

Extensive livestock systems under threat



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UPLAND AND extensive livestock systems have been under attack from industry lobbyists.

The Scottish farmers' union aim at securing payments for less favoured areas and the ewe-hogg scheme for their more-favoured members. The UK national beef association suggests a means to the demise of extensive native cattle via a penal regime forcing early slaughter.

The paper published by NFUS, *Less Favoured Areas: Delivering for Scotland*, in the most part could have been written by the crofters' representative, SCF. It has collected together all the facts and figures that amply illustrate how the disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged areas of Scotland contribute to food production, environmental health, landscape, thriving communities and so on. All good, except that when you get to near the end you find the ulterior motive: retention of the Less Favoured Support Scheme (LFASS) rather than moving to a more effective and equitable scheme.

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Sheep sector most exposed to risk

WHEN THE news isn't talking about Covid-19, it is talking about Brexit, so it is worth summarising the position that SCF has been lobbying for on the major issues.

At the time of writing, there is still no agreement on a deal with the EU. Leaving the EU at the end of December without agreement on tariffs, also known as an "Australian" deal, will be a severe blow for the Scottish red meat industry. Tariffs on lamb of 48% would make the product

uncompetitive in Europe and that would feed back through the supply chain to hit store lamb producers – ie us.

So either prices would fall, or some of the more marginal producers – crofters – would stop keeping stock which, in turn, could make the remaining businesses in the more remote areas – again, crofters – unviable. SAC reckon that the price of lamb would have to half to compensate for tariffs and so maintain sales in the EU under no deal.

A Scottish Government official has said "the sheep sector is the most exposed to risk." And it is not just tariffs that we have to worry about. The UK would have to keep standards in line with the EU in order to have access to their markets. Crofters are proud of our high welfare and environmental standards but their maintenance is not a given in a post-EU world.

The Scottish Government is already dusting off plans to introduce schemes to support the sheep industry in the case of a disastrous collapse in prices. This could take the form of support for prime lamb in spring 2021 – for the lambs we sold in autumn this year at good prices – and/or support for breeding ewes in autumn 2021 if the store lamb sales are below an agreed trigger

point. It seems crazy that we have to discuss these things, but better to be prepared.

The Internal Market Bill is not yet passed into law (at time of writing) and there has been discussion on many aspects of it. But let's concentrate on the implications for crofters. No-one is denying the need for a common framework across the four nations of the UK. But it should be agreed by the four nations – not imposed by a UK government which also functions as the English government.

Animal welfare standards could again be a contentious issue. One of the arguments for Brexit was that it would lead to cheaper food in supermarkets. The US, for one, will insist on agricultural products being part of any trade deal. Say for example that one of the home nations wanted to allow battery eggs to be imported, then the bill insists that the other three nations must accept that product to be sold and cannot discriminate against it.

This lower-welfare product, which is not allowed to be produced here, would undercut local producers, take away sales and possibly force them out of business. Again, we have to

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- Crofting law reform
- Scottish Land Court proposals
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... and much more

Message from the chair...

Yvonne White



BACK IN the mists of time, the announcement of the UK's departure from the EU left crofters in a state of ongoing limbo regarding our premier export market for lamb.

We were told the whole gambit: from nothing will change and it would all be sunshine and eternal summer, to the extinction of the agriculture sector as we know it. It looks like the distinct possibility of no deal, or minimum deal – much the same as a no deal on most fronts – and all the consequences for exporting lamb to Europe. So why so much optimism in the sheep sector regarding store lambs? Not being

an economist or expert in international trade agreements and machinations, I just cannot fathom this paradox.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, sheep producers and dealers have varying theories: good lambing conditions thus more quality lambs; good grass conditions for store lamb buyers; buyers selling on fat lambs quickly due to full order books; New Zealand lamb diverted to China as disease collapsed their domestic pig market; good value for EU buyers thanks to the low value of sterling.

Or was it the news that UK and devolved governments were committed to step in financially next year to compensate breeders and

finishers if the market collapses following Brexit? Whatever the answer to this year's sheep price paradox, it's been a positive type of confusion and bafflement with good prices, giving crofters selling sheep a most welcome boost. I must admit to being none the wiser on understanding the market prices.

Hopefully we will never again have repeat of the devastating prices in the 1990s when breeding ewes were fetching 50 pence and lambs were such an absurdly low price that it practically cost more to medicate them than the prices paid. Crofters were coming to the mart then taking back their sheep and lambs – those that could keep them. Many had no choice but to sell, due to lack of facilities and cost of over-wintering extra mouths. Those were bleak days.

Crofting survived, being an inherently resilient, flexible and some say stubborn system – not necessarily a bad thing.

The range of produce and goods produced on crofts has expanded. This is partly due to resources such as the internet; crofters' pragmatism and at times ingenious (how many uses are there for a feedbag full of baling twine) problem solving; and their creative approach to working land that in many instances is on the edge in terms of quality, weather and topography.

SCF volunteers and chief executive attend many, many meetings on members' behalf: cross party groups on food and crofting; with Scottish Government ministers and officials; with the Crofting Commission; give evidence to the Scottish Government and Westminster Parliament; and sit on national boards with other agricultural organisations. All this to lobby at senior levels and ensure a good standard of representation on crofting. The SCF feeds into all these areas to raise awareness on behalf of crofting members and influences policy on a variety of issues which concern our members.

This will be my last article as chair. I can hear the editor's sigh of relief over the sound of the high winds – no more late copy and endless chasing.

Thank you for being a member and taking the time to read of my perplexity.

CAGS review

THE CROFTING Agriculture Grants Scheme (CAGS) focus group, made up of government officials and stakeholders, has been looking at how the scope of CAGS can be extended – such as:

- widening the eligibility criteria, which will allow crofting land-based activity that is not classed as agriculture, such as timber processing, to be included;
- extending the eligible agriculture works currently supported under the scheme;
- introducing standard costs;
- introducing advanced payments.

This will be reported on further as the review develops.

The National Development Plan for Crofting

IT IS intended to have the National Development Plan for Crofting (NDPC) published by the end of the year.

- The NDPC, as it currently stands, contains the following sections:
- the Crofting Commission's role in the development of crofting;
- Crofting Commission job creation and partnership working;
- environment and biodiversity;

- housing;
- signposting;
- broadband infrastructure;
- local food networks.

Scottish Government has been working very closely with the Commission on its role in the development of crofting. Work is also ongoing on a number of other sections of the NDPC, such as:

- financial incentives, which will cover the wide range of grants and support available to crofters;

- a wildlife section – that will cover, deer, geese, sea eagles and ravens;
- digital skills;
- legislation;
- carbon credits.

The NDPC will also contain a number of case studies and testimonials from crofters, which will hopefully illustrate what is currently being achieved by crofters and common grazings, and also to capture the views of the very people the publication targets.

Extensive livestock systems under threat

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LFASS has been consistently misused to divert public money, intended for support to the fragile areas, to act as a top-up for farms on better land. It was to be replaced by the Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) support scheme which was developed to target support and which, as NFUS note in their paper, would move money north and west to those areas that are genuinely constrained. But Scottish Government decided to not move to ANC and NFUS supported, indeed takes credit for, this decision. The penalty for not joining ANC is that LFASS will be reduced to 40% next year.

As we leave the CAP, there is a gathering consensus amongst stakeholders that there needs to be support for the constrained areas, based on ANC, in the new agriculture regime for Scotland. Scottish Government has made it clear that it is considering going this way, hence the lobby from the industry farmers.

The farmers union then add further insult by trying to hoard the payments made on the ewe-hogg scheme – the Scottish Upland Sheep Support Scheme – by suggesting it be limited to 20% of flock. This figure would be fine for field flocks but, again, is taken as a direct attack on extensive flocks which would need at least 30% replacements.

Then there is the National Beef



© Martin Benson - Old Corry, Isle of Skye

Association recommending a tax on beef slaughtered after 27 months. This would be a major issue for crofters, who almost entirely keep grass-fed cattle. The benefits of grass-fed for the environment, for animal welfare and for the nutritious value of the end product are well documented and fuel a growing movement that advocates slower-maturing grass-fed meat as the sustainable way forward.

Many crofters also keep slow-maturing native breeds and are already penalised by having to send unfinished cattle to slaughter before 30 months. Native breeds tend to

be kinder to the land, are harder – needing less external input – and all cattle increase biodiversity with their grazing habits.

Crofters are not going to move to a shed-based concentrated-feed regime, which would be the reality on Region 3, rough grazing land. If this tax came into effect it would put many crofters out of business.

Luckily this recommendation is being met with wide-ranging rejection, not just from crofters but also from the Scottish Beef Association – and, as far we have seen, just about everyone who is involved in beef production,

animal welfare and care of the environment.

As we went to press, cabinet secretary Fergus Ewing assured SCF delegates that reformation of LFASS is intended.

A very productive meeting between SCF and the minister discussed support to the remote parts of Scotland that face disadvantage through natural constraints. A consultative group will be formed early in the new year, in which SCF will be invited to participate, to look at support to crofting, hill farming, areas of natural constraint and high nature value areas in the context of climate change mitigation. Crofters will be represented on this group by SCF.

Mr Ewing was candid about the lack of progress on reviewing LFASS, a scheme that has been unfair to the very areas that it should be supporting, but COVID-19 and Brexit have taken up a huge amount of Scottish Government resource.

After the meeting, Yvonne White said “Crofting offers a great deal in producing food and retaining communities in remote rural Scotland, whilst protecting the environment and contributing to carbon sequestration. It is a sustainable model of land use that needs to be supported. We welcome the intention to reform how public money can be used effectively to produce public goods.”

Sheep sector most exposed to risk



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protect our high standards and protect our local producers. That is only one example. Think chlorinated chicken, over-use of hormones or antibiotics, or beef raised on land cleared from the Amazon rainforest.

In the longer term we are not much closer to knowing the shape of support systems after the next couple of years. There will be much arguing over the size of the agricultural support “pie” from the UK treasury, since it is no longer protected by the EU and is in competition with the NHS, education and everything else. Then we have to see how the pie is split between the four home nations; and finally how the Scottish allocation is divided up.

So there is much lobbying still to be done on members’ behalf. This is why we need the support of all crofters.

