich òga cheannachd bho àm gu àm, tha cha mhòr a h-uile rud tighinn bhon talamh aige fhèin.

Chan eil mi ag ràdh gum bu choir dhuinn uile a bhith ag obair le eich ach gum b' fhiach uaireannan smaointinn air cosgaisean. Sguir mòran chroitearan air fear a dhèanamh 30-40 bliadhna air ais, gu ìre air tàilleamh droch shìde ach cuideachd chionn dh'fhàs e

doirbh a bhith ceannachd seann innealan a bha beag gu leòr.

Tha na beileachan mòra silage air obair a gheàrradh gun teagamh sam bith, agus air cuideachadh gus crodh a thoirt air ais ann an mòran àiteannan, ach leis cho mòr 's a tha na tractaran a dh'fheumas tu 's e glè bheag de chroitearan as urrainn na prìsean sin a ruigheachd agus eadhon le contractairean tha cosgais àrd agus nì an cudrom a tha sna h-uidheaman cron air

talamh bog.

Chì thu tractaran beaga ùra air a' mhargaid an-diugh agus innealan de mheudachd dha rèir, ach tha na prìsean air an t-seòrsa mhasineiridh seo cho àrd 's nach eil e dèanamh mòran ciall do chroit bheag. Nam biodh cuideigin a' dèanamh suas seann stuth agus ga reic aig prìs reusanta bhiodh sin dha riribh feumail do chroitearan.

*Gabhan Mac a'Phearsain*



## SAFETY FOCUS - Fees for intervention - Beware possible financial implications if you have a visit from the HSE

The Health and Safety Executive is responsible for managing and enforcing Health and Safety within agriculture, and could visit your croft for various reasons; perhaps to undertake a spot check, to investigate a report of non compliance, else, as is most often the case, to investigate an accident or incident.

From 1st October 2012, and under the Health and Safety (Fees) Regulations 2012, the HSE can, in certain circumstances, charge you for their time. These charges are known as Fees for Intervention (FFI).

### When will FFI be triggered?

If, when visiting a business, the HSE see a material breach of the law, the business will now have to pay a fee, based on the amount of time the HSE Inspector has had to spend in identifying the material breach, helping the business to put it right, investigating and taking enforcement action.

### What is a Material Breach?

A material breach is when, in the opinion of the HSE Inspector, there is or has been a contravention of health and safety law that requires them to issue notice of that opinion in writing.

### How much will be charged?

The fee payable is £124 per hour of HSE time. Costs could also include third party involvement, e.g during accident investigation; the costs for which could be higher.

### How Can I avoid incurring such costs?

Under FFI, the HSE will only recover the costs of its regulatory work from dutyholders who are found to be in material breach of health and safety law. As such, businesses who are compliant with the law, or where breaches are not considered 'material', will not be charged FFI for any work undertaken by the HSE. As such, there is no better time to ensure you are complying with relevant Health and Safety regulations.

### How Can I find out More?

Further information on FFI can be found in the following HSE publications, available to download free from the HSE website [www.hse.gov.uk/fee-for-intervention/what-is-ffi.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/fee-for-intervention/what-is-ffi.htm). In particular guidance notes HSE48 – Fee for Intervention – What you need to know, and HSE 47 – Guidance on the Application of FFI.

**For further information or to discuss how NFU Mutual Risk Management Services Ltd could help you manage Health and Safety within your business, please contact**  
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**MEMBERSHIP MATTERS****NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**NAME OF COMPANY:** Scottish Crofting Federation

**COMPANY No:** SC 218658

**REGISTERED OFFICE:** Unit 26 Kyle Industrial Estate,  
Kyle of Lochalsh, IV40 8AX

NOTICE is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Crofting Federation will be held in the Spectrum Centre, 1 Margaret Street, Inverness on Friday, 14th June 2013 at 2.00pm, to consider and if thought fit to pass the following resolutions:

1. To receive company's accounts and the report of the directors and auditors for the year ended 30th November 2012. A summary of the accounts will be available at the meeting and the full or summary accounts will be provided prior to the meeting or on request to the registered office.
2. To elect persons proposed as directors (Article 10 et seq). Ratify the appointment of four directors: David Smith, Finlay Matheson, Iain Keith and Roddy MacDonald.
3. To re-appoint Ritsons Chartered Accountants, of 27 Huntly Street, Inverness IV3 5PR as accountants/auditors and to authorise the directors to fix their remuneration.