Crofting law reform

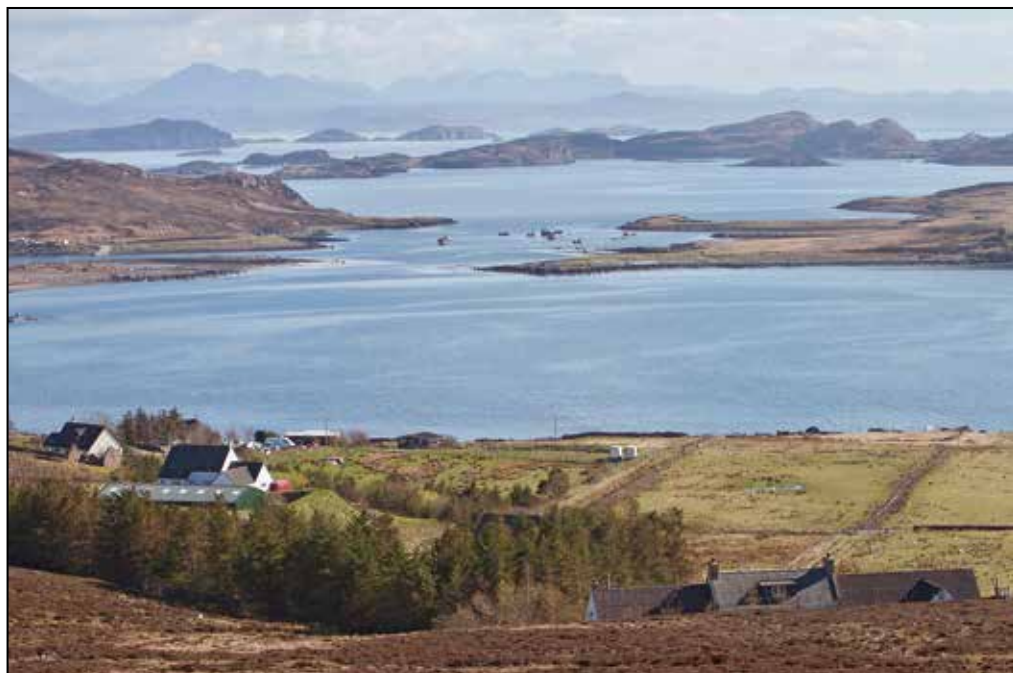
Martin Minton of Inksters Solicitors reports

THE LAW Society of Scotland has published a report on crofting law reform.

The report follows a consultation earlier this year asking stakeholders for their views of four key areas that require reform: succession, owner-occupier status, statutory conditions of tenure and the definition of crofting community. The resulting report considers the responses, but also the previous 2017 Scottish Government consultation, as well as the work of the Crofting Law Group's Sump.

The law of crofting succession is seen as complex and the report acknowledges this, noting the lack of clarity surrounding intestate succession and the application of the 24-month period in which a tenancy should be transferred following a tenant's death. It is suggested the transfer process itself needs to be clarified, with a clear statement as to how such a transfer is effected, by way of guidance or secondary legislation.

In respect of owner-occupier status, it is proposed that an application to enable those who have purchased only part of an owner-occupied croft could be made to the Crofting Commission to obtain owner-occupier status, with the Commission having discretion as to whether to grant it. This seems to be a sensible and straightforward proposition which would save significant time



© Martin Benson - Ailanthu, Coigach

and money for many crofters who discover, after purchase, that they do not have the crofting status they assumed they would obtain on purchase. The report suggests an amendment to the relevant section of the legislation.

Statutory conditions of tenure were also explored. The report findings state that the 32km residency requirement has been noted as arguably inflexible and outdated and that further consultation with stakeholders is required. A statutory definition of misuse or neglect should be considered, along with

the Commission providing clear examples of neglect and purposeful use.

That may be welcomed by some crofters who feel the Commission's approach to these areas is too arbitrary. Among other matters reviewed in this topic was the appropriateness of provisions relating to bankruptcy (and whether this should remain), and whether the Commission should be able to recover their costs when they are required to enforce the statutory conditions.

The report looks at the definition

of crofting community, a definition criticised in the Scottish Land Court case of *Eunson v Crofting Commission*. The report suggests a more refined definition, but takes into account that the term may be utilised differently whether in a regulatory context or when promoting the interests of crofting.

The Law Society of Scotland feels that prompt action is needed by the Scottish Government to reform crofting law, no doubt a view that will be echoed by crofters and legal practitioners alike.

The future of the Land Court and the Lands Tribunal

SCOTTISH Government recently consulted on the proposal to merge the Scottish Land Court (SLC) and the Lands Tribunal for Scotland (LTS).

SCF gathered views and responded that it makes sense to amalgamate the two in order to have one body, a court, which deals with land-related litigation. The two bodies have many common functions and purposes and amalgamation could enhance the powers and scope of the court. A single body devoted to the matters currently dealt with by both would have more coherence and efficacy.

However, the consultation document doesn't make it clear what is driving the proposal, so if this goes ahead we would like to see the rationale.

The SLC should take in the functions of the LTS and must remain a court with full powers. An amalgamation must not dilute the powers of

the SLC in any way. The SLC has always been respected by our members and recognised as a fair arbiter. We would want it to continue to do site visits and convene in the townships.

Furthermore, the merged body, the SLC, should take on all things affecting crofting and land, including the sheriff court's role in land-related cases. Environmental judgements, march dykes, runrig and division of commonties and the right to take responsible access should also be transferred.

We think that at least one court member should have a cultural link to the Highlands and Islands and that it would still be of practical benefit for there to be a Gaelic-speaking official employed by the court. Knowledge of place names and the cultural links is important.

Costs awarded should be proportional to the case and protected expenses orders made

available. Appellants will incur expenses getting the case to court, which can deter frivolous applications.

Someone appealing against the Scottish Government is completely out-matched in regard to the representation the SG can afford – at public expense. This deters appellants from coming forward to appeal against a SG decision, due to the fear of incurring the SG expenses, which could be ruinous.

We therefore recommend the introduction of a statutory cap on awards of expenses – so that appellants would know in advance their maximum exposure to expenses; and/or discretion of the court to limit awards in appropriate cases or to depart from the principle that expenses should follow success where that seemed to accord with the interests of justice.

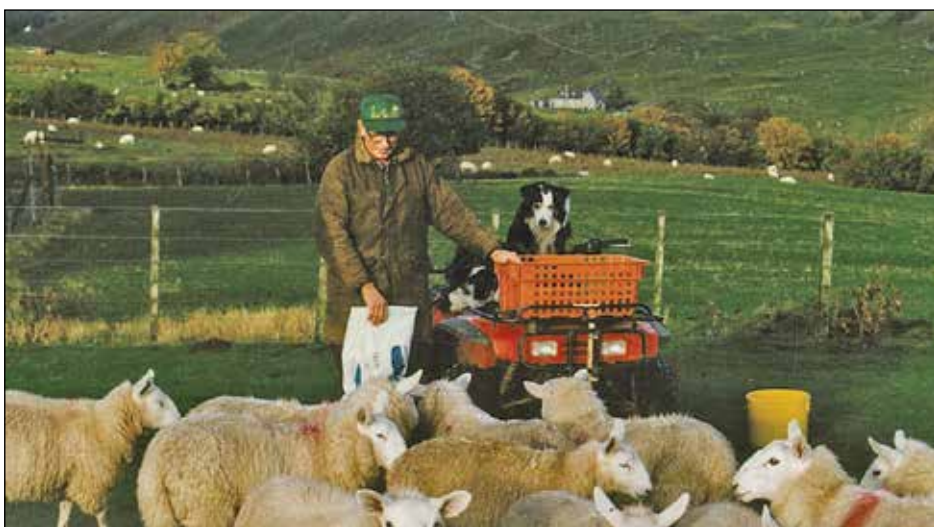
Alastair Maciver, Rogart



Alastair



Alastair (right) taking notes



CROFTING LOST one of its most popular and faithful stalwarts in October, after a short illness.

Alastair was born in Brora and brought up in Rossal, Rogart. After many years in agriculture, he joined the local roads squad, in due course becoming foreman. In the 1970s he became a representative for the council workers union. His next role was with a management services section, based in Brora but covering the whole Highland Region. This saw him drive vast distances in the line of duty. Following this he was put in charge of a manpower services unit, setting up and supervising youth training schemes.

By the time that this scheme was being wound down, Alistair was 64 and accepted the opportunity of retirement and more time to work the croft. Although working on the home croft all his life, it was only in 1981, when his uncle died, that Alastair took up the tenancy. He greatly increased the sheep flock, upped the

cow numbers, built a new house for the croft and following that a splendid large shed.

Fitting in croft work in with such a busy schedule meant a lot of planning and organising, the occasional help from his neighbours being called upon and rewarded in kind when appropriate. He supported the local hill grazings committee, seeking it to take advantage of the grants on offer, one of these being for a forestry scheme.

As if this was not enough, there was the commitment to the local community council, which he served in various capacities including a long spell as chairman.

Parallel to all this was his role in the SCU and SCF. He was there at the inaugural meeting of the SCU in November 1985 and was the second chairman to serve the local branch. Attending every branch and area meeting was the norm. Soon he was rising up the hierarchy of the organisation, attending council and serving for two and a half years as SCU president.

Alastair was constantly called on to fulfil diplomatic and representative positions for the organisation, attending the annual hill farming review in Edinburgh and trips to Brussels to put forward a case in support of crofting.

When the SCU obtained charitable status and became SCF, he served for a number of years as company secretary.

Alastair was honoured with an MBE in 2015 for his services to the crofting community. The photo shows Alastair, his wife Betty and SCU founding director Jim Hunter, with the Lady Lieutenant of Sutherland, Dr Monica Main, who presented the medal on behalf of the Queen.

Our heartfelt condolences go to his wife Betty. Alastair was such a kind man and will be sorely missed by many.

This article is based on a tribute written several years ago by Alastair's old friend and colleague, John MacDonald.

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Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Crofting

SCF has organised the Cross-Party Group on Crofting in the Scottish Parliament for over 20 years.

IT IS a very powerful forum for informing MSPs and garnering their support for pressing the Scottish Government to act on crofting issues. At the last meeting the main agenda items were crofting development, waste plastic disposal, the Law Society Scotland crofting law consultation and crofting/agriculture support in the rapidly changing post-CAP world. These topics are covered in other articles.

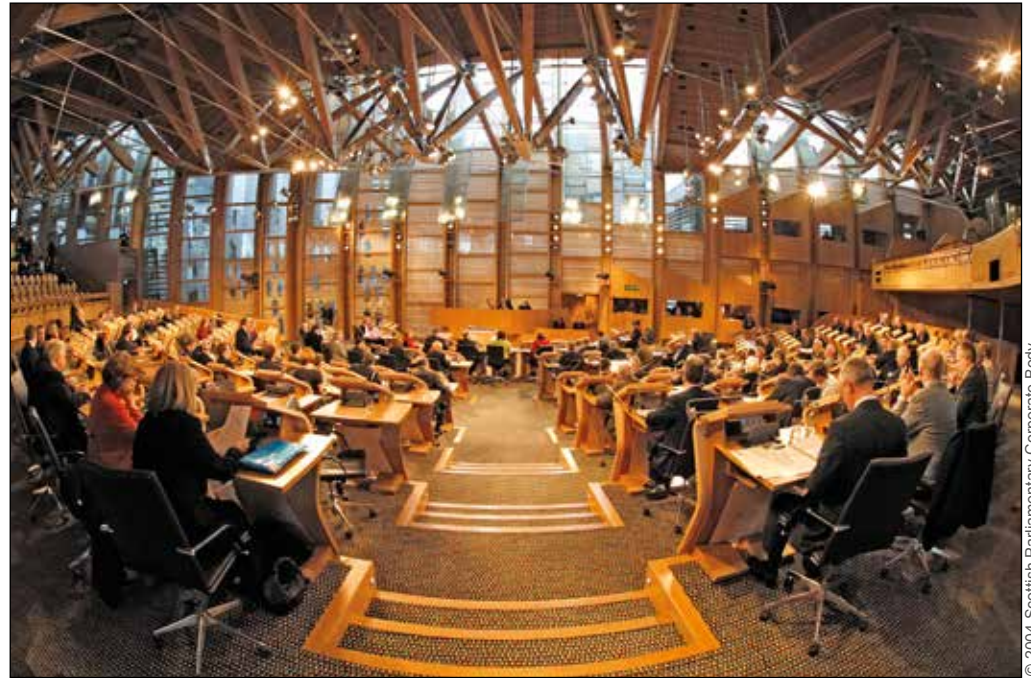
A standing item of great importance on the agenda is crofting administration. Bill Barron, CEO, and/or Rod Mackenzie, convener, give an update on business at the Crofting Commission. At this meeting Bill Barron summarised key developments:

Mairi Mackenzie had been elected deputy convener.

The March meeting of the Convention of the Highlands and Islands, at which crofting was to have been discussed, had been cancelled; but crofting should be on its agenda in 2021.

Almost all staff had been working at home since late March, presenting logistical challenges. A great deal had been done to improve connectivity and facilities for home working. Online board meetings make it much easier for visitors to observe. The next is on 3rd December.

The Commission board has emphasised five priorities: staff



Scottish Parliament

wellbeing when many are working in isolation; expand duties enforcement; ensure that capacity to process regulatory casework keeps pace with the numbers of applications received; using the new SG money to enhance efficiency, especially through IT improvements (but also a website refresh and a review of the strengths and weaknesses of grazings registration); and deciding how to implement the development role and recruit to the posts in the Western Isles.

The Commission is using the new

money to expand its regulatory and land use (RALU) team (two posts), its regulatory team (one post) and to bring in two new development posts. After internal moves to fill some of these, the Commission will shortly be advertising for a new IT specialist, an administrator/telephone receptionist with Gaelic, a new member of the RALU team and the two development posts. The Commission sees RALU as vital to crofting development. If there are several good candidates for these roles, there would be flexibility to take one each in Lewis

and Benbecula, if the board wished to do that.

The Commission is taking on a development role because it has a statutory function to promote the interests of crofting, as well as to regulate it; and it has commissioners and staff with skills and knowledge about crofting. The Commission would not have agreed to take on the expanded role without a suitable increase in its funding and encouragement to expect that a higher level of funding would continue.

TRAINING

Sustain Diversify Grow

On-line Crofting Courses



Crofting Resilience in Transition

SCF's training manager, Tina Hartley, reports

FUNDED BY HIE, our Sustain, Diversify, Grow courses are proving a big hit across the Highlands and Islands.

The delivery of 20 courses aims to support promotion of diversified activity for short-term economic recovery and growth by sharing innovative practice at a very localised level.

On offer we have:

- Crofting the brand – adding value;
- Fantastic food from local producer markets;
- Virtual sheepdogs – Braehillor sheepdog handler training;
- Turkey production for Christmas – how to start;
- Staycations – what do I need to know coming out of Covid19;
- Crofters who diversify – Instagram marketing for your business;
- How to start a local community food hub.

Are you able to offer a course that looks at innovative practice and new business models? Do you have any ideas of courses that would support you during Covid19 transition? Want to attend any of our online events?

Contact our training team who are waiting to hear from you. Email Tina at training@crofting.org.



An exciting new venture which recently opened in Kishorn, Wester Ross on the NC500.

The shop showcases a diverse collection of unique pieces of art and crafts, all made with love by individuals in the Highlands. Here you will find items from at least twenty different vendors living and working either locally or further afield in other areas of this glorious environment.

Every hook, shelf and wall space is filled with wonderfully unique items, as varied in their intrinsic properties as the different artists and crafters that have put their heart and soul into each and every item they have produced.

For more info check out:

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The Scottish Land Matching Service

Ian Davidson, independent advisor for the Scottish Land Matching Service, outlines its aims and functions.

THE SCOTTISH Land Matching Service (SLMS) was launched by cabinet secretary Fergus Ewing at the end of September 2019.

I was very pleased to be asked to give a presentation to the Scottish Crofting Federation AGM in September. It stimulated a lot of very good discussion.

The average age of farmers and crofters continues to rise and it is important for the industry and wider rural economy to encourage a steady flow of young entrants. There are barriers to young entrants to the industry – particularly lack of access to land and access to capital to get started.

The Land Matching Service was established to try and help to bridge the gap by providing free independent advice and facilitation to those interested in developing joint ventures. The aim is to try and match new entrants and developing businesses with well-established crofters and farmers who may be

looking to step back from the day-to-day workload.

One of the key recommendations when SLMS was set up was that there should be an independent advisor appointed who could offer free advice and facilitation. That role is funded by Scottish Government and supported by a number of rural organisations, details of which can be seen on the website, www.slms.scot. It is very much a consortium approach and I am very pleased that SCF has agreed to be part of that.

SLMS has a database of enquiries which now stands at 150 from across the country and beyond, all of which have been followed up. Enquiries from people looking for opportunities far outweighs the number of opportunities available.

The website provides a platform where people can register interest. Registration is a simple and easy process which will lead to a follow-up contact from me to discuss in more detail what people are looking



Ian Davidson

The burden is shared with someone who will bring fresh enthusiasm, vigour and ideas.

for. Where an introduction is made, it is important to say that this is first and foremost about establishing a relationship and that not all introductions will work out.

In a crofting context some land is under-utilised compared to how it was previously, particularly

on common grazings. Sometimes that is down to people no longer being able to physically sustain the considerable effort required around gatherings and handlings. These people have a great asset in terms of their knowledge and experience; and tapping into that in a joint venture with someone looking to start or develop a business is an area of great potential.

One of the other benefits of joint ventures is that the person taking the step back is still involved. They have input but the burden (physical and mental) is shared with someone who will bring fresh enthusiasm, vigour and ideas to the business.

There are, of course, opportunities in terms of official subtleties, but I would like to explore if there are other options that might help bring people together – protecting the rights of the existing crofter and at the same time providing opportunity and encouragement to the vital next generation. I would be interested to hear your views.

Helping guide crofting families through succession



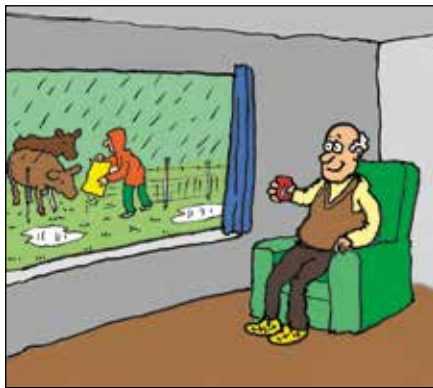
© Chris Tyler

Janette Sutherland, SAC Portree, on the importance of planning for the future.

WORKING AS an agricultural advisor is a varied and interesting job.

One of the privileges of this role is helping crofters with succession planning. When you have been involved in the discussions, sketched out the plan and completed the maps and forms, it is great to see the fruits of the work. This may be younger crofters setting up in their own right or moving into a partnership with an existing agricultural business. There are many permutations. It makes me happy when the older generation lets you know how well the new crofters are getting on, or you see a common grazing or sheepstock club reenergised by the new blood.

Although crofting businesses may be small, there are several layers to consider when thinking



It makes me happy when the older generations let you know how well the new crofters are getting on, or you see a common grazing or sheepstock club re-energised by the new blood.

about succession:

- livestock
- agricultural business
- sheds and equipment
- houses
- land – common grazing shares and sheepstock club membership
- land – inbye (tenanted, owner occupied etc)

Nowadays, the process for passing on crofts or shares involves more steps, in part due to the Crofting Register. To help navigate this,



SAC created this online tool available on the Farm Advisory Service website www.fas.scot/succession-planning-crofting, where you can click on your answers to find out the steps you need to take.

Another key consideration in crofting is whether crofts have shares in common grazings or may be part of a sheepstock club. Do you know what roles the existing crofter holds in the common grazings or sheep stock club? It is good to discuss with the wider community so they can either replace those roles or find other roles for the new entrant that fits their skills better.

We made this document along with SAOS: www.fas.scot/downloads/succession-in-sheepstock-clubs-points-to-consider.

Sadly, life is uncertain, so no matter how clear your succession plans are, if you have a croft we suggest you always have a will to prevent any complications.

SCF YOUNG CROFTERS

IN THIS issue of *The Crofter* we are featuring some of our young crofter members and the inspiring work they are doing on their crofts.

It is vital for the future of crofting that young people are able to obtain crofts. Getting more young folk into crofting is an ongoing goal for SCF, and we are pleased to welcome younger and new crofters to our organisation, where they can benefit from the experience and wisdom of our older members.

Young folk have the energy and enthusiasm that is needed to make crofting sustainable. That energy is also important to SCF's future and we are keen to involve our younger members as much as possible.

Our first very successful young crofters gathering was held in Glencanisp in 2015. Another excellent and innovative gathering took place via Zoom in August. We have reports from that in this feature, with thanks to all participants.