By order of the board of directors.

Company secretary: John Bannister

Date of notice: 30th May 2013

The Annual General Meeting will be followed by a presentation given by Neil Ferguson on the subject of alternative architecture through crofting.





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- 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
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- Horticultural advice
- Agri-environment advice
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- Marketing advice
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## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

# Members' legal helpline

*Eilidh Ross of Inksters reports*



Eilidh Ross

**T**HE FIRST few weeks of the SCF's legal helpline have been busy, as word gets around that SCF members can call Inksters and speak to either Brian Inkster or myself, both specialists in crofting law, to receive around 15 minutes or so of free legal advice on crofting law.

We have spoken to more than a dozen crofters so far, about all sorts of issues, including the Crofting Commission, owner-occupied croft decrofting, croft purchase, grazings committees and common grazings, the sometimes complex interface between an owner-occupier crofter and his former landlord, the worry of liability for future care

home fees, the problems which can arise when landlords (or former landlords) grant servitude rights to third parties over croft land, often to the detriment of the crofter – and the tax implications of selling croft land.

Eilidh has also spoken to young crofters about how they need to structure the legalities of building a house on croft land, ie the order of various processes in obtaining planning permission – including a Section 75 agreement, where the council insist on it – decrofting, purchasing and obtaining a grant must take place. Eilidh is about to embark on that process herself, so is reading Karen MacRae's diary with great interest (see

page 19 of the March *Crofter*).

When the helpline was launched, we said that crofters would receive around 15 minutes of advice and so far we think that was probably about the right amount of time. The calls we have received have lasted for an average of 12-15 minutes; and we hope that in all cases crofters have left better informed than they were at the outset. We have found that 15 minutes is sufficient to establish whether there is a problem which requires further attention. Each case is different.

Everybody at Inksters is looking forward to developing the helpline with the SCF over the coming months and years.

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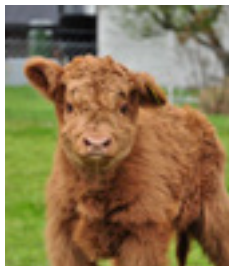
*Rooted in Our Communities*

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

We:

- work to develop, promote and encourage crofting.
- represent and safeguard the interests of crofters, their families and communities, their cultural heritage and their legislative rights.
- promote the environmental, social and cultural benefits of crofting activity and land use as intrinsic aspects of rural development.
- raise awareness of crofting through information and education.
- promote diversity of people, enterprise, skills and expertise.



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**H**AVE YOU HAD a look at the SCF's website recently? If not, you should. It has been refreshed and improved and is now full of fantastic images of crofting life and lots of useful information on crofting and what the SCF is about.

Pop in for a browse today!

## Diversification

Are you doing something interesting and different on your croft? Please let us know what diversification projects are happening around the crofting areas. Email [hq@crofting.org](mailto:hq@crofting.org) or phone 01599 530005.



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We've always worked closely with the people at the heart of the land. It's one of the reasons why we added to our dedicated Energy & Natural Resources team with a Gaelic-speaking crofting lawyer and why we founded the Scottish Highland Renewable Energy Conference – which this year placed the spotlight on crofting and renewables.

With expertise in renewable energy projects on croft land and common grazings, and with offices in Inverness and Thurso, we're perfectly placed to help you harness the full potential of your land.

Contact Calum MacLeod on 01463 795 043, or by email at [calum.macleod@harpermacleod.co.uk](mailto:calum.macleod@harpermacleod.co.uk) to see how we can work together.



GLASGOW 2014  
XX COMMONWEALTH GAMES

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# Small wind turbines pay big dividends

## Lease land for small wind turbines and gain free electricity

**M**ANY FARMERS, small-holders and home owners are combating the continual energy price increases by investing in small wind turbines and taking control of their energy costs.

Small wind turbines, those designed to power farms and homes – not to be confused with large-scale turbines or commercial wind farms – enable owners to fix electricity costs for 20 years, or in some cases gain free electricity for 20 years.

The Evance R9000, the most popular small wind turbine in the UK, suits most sites as it is a versatile solution with flexibility for location and connection – single phase and three phase, on-grid and off-grid.

If you have the space and the wind for small wind turbines but not the finance, you may be able to lease a small portion of your land for R9000 turbines and use the generated electricity free of charge. Already over 400 Evance turbines are supplying free electricity to landowners.