We are always keen to hear from our members and will be glad to have more articles in future issues. If you're crofting already, it's always interesting to see what folk are doing on the croft, whether it's about the breeds of livestock you have, what you're planting or growing, what



At Glencanisp

you have diversified into or what you may be planning on doing.

For those keen to get into crofting, this is a useful opportunity to reach the SCF membership and perhaps make connections.

We'd also like to hear about the challenges you're facing in trying to get a croft. This will be helpful to SCF as we influence policy-makers to

assist folk get into crofting.

Please contact the editor, fiona@crofting.org, if you would like to contribute to a future issue of *The Crofter*, or indeed to become involved in our work in any way.

Please encourage other young folk to join SCF. For those under 41, a year's subscription is only £33.25. Go to www.crofting.org/join-scf.

Young crofters gather online

AUGUST SAW an online event hosted by the Scottish Crofting Federation's young crofters.

The event showcased what young folk are doing on their crofts and highlighted the aspirations and concerns of young crofters. The day was chaired Donald MacKinnon, SCF's vice-chair and himself a young crofter, with 65 people participating.

Video presentations made by young crofters showing their enterprises inspired a very lively discussion. Topics covered during the day included local food, horticulture, direct selling of meat and other croft products and the Scottish Crofting Produce Mark. The lack of available land kept coming up and is clearly a major obstacle for young folk wanting to get into crofting.

Fergus Ewing, cabinet secretary for rural economy, addressed the gathering and the programme finished with a very interesting session where panel members from Scottish Government, Crofting Commission, SNH, SAC and SCF gave their views on the big picture, the main issues for crofting and took many questions.

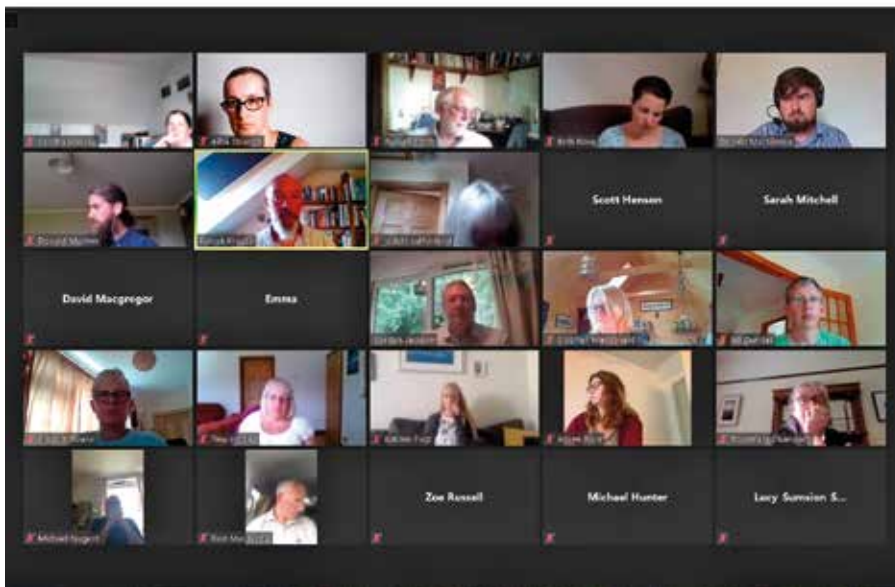
The day concluded by informing the gathering that SCF will be taking nominations for the Euan MacRae memorial cup for Young Crofter of the Year, supported by The MacRobert Trust, with the award presented early in the new year.

SCF young crofters intend to hold regular online gatherings for younger folk, drilling in on specific topic areas such as access to land, common grazings and climate emergency.

Planning an online event was a learning curve, made all the more enjoyable by the small working group of SCF directors and staff who planned with me, writes event co-ordinator Ailsa Strange.

THE PROGRAMME emerged bit by bit as we discussed what was most relevant and engaging in this strange time of Covid 19.

A visual snapshot of what crofting in 2020 means to a range of young people



The idea behind session one came from our realisation that people generally love to know what people are doing, particularly following lockdown with many fewer opportunities to meet others. "What have you been up to on your croft?"

We spread our net to find a selection of willing young crofters with a story to tell and time to donate. What came back in response was truly a joy – eight stories from different perspectives.

From Lewis in the north to Fort William in the south, we gathered short films and photographs giving a visual snapshot of what crofting in 2020 means to a range of young people. These inspiring short films and presentations were patchworked together (another learning curve for me) and offered a perfect starting point for the day.

Many of those who gave films also joined us for a Q&A session chaired by SCF board member Beth Rose, which gave a lively and interesting chance to learn more about their experiences.

The individual short films are available on the SCF YouTube Channel. I am sure you will love them!

SCF YOUNG CROFTERS



Young crofter Beth Rose describes how the SCP mark is used on her croft at Birchwood.

THE THIRD session of the day was 'Adding Value', looking at the Scottish Crofting Produce (SCP) mark in terms of holiday accommodation and produce.

Our Birchwood Croft (Inverness) was used as a case study to show how we use both the SCP Mark and Quality Meat Scotland when selling meat and other produce directly to our customers.

Zoom allowed a virtual croft tour to show

what we do, how we do it and the big 'why join' question. Everything from our first steer being sent off, the challenges with butchers, the entrance of Brexit, joining the QMS scheme and then the SCP mark was covered.

A global pandemic had its impact, so we had a quick look at how we adapted to lockdown, understanding our new customers, and therefore changing tactics in social media posts – Facebook and on the blog at www.croftingwife.com – where customers can see what meat and other produce we have for sale at the time.



Crofting policy: what's the plan?

The final session of the day began with an encouraging, pre-recorded message from Fergus Ewing, cabinet secretary for the rural economy, reports SCF vice-chair Donald MacKinnon. We were then joined by a panel discussion of decision-makers and industry experts for a discussion on crofting policy.

THE PANEL included Siobhan MacDonald (SAC), Bill Dundas (SGRPID), Gordon Jackson (Scottish Government), Claudia Rowse (SNH) Rod Mackenzie (Crofting Commission) and Patrick Krause. Questions covered a broad range of topics from access to land, the climate emergency and progress on the National Development Plan for Crofting.

Access to land proved to be of particular interest to attendees and the discussion that followed demonstrated that this is an issue that the decision-makers are taking seriously. Rod Mackenzie made clear that the Crofting Commission is keen to see more opportunities for new entrants.

Claudia Rowse highlighted the role that crofting can play in tackling the climate emergency. Many common grazings have huge potential for peatland restoration. SNH's Peatland Action project is working with crofters and other land managers to deliver ambitious targets to restore degraded peatland across Scotland.

Access to land proved to be of particular interest.

Siobhan MacDonald highlighted some of the new technology and research that crofters can take advantage of to better understand and ultimately reduce their carbon emissions. Examples include carbon audits, feed additives and improved pasture management.

Gordon Jackson restated the Scottish Government's commitment to crofting and to encouraging new entrants to the sector.

Bill Dundas explained some of the changes that have been made to the Croft House Grant Scheme to improve its impact as well as explaining the Scottish Government's approach to goose management.

Everyone agreed that we could have done with at least another hour of discussion to get through all the questions. To be continued!

Crofting during Covid

Chaired by SCF director Jonathan Hedges, participants also shared experiences of crofting during the pandemic. Here Jonathan presents the questions and answers.

THIS DISCUSSION was facilitated using interactive presentation software.

A series of questions were given to the group in different formats. People answered individually and their answers appeared simultaneously for the group to see. It allowed participants to express their thoughts at the same time as others.

Participants' experience of lockdown seemed generally positive. Crofts were a good place to be, despite some challenges. Growth in public awareness of the value of local food production was another positive.

How would you describe crofting during Covid?

Refreshing, fulfilling, productive, local interest, educational, strange, uncertain, isolation.

What has been your biggest challenge / the impact of Covid?

Working from home fitted in well; having time to spend on the croft; with crofting, agricultural suppliers and vets stepping up to maintain their services.

Delays to work on the croft; difficulties in ordering fencing and building supplies; accessing animal feed; less income, meaning less money to get jobs done; concern over livestock sales; abattoir shut for private kills; the difficulty of social distancing in the flock; uncertainty over future income; managing on your own with no one able to help.

Some positive things about crofting during Covid?

More time to work the croft due to being furloughed; great place to be during lockdown; more local demand for produce; new customers; everyone at home to help with lambing; the family being safe; quiet roads; a feeling of resilience; having time to catch up with jobs; a time for reflection and planning; sharing surplus food; an increase in wildlife.

What long-term change do you envisage on your croft as a result of Covid?

Increasing production to be more self-sufficient; developing local markets, as people are more aware of local produce; diversifying to get more of an income from the croft; being more resilient; putting more effort into township co-operation.

Crofting advice through the Farm Advisory Service



**Farm
Advisory
Service**

National Advice
Hub

T: 0300 323 0161

E: advice@fas.

Call the Farm Advisory Service helpline for up to half an hour of free advice on all crofting and agricultural matters, available for all crofters and smallholders, whether new starts or old hands!

And for advice tailored to your croft and situation, benefit from an annual subscription with SAC, part-funded through the Farm Advisory Service, for £73.43 + VAT for two hours of advice, newsletters and updates.

Contact your local SAC office or the free FAS helpline for independent, unbiased, local and up-to-date advice.



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Europe investing in rural areas



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gov.scot



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Energy and nutrient support for the early stages of foetal growth and development

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3

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www.harbro.co.uk/country-stores

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SCF YOUNG CROFTERS



During the event, SCF board member Russell Smith outlined the Scottish Crofting Produce Mark.

THIS IS a scheme which certifies that the product is from a croft and is produced to a certain standard, adding value to croft produce for our members.

The produce must be from a croft, or similar, in the Highlands and Islands, meet defined minimum standards (depending on the type of produce) and the producer must be an SCF member.

The mark is free to SCF members, who can then use the name and logo to promote their products.

The scheme was originally intended for food, but also includes crafts – made on the croft and using croft produce where possible – and holidays, mainly accommodation, on or run from the croft.

The aim of any brand is to enable you to either sell at a higher price or sell more at the same price, or both. The crofting brand is associated with lots of good things – open space, fresh air, good environmental practice, local, natural food, as well as preserving culture, history and a healthy lifestyle. Look at the QMS advertising for lamb – it is all highland scenery and North Country Cheviots – these are crofting images.



Russell and crofting produce at Cawdor

“Authenticity” is a key advertising trend and crofting has it. You are living the life and can sell that to the consumer as part of the package. We know this through market research which we commissioned in 2011. People are more likely to buy croft produce than generic Scottish produce.

Like all schemes, it is about giving consumers confidence in what they are buying. It has been running since 2009, so is well established, but not as well known as we would like.

Now we want to take the mark forward, so we have a new section on the SCF website. We have a new working group set up. We are looking for more members and we want to get a project going to drive it forward – revisit the earlier research, look at the branding again, push the brand through advertising and at shows.

And we can look at supporting members more by setting up buying groups, sharing learning, and communal marketing.

Young Crofter Award 2020

DO YOU know someone who deserves to be nominated for this award? They may have been crofting all their lives or are just starting out.

Increasing numbers of people 40 and under are choosing to make crofting part of their lives. Help us tell their story by getting involved with the Young Crofter Award 2020.

The award celebrates, acknowledges and encourages crofting as a way of sustaining communities, culture and the land. With the support of the MacRobert Trust, we would like to recognise the role young crofters are playing in securing a future for crofting.

The judging panel is looking for inspiring young folk who are crofting in a sustainable way, using traditional and/or new ways of working and who play an active part in their crofting community. If you know that crofter you can download the application form at www.crofting.org/about-scf/young-crofters.

The winner will be presented, early in the new year, with the Euan MacRae Memorial Quaich, £500, one year's free SCF membership and a copy of the Horticulture and Woodlands Handbooks. Nominations are open till the end of the year.

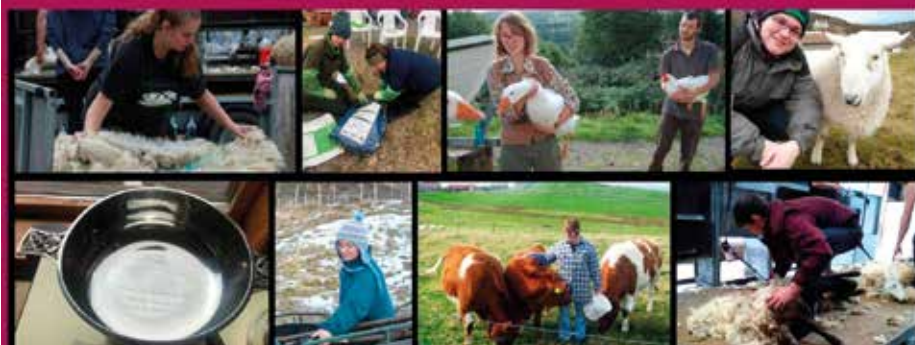


THE MACROBERT TRUST

YOUNG CROFTER AWARD 2020

We want to hear about crofters aged 40 and under in your community - nominate someone today

- EUAN MACRAE QUACH
- £500 CASH PRIZE
- ONE YEARS FREE SCF MEMBERSHIP



APPLICATION FORMS AT WWW.CROFTING.ORG

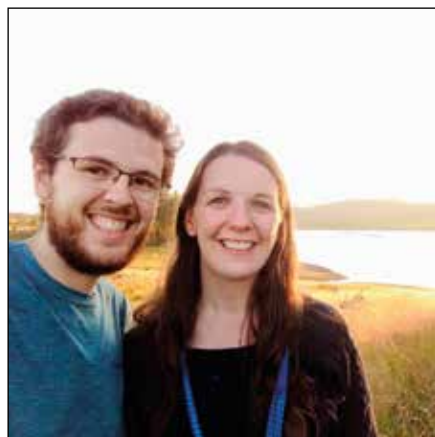
SCF YOUNG CROFTERS



Bee hives



Busy with the bees



Sam and Sarah

A great responsibility

Sarah Mitchell and Sam Smith on their new crofting activities

EARLIER THIS year we took on Sarah's family's 7.5-acre croft at Ruilick near Beaulieu.

The croft has been in the family since the 1700s with Sarah being the ninth generation of her family to work the croft. We rent the land from Sarah's uncle and are in the process of buying the croft house.

Our main difficulty in getting started has been

the slow process of getting our sub-tenancy application granted and the decrofting of the house completed. The wait was much longer than we had anticipated, but we are delighted both have now come through.

Since getting the sub-tenancy in March, we have acquired three beehives and recently harvested our first honey. We have had hens for a few months now and recently acquired more to allow us to start selling eggs at our road end.

We have caught the gardening bug and grow vegetables in a small plot and in a greenhouse.

We would like to expand our vegetable plot and to one day put up a polytunnel.

Our next step is to improve and add to the existing fencing to allow us to welcome our first sheep onto the croft. We are both vets and so have to be careful that any future plans for the croft fit in with our busy work schedules.

We feel a great responsibility in carrying the family croft forward and we know that we are incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to do so.

Gradual succession

Janette Sutherland describes her and her family's route to passing on a croft.

THE DAY the croft tenancy came into my name was no different to the day before, as the transition and shift of business responsibility had been very gradual. On reflection there are many things my parents did, though not appreciated at the time, which make my crofting life easier now.

'Don't be so morbid'

It was only by doing the job I do now that I began to realise people discussing what to do when they and their spouse die was not necessarily the norm. I think it was one of my late father's favourite topics. We would try and ask him not to be so morbid – to no avail!

However, a benefit of talking about these issues from a really young age was that the full spectrum of options was discussed, from both my sister and I wanting to croft and dividing it, to neither of us wanting to croft. I now appreciate the lack of expectations and range of options.

Being included in croft decision making

My parents were always very open about the croft's problems as well as its successes. I look back and marvel on the time they took to answer my questions and listen to my ideas when I was younger. It gives me confidence in my decisions today, now that I can look back on previous decisions that I was a part of. Some turned out well, others less so!

Always more to learn

My dad was endlessly curious and always willing to learn and take advice. I often arrive home from work to be quizzed by my mum about items in that day's Scottish Farmer. I hope that this trait will help me steer the croft through changing and uncertain times.

It may be impossible to run a croft the same way as previous

generations did – and that's okay. Dad had tried to run his parent's smallholding the same way they had after they passed away and found it to be impossible. "Times change, and we have to change with them," he would often say. Giving me permission to plough my own furrow is a real blessing. It's been helpful to me to have what he did as a guide, but not as a fixed rule.



Janette's croft and cattle

SCF YOUNG CROFTERS



Donkeys enjoying the view of Mount Arkle



Walking the cows out to Strathan

Investing time, effort and money

Alex Munro is owner-occupier of an eight hectare croft in Oldshoremore, NW Sutherland.

WAS given my croft eleven years ago by my father, Stuart Munro, when I was in my mid-twenties.

Without my own croft I would not have invested the time, effort and money I have. Crofts should be handed over decades before they generally are. But now crofts have value and are sold on the open market.

The Crofting Commission consented to me being absent from the croft, otherwise I would not have been able to establish a career and earn a decent salary to allow me to borrow and invest in my croft, along with CAGS grants which I have used. I am a key worker in the aviation/transport industry, allowing me seven months a year on the croft and five months working in Aberdeen. This benefits the croft, with long blocks off-shift giving time to get plenty done.

I run Cheviot, a few Soay, Jacob and Shetland sheep. Highland cattle have been crossed with beef shorthorn and now a belted Galloway bull. I'm considering getting a white shorthorn bull.

I work two self-trained collie dogs and we have a few chickens and five donkeys, and the kids plan to do donkey rides. They have also instructed me to expand their animal sanctuary. They want goats next summer and plan to make goat soap. My son Finlay wants to try the milk directly from his own goat.

Through the forestry trust scheme, in 2018 I planted about 1600 trees on part of my croft.

The last four years have seen croft livestock numbers maintained and croft diversification

in the form of a small two-bedroom house. Planning is passed for 32-bed hostel, 18 en-suite glamping cabins, a three-bedroom house with café and a larger four-bedroom house. The first three cabins have been ordered and will open in spring 2021.

This has been far from easy, and not cheap, with numerous hurdles to overcome. The driving force is the creation of much-needed jobs and improved tourist infrastructure in the local area and wider highlands.

The best part of being involved with SCF is being inspired by other members and being able to share and exchange ideas.

Some of the threats I see to crofting are:

- The waste of common grazings not being used. There is potential for crofting townships to do more. Give unused land to community groups, including community housing.
- Difficulties with grazing committees, especially when active crofters with livestock have no more say than a crofter who lives in Glasgow or London, still classed as a crofter with the same rights.
- Crofts sitting empty.
- The average age of a crofter.
- The difficulties and delays in registering a croft; and in decrofting for mortgage purposes once you've got planning.
- Apportionment refused because you're developing other parts of your croft. So if you do work your croft you're punished, because other crofters argue why do you need a three hectare appointment. If I didn't decroft I wouldn't need land for sheep, but I have to decroft to borrow against.

The sleeping giant

Never has crofting been confronted with a greater challenge, writes crofting landowner and SCF member Mark Pattinson.

AS DONALD MacKinnon in his article in the August edition of *The Crofter* states, there are huge opportunities for crofters to use their environmentally friendly land to grow the best local food for the locally expanding population.

Lochcarron Estate, which I have owned for 30 years, has over 100 crofts and seven townships.

But whereas salmon farming, the Howard Doris dry dock, the Loch Kishorn yacht repair yard and other enterprises provide work and employment, crofting has become the "sleeping giant".

Never before has the availability of locally-grown food been more important in rural Scotland. The lockdown, restricting access to distant supermarkets and shops, gives opportunity for the many small crofts to thrive.

So many Lochcarron crofts are being held by residents who have retired from active work. Their croft land is unfenced and wasted. I have had applications to work the land from many young employees of salmon farms and other local business, looking for part-time work.

Another opportunity for Lochcarron crofters and those elsewhere in the West Highlands is the rapid increase in tourism as a result of the North Coast 500 scenic road route. The first time this world-famous NC500 meets the scenic coast, seventy miles from its start in Inverness, is Lochcarron.

Lochcarron Estate's twenty miles of NC500 road and its side roads, overlooking some of the most scenic coastline in the West Highlands, presents the valuable gift to the Highlands of the massive increase in tourism, three million tourists per annum. Home-grown food, croft-house hospitality and the provision of entertainment venues for the tourists could become a major source of revenue for crofting.

The training courses run by SCF are not only essential guidance in agricultural and forestry practice, but also the benefits which crofting can give for tourism.