To benefit from this free electricity the proposed location for the turbine needs to

be suitable. Once the site is accepted the process is hassle free for you – as a site survey, planning application and installation are all managed.

Although small and unobtrusive, the R9000 makes a significant impact to energy savings. Costs are reduced as less energy is purchased due to using wind-generated electricity; also there is the additional income available from the Feed-in Tariff (FiT) scheme. For a site with a mean annual

wind speed of 6 m/s the R9000 can deliver a return of up to £5,100 a year and two R9000 turbines up to £10,200 a year!

For the best return, the time to act is now as the current FiT rate of 21.65p per kWh of energy generated is unlikely to be maintained for systems installed after April 2014.

*Evance Wind Turbines is working in partnership with Claymore Energy. For further details contact 01738 472 121.*



## Woodland carbon code

**T**HE FORESTRY COMMISSION has announced a new initiative which has potential financial benefits to crofters and townships.

Plant a new woodland which follows the Woodland Carbon Code and you can:

- generate a new income stream;
- create a lasting legacy for future generations;
- make a real contribution to tackling damaging climate change.

New woodlands which meet the standards set out in the Woodland Carbon Code could provide an alternative to agricultural income,

with the future possibility of:

- additional income upfront to help with the establishment of the woodland;
- future income from the carbon sequestered in the woodland;
- future income from timber products from sawlogs to woodfuel.

Woodland creation projects are sustainable projects which not only sequester carbon but also provide a range of social and environmental benefits such as:

- provide shelter for animals or humans

- depending on location;
- enhance the local landscape or restore degraded landscapes;
- provide a source of woodfuel as an alternative to fossil fuels;
- protect water and soils;
- benefits to wildlife and biodiversity;
- provide timber which can then also continue to store carbon in long-lasting timber products.

*For full details go to [www.forestry.gov.uk/carboncode](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/carboncode) or speak to your local Forestry Commission woodland officer.*

## Unlocking the energy potential of common grazings

*A report by Calum MacLeod*

**C**rofting and renewables was one of the hot topics at the recent Scottish Highland Renewable Energy Conference (SHREC), hosted by law firm Harper Macleod in Inverness in April.

Lisa Maclean from Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (Galson Estate Trust, in the Isle of Lewis) and Calum MacDonald from Point and Sandwick Power are commissioning what will become the UK's largest community-owned wind farm which will bring an average of around £1.4 million per annum to the local crofting community – on common grazings at Beinn Ghrideag.

Lisa Maclean spoke about the crofting wind farm project which, as a crofting community landowner, they are undertaking themselves. It is a fantastic project which will bring tangible benefits to the crofting community.

Calum MacDonald then considered the potential for common grazings to be used for renewable energy development. Point and Sandwick Power are commissioning what will become the UK's largest community-owned wind farm which will bring an average of around £1.4 million per annum to the local crofting community – on common grazings at Beinn Ghrideag.

Compared to other crofting communities, Point crofters are fortunate to be dealing with a community landowner who granted them a windfarm lease. Calum believes the legislative framework needs amended to give crofters

greater renewable energy development rights on common grazings. Generally crofters have less control over development of common grazings than in-bye crofts. As a solicitor involved in these projects, the key is being able to have a valid windfarm lease that allows a funder to take security over the project.

Calum's proposal, and the routes which could be used to unlock the potential of the common grazings, gives much food for thought and will undoubtedly be a reform to which the Land Reform Review Group may be giving consideration.

*Calum MacLeod is a solicitor specialising in crofting and renewables at Harper Macleod LLP in Inverness and can be contacted on 01463 795 043.*

# Alternative architecture through crofting

**F**OLLOWING the SCF AGM on Friday 14th June (details on page 21) chartered architect and SCF member Neil Ferguson will give a presentation on the next generation crofting affordable zero carbon homes initiative – empowering and enabling crofters to multi-skill and build innovatively on the croft.

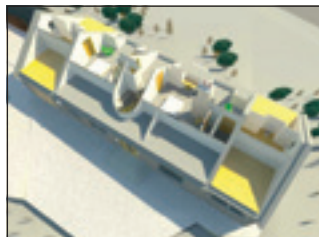
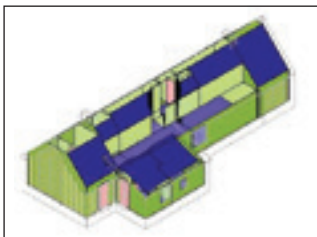
Neil aims to gather views on how best to build affordably, give pointers to the way forward and contribute to next generation crofting initiatives by SCF.