Kishorn
Strathcarron
IV54 8UY
01520 733 227

SCF YOUNG CROFTERS

Crofting and rural communities need young folk



Rod's croft, looking down to the Beaully Firth

Crofting Commission Convener Rod Mackenzie emphasises the importance of getting young people into crofting.

LAST AUGUST I was fortunate enough to join in with the SCF Young Crofters Gathering 2020.

Obviously Covid meant we could not meet in person, but over 60 folk joined the event via ZOOM, which showcased croft-work, aspirations and concerns of young crofters. What came across very clearly, and was really encouraging, is the number of young people who are already involved or want to get involved in crofting.

Without them crofting can't survive and many remote communities would struggle to maintain essential services, like schools. It's the young who invigorate communities and it's essential we provide them with the means to stay in their communities.

So, what can we do here at the Commission to help achieve this? One of the main areas we can tackle is to get unused crofts freed up through duties action to give young folk the chance of

getting a croft. This is not a simple process – and I don't think it should be too simple. Although we are looking to get crofts freed up we also have to consider, and deal sympathetically with, the crofter who is giving up the croft. One thing outgoing crofters must remember is that they can keep their croft house and therefore retain their links in the community.

Give a young person the chance to get a foothold in crofting

When we start the process of duties action it can take up to 18-24 months to complete. Far too long, I hear you say, but the process is laid out in crofting law and must be followed.

Over the last two years we have contacted hundreds of crofters, giving them the opportunity to resolve their breaches of duty and already over

two hundred have done so. Forty eight crofters have taken up residence; 29 have assigned their crofts, 98 have sublet and 37 have been granted consent to be absent in view of their particular circumstances. Where the crofter is unwilling to resolve any breach themselves, we can step in, terminate the tenancy and let the croft.

But much more remains to be done. Thanks to the additional funding announced by cabinet secretary Fergus Ewing earlier this year, we have been able to expand our residency and land use team, allowing us to contact more crofters who are in breaches of duty.

But you can help as well. If you're not complying with your duties, or if you're not able to work your croft anymore, YOU have the power to give a young person the chance to get a foothold in crofting.

Please consider it – and if you're not sure give us a ring to talk through the process, even if you are just thinking of allowing a young person to sublet your croft to see how they get on.

Working together, we can make a difference.

Succession and assessing crofts for care costs

FOR MANY years there has been robust discussion of local authorities assessing crofts as assets, being valued to cover the costs of care.

This is a very contentious issue anywhere, not just in crofting. Of course care costs and local authorities are strapped for cash, but some argue that taking someone's capital assets, which they have gathered over their lifetime of work, is wrong in a welfare state.

Some state that if you have the means to pay, you should. The argument is taken further in crofting,

as others feel that a tenancy should not be valued as an asset. This would be the only situation we know of where a tenancy on someone else's land is deemed an asset. The counter-argument put forward by local authorities is that croft tenancies are sold on the open market. They have monetary value and are therefore a capital asset.

This issue was prevalent in the press again recently.

It was discussed at length in the Cross Party Group on Crofting some years ago and is back on the agenda for the next meeting

in January. Scottish Government leaves it to local authorities to determine their policy on this, but because of different approaches taken in different areas, we have called on Scottish Government to issue guidance.

SCF is advising all members to look at their plans for succession. As it stands now, if a local authority deems a croft tenancy to be an asset they will force the sale, despite plans to assign the croft for free, for example to a family member. **To stop this, the croft must be assigned in advance, in plenty of time.** It is

no good trying to assign it when you know that you are going to need care – the local authority will treat this as avoidance and will value it anyway.

But it isn't just about not letting the local authority sell your croft. Please read Rod Mackenzie's article above. This is about you making the choice to pass the croft on to someone, perhaps a family member, perhaps an incoming young family.

If you are coming to the point that you no longer work your croft – pass it on! This is what keeps crofting alive.

SCF YOUNG CROFTERS

Crofting – the good life?

A touch of realism from Katrine Fogt

CUTE LAMBS playfully jumping around beautiful green pastures; blue skies and birdsong above; a crofter strolling through fields in a spotless waxed jacket, complete with collie at heel doing exactly what it's told?

Or horizontal rain penetrating every hole in your mud-clad oilskins whilst you struggle up the hill looking for the sheep that, yet again, got out. Shouting commands to a dog that can't hear you over the wind – with at least one screaming child in tow. I find the latter to be the case more often than not.

I don't have a collie, or missing sheep for that matter, as our sheep aren't arriving until the end of November. But I do feel it's important to paint a more realistic picture of crofting. Even more so now, with many people keen move to rural areas and live the good life. I would class crofting as the good life, but it comes with its fair share of frustration and struggles.

We are all well aware of the difficulties of obtaining a croft. They are notoriously hard to come by, often sold for an eye-watering amount

and don't necessarily come with a place to live – something that can be as hard to find as the croft itself. My family and I were fortunate to have already settled in the area when our croft came up for sale.

After a year and a half of sorting out all the legal stuff, remortgaging our house and pulling our hair out in frustration, the croft was ours and we were good to go! Or so we thought. This is where the real uphill battle began.

Stepping onto the croft for the first time was daunting and overwhelming. Where do you begin? We had bought a bareland croft with no structures, a knackered fence and a gate that won't stay on its hinges. A typical croft.

Three years on, not much has changed. We dream of a poly-tunnel, deer fencing, a shed, machinery and winning the lottery. Mostly the latter, because how else are you supposed to achieve the former?

The biggest lesson we have learned from our three years crofting is that crofters are grafters. And inventors. A crofter can make anything from nothing – or whatever was left over from the last project combined with what washed up on the shore, generally held together with baling twine.



Katrine

Useful skills, really.

It helps to have money behind you, something most of us don't after handing over our entire life savings for the privilege of spending our days mud-clad and wet. Yet a privilege it is and a truly fantastic lifestyle.

Just don't expect fast progress, matching gates, stock-proof fencing and blue skies. With a smile on my face, I will don my leaking oilskins, feed the animals in the driving rain and mend another hole in the fence before our sheep arrive next month.

Heatherlea Black Cheviot

WWW.BLACKCHEVIOT.COM



Natural Handspun Wool
From our Fleeced Family
To your Knitting Family
This Christmas

Sabrina Ross describes her small wool business.

TOGETHER WITH my husband George, we are fifth generation crofters with a flock of North Country Cheviot Hill sheep alongside a smaller flock of rare Black North Country Cheviots.

Our croft sits in a remote Sutherland strath in the Scottish Highlands. Here at Heatherlea we dedicate our time to looking after our flock, the environment and croft wildlife.

Despite finding knitting unappealing when I was younger, I always loved to wear the knitted socks my mum made. Who wouldn't?

I was very disappointed to learn that black wool is a waste product. Being environmentally conscious, I saw an opportunity to create soft yarn from this rare colour variety and at the same time reduce waste.

Our sheep are born, raised and sheared or hand-clipped on the croft. Each fleece is graded, sorted, washed, carded and spun in a traditional way – all by hand. Every hand-spun black skein, produced on the croft or by an artisan spinner named Chelene, can be traced back to the individual sheep.

The care and respect for our beloved woolly family and their fibre is present every step of the way and is one ingredient in the softness and warmth of our undyed natural wool.

In addition to our hand-spun range, to make our wool available for every taste and purse, we have a machine-spun range processed in a British mill.

Finding every step in the process fascinating, including aspects like website design, advertising and marketing, I still have lots to learn. Meeting kind and helpful people along the way has made it easier.

We love seeing pictures of finished garments and one in particular stands out. A lady knitted hats for her whole family. It never fails to put a smile on our faces!

We know our sheep and skeins by heart and are part of every step of their life or production. If you are looking for a lovely wool gift for Christmas, please browse www.blackcheviot.com.

A Scottish superstition states that having some black sheep in your flock will bring good luck. Formerly a vet, and becoming a crofter, I knew I would need to be a jack of all trades – and a little bit of luck is always welcome.

SCF YOUNG CROFTERS



Balkehøgda Hill



Bondegard

Cothrom eòlas fhaighinn air croitearachd

THA FHIOS againn bho Chruinneachadh nan Croitearan Òga gu bheil ùidh aig mòran dhaoine òga ann an croitearachd.

Dh'fhaodamaid a ràdh cuideachd gu bheil cruaidh fheum aig croitearachd air daoine òga. Air tàilleibh Brexit, blàthachadh na cruinne agus meudachadh ann an àireamh sluaigh bu chòir fada bharrachd de thoradh na talmhainn tighinn bhon dùthaich againn fhìn. Dh'fhaodadh croitean a bhith mar phàirt de seo. Ach, tha an dàrna leth de chroitearan thairis air aois trì fichead 's mar sin feumaidh daoine òga tighinn a-staigh gus croitearachd a chumail a' dol. 'S e, cion croitean rim faighinn aon duilgheadas a chluinneas sinn tric; chan eil croitearan nach eil gan obrachadh deònach an toirt seachad, air neo ma tha, tha a' phrìs ro àrd. 'S e duilgheadas eile, gu tric chan eil na sgilean aig na daoine a tha ag iarraidh croitean. Ged a tha sgeime trèanaidh math airson sgilean aig an SCF dh'fhaoidte gum biodh greis-obrach air croit na chuideachadh

do dhaoine airson barrachd eòlas fhaighinn air dòighean obrach.

Bha mi leughadh o chionn ghoirid mu sgeama mar seo ann an Nirribhidh *Grønt Spatak* a tha toirt cothrom do dhaoine aig aois oileanaich, dà sheachdain a chur seachad air croit no air àirigh. Bidh iad uile a' tighinn còmhla aig toiseach an t-samhraidh airson deireadh seachdain oideachaidh nuair a bhios iad ag ionnsachadh mu cho cudromach 's a tha e gu bheil àiteachas ga chumail a' dol air feadh na dùthcha, mu na duilgheadasan a tha roimhe, agus mu na tha aig bunait a' ghnòthaich uile gu lèir – talamh! Bha còrr is 150 duine sa sgeama am-bliadhna agus mòran dhiubh an sàs ann an obair cruidh. Tha tuathanasan bainne beaga fhathast rin lorg ann an Nirribhidh ged a tha an àireamh a' crìonadh gach bliadhna. 'S ann thuca sin a bhios mòran de na h-oileanaich seo a' dol agus mar sin ri bleoghann agus obair bainne eile leithid dèanamh im is càis.

Saoil am biodh sgeama mar seo feumail air croitean na h-Alba? Bheireadh e seachad blasad den obair a tha an lùib croitearachd, agus bhiodh adhbharan eile air a shon cuideachd, mar a mhinich fear de na tuathanaich Nirribheach. "Tha Grønt Spatak na sgeama cudromach airson ceanglaichean a chruthachadh eadar àiteachas agus coimhearsnachdan san fharsainneachd. Feumaidh sinn dèanamh cinnteach gun tuig daoine an luach a th' aig àiteachas sna sgìrean iomallach ann an Nirribhidh". Tha an aon rud fìor airson Alba.

A scheme in Norway gives young people a short spell of experience on small farms. The scheme gives those, perhaps a generation or two away from croft life, a taste of what is involved, and also spreads knowledge of the importance of agriculture in marginal areas.

Gabhan Mac a'Phearsain



Rhoda and Gunna



The croft house with lambing sheep close by

Crofting

Rhoda Meek, a digital consultant and crofter in the Isle of Tiree, shares her croft history and aspirations.

MY FAMILY have been resident in the south east corner of the Isle of Tiree for the best part of four centuries.

In common with many others, my father left his home island for education and work, so I was born and brought up on the mainland. One of my earliest memories is a fleeting one, of an old man sat in a chair by the fire in our family home in Tiree.

That would have been my Seanair (Gaelic for grandfather). He was the very embodiment of a multi-skilled islander – a crofter,

boatbuilder, talented smith and a Baptist minister. After his death in 1984, my father and grandmother bought the title to our croft in Caolas and held it jointly. My grandmother moved to the mainland and although the croft was still held in the family, it was worked by someone else.

All my childhood holidays were spent in Tiree. At the age of seven I declared my intention to return, do the house up, and take on the croft as well. Whether anyone took me seriously, I don't know, but in 2013 it finally happened. I moved home. In 2016 I took over the running of the croft that my father and I now hold jointly.

2017 saw the arrival of 20 Hebridean sheep from the

SCF YOUNG CROFTERS

The wild croft



Al and Aurore Whitworth share their plans for their woodland croft.

IN 2018 we moved to our eight acre woodland croft in Skerry on the north coast, so that we could try to grow more of our own food and be more self-sufficient.

We had spent respectively 13 and 7 years in Shetland and lived in a remote place called Eshaness. We wished to remain in this community but could not persuade the crofter – who has multiple crofts and lives in another village 15 miles away – to rent, or part with, a small area of the croft around our house for growing vegetables.

As Al developed his woodworking skills and business, we spent a while looking for woodland across the Highlands and were particularly interested in the woodland croft concept. We saw this perfect-for-us croft on the SCF register and could only afford it thanks to Al having previously worked in the decommissioning industry. We had just managed to pay off our house in Shetland, and getting a big mortgage would not have been feasible, as Al was then self-employed and Aurore was a relief postie.

Our plan for the croft has evolved over the last two years as we observe the land and settle in. Al is a part-time carpenter and intends to use some of our own trees for woodcraft in the future. Aurore is currently learning the craft of basketmaking and hopes to focus on this and reduce her hours as a relief postie.

Our work on the croft has been focused on creating new no-dig veg beds and sowing seeds from local, native tree species. As well as growing trees for ourselves, we are setting up a wee tree nursery. This autumn we have prepared areas to be planted with basketry willows too, so we can grow our own material for weaving. We are also setting up a willow, alder and birch coppice rotation to be self-sufficient in wood fuel for our Rayburn and stove.

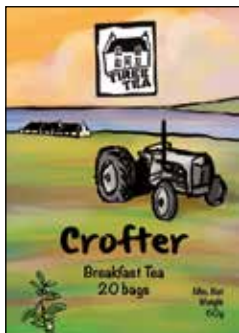
We want to show that you can produce food, fuel and other produce from what is considered to be marginal land in a sustainable way and with very few external inputs. We won't make much money from the croft. For us it is about simplifying our lives and spending time doing things we consider meaningful and enjoyable.

Follow our progress on Facebook and Instagram (The Wild Croft). A website is on the way!

on Tiree

neighbouring island of Gunna. In 2018 a sheepdog, also called Gunna, arrived. I'm now at a flock of over 60. I'm experimenting with two approaches, firstly doing a Hebridean Texel first cross, and a Hebtex x Beltex second cross to see if I can get a small, hardy but heavier breed for store. At just over five foot, I have learnt to my cost that without serious investment in equipment, the big commercial breeds are not for me!

My second experiment is with mutton. Last year I kept my first cross wedders and this year I have kept my pure Hebridean wedders. I'm looking forward to finding out how they taste, but as a naturally impatient person, it's



Tiree Tea - Crofter Blend

driving me up the wall that there's another few years to go yet.

In terms of the future, I am fortunate to work remotely in the software industry which allows me to be at home and work the croft. I have set up



One of the first hebtex lambs

a wee tea label, Tiree Tea and I also launched the isle20.com shopping site during lockdown which has kept me very busy.

I had planned to add cows to the croft this year, but with everything going on, I've hit pause. I'll probably

go for Luing when it does happen. Despite living in Falkirk these days, my dad keeps asking when "his" cows will arrive!

Rhoda runs tireetea.co.uk, and isle20.com.

ON THE CROFT

From Grimsay to Vermont



Reclaimed blackland, Grimsay and Mary (inset)

Maria Scholten pays tribute to the work of Mary Norton, Grimsay community-fundraiser, researcher and crofter.

WHILE THE bright leaves of the sycamore remind me of autumn in the new world, Mary had planned ahead and is – hopefully and deservedly – enjoying a beautiful Indian summer in her home country.

The news of her departure came to me in the August edition of *Am Pàipear*. Editor Iain Stephen Morrison did an excellent job capturing her life and career in an extensive interview. I recommend ordering the August copy as it will do more justice to her achievements than I can do here.

Instead, I will reflect briefly and incompletely on her contributions to crofting. Two years ago I organised a technical visit to Uist with a small group of crofters from Lochaber to give them a

crash course in Uist crofting agriculture, starting at Mary's croft. Her welcoming greeting was: "Crofters, nice!"

From the start she was very supportive of, and generous towards, my work on Uist landraces and became a Shetland kale enthusiast. I saw her on the blue tiny tractor tearing out and throwing clouds of sphagnum into the air with visible pleasure.

The resources generated through her croft work and research are impressive: the Blackland Index as part of her thesis, the reprint of Fraser Darling's *Crofting Agriculture* book; the *Crofting Year* handbook for the Sgoil Lionacleit crofting course – both with beautiful drawings by local artist Bill Neil. Numerous training seminars, first in the old schoolhouse, later in the new boat shed, with SAC staff, each of them enjoying coming up and staying at the croft house and always with local crofters involved.

Her writing strong, clear and highly readable,

usually in Helvetica font, showing her arts background, can be read on the website (www.blacklandcentre.org), *The Blacklander* newsletter and the *Peat is like snow* leaflet. Worth a re-read and a wide audience. Thank you Mary!

SCF's Donald Murdie commented: "I hope her many successful projects have been left in good hands. They are almost too many to list; crofting and boatbuilding on the curriculum at Lionacleit and Plockton; the boat shed on Grimsay; the Blackland Centre; Uist Wool; the community hub; and others I've probably missed. Everything she did was meticulously researched and taken forward with driven determination. She managed to take people along with her, no easy task in a Hebridean crofting and fishing community."

Patrick Krause concluded, "And can I just add a big thank you Mary for being such a good friend to crofting and to the SCF over these many years; it has been an inspiration to know you. All good wishes for your new life in your homeland."

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ON THE CROFT

Donald's hortiblog



HERE WE are at the end of another growing season, and the start of the next, with ground to be manured and overwintering crops planted out.

In many ways, growing conditions have been ideal, with a good balance of warmth and rainfall. Marketing has been difficult for obvious reasons. We could not operate our usual sales outlet at the croft gate as it would have been difficult to maintain hygiene and deal with cash.

Our excellent local shop came to the rescue and sold a good proportion of our produce. The support they gave us, and to other growers in the area, will not be forgotten.

These small, local businesses have become the backbone of remote and fragile communities in this year of crisis. With more diverse and flexible supply chains than supermarkets, they have been well stocked with a good variety of quality food, and our shop has gone the extra mile for all of us. Let us not forget that, and continue to support our local food retailers in the long term. They have proved without doubt how much we need them.

Which tomatoes to grow?

We like to try out different tomato varieties alongside our established favourites. This year we grew Gardening Delight F1, which the seed companies claimed to be an improvement on the well known Gardener's Delight. It was a

disappointment. Certainly the crop was heavy, but it was thick skinned and a bit bland in taste, like a supermarket tomato, and just about ok for cooking or sliced on a sandwich. We have yet to find a better red tomato than Olirose. It's reliable and produces a good crop of lovely plum-shaped fruits over a long season, with the usual caveat that what works in our soil and growing conditions will not necessarily suit everyone.

SCF's Horticulture Handbook reprinted

It's great to see the Horticulture Handbook back in print. A surge in demand during the first lockdown caused the original print run to sell out.

The handbook grew out of a series of meetings and training events that took place throughout the Highlands and Islands in 2006 and 2007, where we had the pleasure of meeting very many crofters who were interested in diversifying into fruit and vegetable growing. It became clear that there was demand for a definitive guide covering our diverse and challenging growing conditions.

Principal authors are Audrey Litterick, a horticulture consultant well-known to Highland and Island growers; Calina MacDonald, presenter of *Ann's a Gharraidh* on BBC Alba; and John Bannister, crofter and nurseryman in Skye.

The handbook is available from SCF head office at £15 to members and £20 to non-members, and I'm told it's flying off the shelves.

Re-imagining local food in the Highlands

Would you like to be part of a movement that is taking action to improve access to local sustainable food here in the Highlands, asks Emma Whitham of Highland Good Food.

THE HIGHLAND Good Food conference will take place online over five Monday afternoons in January and February 2021, on 11th, 18th and 25th January and 1st and 8th February.

This online conference is the important second phase of the Highland Good Food Conversation, where people across the region are re-imagining what good food looks like – and what a truly sustainable Highland diet means. We have all witnessed how precarious our food system is, and how, during this crisis, it was our local food producers and retailers who innovatively and passionately rose to the challenge of getting food to us all.

There is now a lot of momentum and energy in the local food sector and many are keen to see a food system that is better for the planet, better for people and better for producers – making this conversation very timely.