Topics raised during a previous croft housing workshop will be looked at further.

- Housing is too expensive for young people to get a foothold.
- Designs should start small and be easily extendable.
- Future-proof innovative croft housing by keeping building and running costs down.
- Support funding and in-kind contributions, all linked to croft management plans.
- Enhance the crofter's own labour and building expertise – acquiring additional skills and obtaining specialist advice.
- Cut carbon emissions through high energy efficiency, making the most of renewable energy.
- Initial needs and lifetime requirements can be met by better use of local materials.
- The presentation will look at the whole picture of what is built, promote innovation and lower environmental impact as the way forward through:
- creative and affordable designs that are energy efficient, with appropriate form that responds to its surroundings;
- improving on increased legislative standards and requirements within available funding with flexible designs;
- affordable design and building

guidance for crofter starter homes in liaison with the University of the Highlands and Islands, including building virtual demonstration projects with live technologies;

- helping young people to build virtually using their IT skills, communicate their ideas in 3D and make the most of what is built;
- advocating Scottish Government support for the SCF initiative through pilot projects with real crofting clients in different Highland locations and all to show what can be achieved on the ground.



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## New accredited specialist in crofting law

**M**ACLEOD and MacCallum are pleased to announce that David Findlay has been accredited by the Law Society of Scotland as a specialist in crofting law, one of Macleod and MacCallum's niche practice areas. He becomes one of only four solicitors able to claim this accreditation at the present time. David gained his first hands-on experience of crofting when he lived on and ran the family croft in the Western Isles. During this time he trained as a solicitor in Stornoway and gained his first experience of crofting law.

Since joining Macleod and MacCallum, David has specialised in crofting law and agricultural law and has dealt with a large number of complex

crofting transactions. David has a particular interest in common grazings and renewable energy developments on croft land and common grazing land. Now he regularly advises clients in both the public and private sector on crofting law, which includes representations in the Scottish Land Court where appropriate. David regularly travels throughout the Highlands and Islands to see clients with Macleod and MacCallum's mobile office and is able to offer a combination of expertise and local service.

Should you wish advice on any aspect of crofting law, please contact David Findlay on 01463 239393 or email him at david.findlay@macandmac.co.uk.



David Findlay

## Show dates for your diary:

**30th May**  
Highland Sheep  
Dingwall Mart

**19th to 23rd June**  
Royal Highland Show  
Ingleston

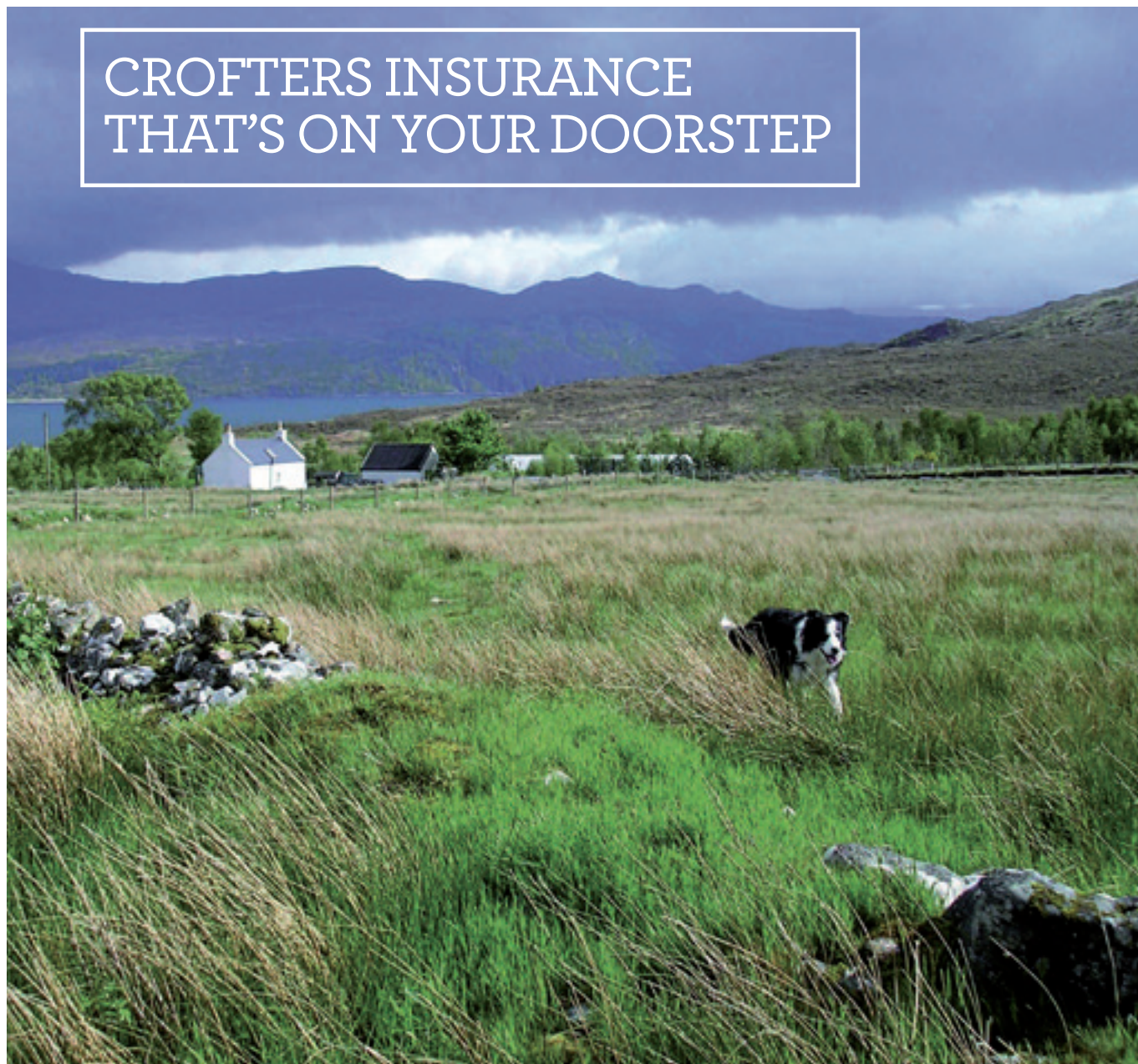
**31st July and 1st August**  
Black Isle Show  
Muir of Ord

SCF staff and volunteers will be at all of these shows to answer any questions you may have on grants, training or any other topic! We will also have copies of all of our publications including the popular Horticulture Handbook. We will also be hosting Registers of Scotland staff. They will be present to answer any questions about the Crofting Register and the process of registration.

Hope to see you there.



# CROFTERS INSURANCE THAT'S ON YOUR DOORSTEP



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## A celebration for Agnes

IN THE LAST ISSUE of *The Crofter* we highlighted that SCF Shetland representative Agnes Leask had received the British Empire Medal for her services to crofting.

Agnes' award was celebrated at a reception held in Lerwick town hall in April.

The photo shows standing, left to right:

Malcolm Bell, SIC Convener  
Richard Briggs, SCF member  
SCF's Norman and Evelyn Leask  
Pauline Gilfillan  
Dean Gilfillan, SCF member  
Lord Lieutenant Robert Hunter

sitting, left to right:

Mary Graham, widow of the late Lollie,  
former local chair and SCU founder member  
Agnes Leask and her husband Davie  
Georgie Arthur, Davie's sister



## 2013 SCF Annual Gathering common grazings: utilising potential

18th to 20th September (evening 18th, all day 19th, am 20th)



© Martin Benson

THE THEME of this year's SCF annual gathering is common grazing. Common grazings make up a large proportion of land covered by crofting tenure, extending to nearly 600,000 hectares. Their management has been regulated for over 125 years. These common grazings play an important role for many crofters and provide a significant amount of public benefit, environmentally as well as aesthetically. They provide 15% of high nature value farmland and 30% of the area with peat of over 2m in depth.

**Common grazings: utilising potential** – a two day event – explores ways to develop opportunities offered to crofters and the wider community through action to improve, protect and manage habitats, species and landscapes. It will encourage participants to think about the future of common grazings and how they contribute to creating better places to live, work and visit.

*For more information about booking your place at this year's gathering please see the flier enclosed with this edition of The Crofter or contact HQ.*

  
Scottish Crofting Federation  
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Scottish Crofting Produce  
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Produced in Scotland with 100% Highland and Islands Croft Origin

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