During phase 1 (the Highland Good Food podcast), we met some incredible people and discovered many exciting initiatives. There is a



great appetite for change to our food system. This conference gives an opportunity to work out the solutions as part of a team within a growing movement.

The aim is to create deliverable actions that will contribute to achieving a Highland food system that is better for all. This event is for anyone interested in any area of the food sector and who wants to be part of the solution.

Throughout the five sessions we will be joined

by some inspirational and passionate people, including Pete Ritchie from Nourish Scotland, Dr Sheila George from WWF, Lynn Cassells from Lynbreck Croft, Jo Hunt from Knockfarrel Produce and several others; all sharing ideas, visions and their incredible work.

Delegates will work in facilitated groups throughout the sessions to create an action plan. Over the course of the five weeks there will be opportunities to work in thematic groups of your choice and to work in mixed-interest groups, ensuring you get an opportunity to hear the perspective of different people.

We are at an exciting time in our history, with a fantastic opportunity to work together to create a better future. With creativity, belief, energy and human connections, we can create a food system that works for all; no matter where you live or what your income is.

If we work together we can make real, meaningful change.

For more info, get in touch.

Follow Highland Good Food Conversation on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Email hello@highlandgoodfood.scot.

And check out the Highland Good Food Conversation website <https://highlandgoodfood.scot>.

ON THE CROFT

A living legacy for



Michael and his son Calum-Ruairidh

DR MICHAEL Foxley's croft sits on a north-facing slope above the scattered township of Achaphubuil overlooking the Loch Eil Narrows.

The croft, on Conaglen estate, has been tenanted by Michael's family for generations. As well as 4 ha of in-bye pasture and 125 ha of hill parks, the croft includes extensive areas of ancient semi-natural woodland. In keeping with many crofts in the western highlands, the cattle went a few years ago but there is still a large flock of blackface, Lleyen and Hebridean sheep. The grazing has been improved by the eradication of bracken from 20 ha over the past 20 years.

In 2016 Michael heard about the launch of the Croft Woodland Project (CWP) at the Highlands and Islands Forestry Forum. A partnership project run by the Woodland Trust, the CWP provides free advice and assistance to crofters, smallholders and common grazings committees within the crofting counties, to plant and manage native woodlands. CWP advisors provide advice and help on all aspects of woodland creation, including accessing funding and loans.

Following CWP site assessments and discussions with Michael about his objectives for woodland creation, whilst retaining the better

 A photograph of a Highland cow standing in a field with trees in the background. The cow is brown and has long, shaggy fur. The trees are bare, suggesting autumn or winter.

WOODLAND
TRUST SCOTLAND

Trees are a valuable source of woodfuel and provide important shelter for your livestock, crops and buildings.

The Woodland Trust offers free planting and woodland management advice to crofters, common grazings and small holders.

Find out how useful trees are.
Get in touch.

Image: John Bridges/WTML

Trees for the crofting community



0343 770 5818



crofting@woodlandtrust.org.uk



woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant

ON THE CROFT

future generations

ground for grazing, three small areas of new native woodland were proposed. Once the proposals had been supported by Conaglen estate as landlord, an agent was employed by CWP to take the proposal through the Forestry Grant Scheme application process. In 2018, an approved contract was issued to create 5.1 ha of upland oak woodland and 2.2 ha of native Scots pine woodland.

The new woodlands were planted over the next two winters and will extend and link the existing woodlands on the croft. In time, the new woodlands should provide a range of benefits including improved shelter and agricultural productivity, quality hardwood timber, firewood and enhanced biodiversity.

Michael is now working with CWP and Conaglen estate on a second proposal to create another 8 ha woodland. For Michael, planting new woodlands is leaving a living legacy on this family's croft that his children and grandchildren will see prosper and grow over the coming years and enjoy benefits from in the future. "It was hard work planting

10,000 trees with my family and friends, often in hail storms. The trees are thriving and we all have a great sense of achievement. The CWP team were excellent in giving good advice and dealing with the complicated FS grant process. I would very strongly advise active hill farmers and crofters to contact them as to how some of their poorer hill ground can be planted with long-term benefits for them."

Initially established to run for five years from 2015, the CWP has recently secured funding commitment for a further five years, due to increasing interest and demand from the crofting community. This second phase of the project is funded by the Woodland Trust and Point and Sandwick Trust with additional support from Scottish Forestry.

For further information, contact Iona Hyde (Argyll & Lochaber) on 07840 699427, Viv Halcrow (Western Isles) on 07876 217034 or Eleanor Garty (Highland and Northern Isles) on 07436 627176.



For more info
contact Maree
on 07787125219
or info@polycrub.co.uk
www.polycrub.co.uk



Polycrub® – storm strength from Shetland

The Polycrub company markets a unique polytunnel/greenhouse hybrid designed in Shetland to withstand extreme climates.

The Polycrub concept started life as part of a Northmavine Community Development Company (NCDC) community project almost thirteen years ago. Folk in the Shetland community of Northmavine were keen to reduce food miles and grow fresh produce undercover, but they couldn't find a product that would withstand the Shetland climate long-term. So they developed their own!

Grant aid from the Climate Challenge Fund allowed 12 growing spaces to be built throughout Northmavine. Each super-strength structure was split into shared plots.

Once the community growing project was complete, it attracted lots of interest from other community groups and individuals who wanted to buy the product. The Polycrub was born and they are now sold in kit form as far away as France and the Falklands.

The Polycrub company trades

as nortenergy Ltd, a successful social enterprise. The company is a trading arm of NCDC, a charity that works alongside local people to regenerate Northmavine. Profits from the Polycrub company are reinvested in Northmavine.

Polycrubs are very popular with individual growers who need a robust growing space. Schools and community groups have been able to access grant funding for Polycrub growing projects and crofters could also be eligible for funding support through the CAGS grant system.

Polycrubs have structural accreditation and a rating to withstand winds of 120mph, if built to spec. The company has developed and improved the initial range which now includes Peerie Polly, a three-metre-wide Polycrub; Polycrub Classic, a four-metre-wide version and Polycrub Opyl, a four-metre-wide structure. The Opyl is of particular interest to crofters as it is suitable for storage or small livestock and poultry. Each range comes in a variety of lengths.

Sheep owners wanted to help investigate sheep parasite control

IN SCOTLAND there are approximately 15,000 hill and upland crofts and farms with sheep, representing around 60% of the whole sector.

Despite these numbers sheep production is becoming increasingly demanding for a number of reasons, including parasite infections. The main parasites affecting grazing sheep and lambs are roundworms and liver fluke, which are usually controlled by the use of anthelmintics. However, both of these parasites have developed resistance to these drugs, threatening the ability of sheep owners to sustainably control these infections.

To help tackle this, Moredun Research Institute has recently funded a new PhD student to work on a project titled: "A holistic approach to internal parasite control on hill and upland sheep farms", in conjunction with SRUC and the University of Edinburgh.

The project aims to identify the scale of anthelmintic-related issues faced by hill and upland sheep owners, by gathering questionnaire information. In parallel, focus crofts and farms will



Swaledale sheep, drawn by PhD student Eilidh Geddes

be identified, their parasite challenge assessed and their approach to internal parasite control monitored over a full production year.

After initial data collection and analysis, customised options for parasite control will be proposed, implemented and monitored on the focus crofts and farms over the next production

year. Once implemented, economic and performance data will be collected to analyse the impact of improved disease control at croft and farm level. This will allow the development of practical recommendations on how to optimise internal parasite control.

The project plans to recruit sheep owners over the next six months. We are looking for crofters, farmers and vet practices, in hill and upland areas, who would be willing to complete a short questionnaire for us. We would also like to identify about ten focus crofters or farmers willing to take part by sharing faecal samples from their animals and information about their croft or farm.

Focus crofters and farmers will gain information on the parasites present on the land, the anthelmintic resistance status of their flock and advice on how best to treat their flock in the future.

Anyone who is interested please contact Fiona Kenyon (Fiona.Kenyon@moredun.ac.uk) or Eilidh Geddes (Eilidh.Geddes@moredun.ac.uk) for more information.

MEMBERS PAGES



SCF's annual general meeting

SCF'S AGM took place using Zoom on 10th September 2020.

SCF chair Yvonne White welcomed members and staff. In her chair's report Yvonne explained how SCF had supported and represented members during the pandemic, with effective communications from staff who were working from home, digitally and by video. SCF had performed well over the past year, despite the pandemic, utilising new communication strategies where possible. Staff had assisted members, with the help of the board and council who provide advice and experience when required. This voluntary input is vital to SCF.

The SCF training team were doing an excellent job and a new project, Sustain, Diversify, Grow had been funded by HIE.

The new SCF website is operational and a very good resource. Thanks were due to the

project team and to web designers Lumberjack Digital, with a special mention of SCF's IT support, Geoff Mandeville.

Yvonne confirmed that agricultural support continues to be a huge priority for SCF, particularly with Brexit looming. SCF strives constantly to build good working relationships throughout its work, resulting in our being listened to and respected, representing members at the highest levels.

Membership numbers are holding their own in what is a challenging period for crofters and agriculture. To do the best possible job for crofters, SCF needs as much support as possible through membership.

There is a significant workload ahead, but the organisation had achieved a great deal in the past year. Yvonne concluded her report by thanking everyone for giving their time so freely on behalf of members.

SCF's annual accounts for the year had been signed off. Patrick Krause explained that much of the organisation's funds were allocated to specific future expenditure. Unrestricted funds are available for expenditure

at the board's discretion, while designated funds are tied to specific items – such as the new website. Restricted funds are grants to SCF for particular, individual projects such as training. Staff salaries are paid from core funds, ie membership subscriptions.

Three objectives are crucial for SCF in managing income and expenditure:

- services to members eg advice and representation;
- lobbying government and agencies and ensuring crofting's voice is heard;
- development, eg the SCF training project.

Funding sources which SCF would normally apply to had been diverted to Covid mitigation, so it was even harder than usual to find funds for new projects.

Patrick emphasised how much is achieved though the support of SCF's volunteers. He thanked the board and council for their considerable amount of donated time – and SCF staff for their hard work.

SCF financial administrator

Barbara Thayer had left the organisation and Erin Matheson had taken over her role and was working hard and coping well with the challenge. Thanks were noted to Barbara for her work over the past years.

Donald MacKinnon was re-appointed to the board and Jonathan Hedges was ratified as a director, having been co-opted onto the SCF board in August 2019. Fiona Mandeville was also ratified as a director, having been co-opted onto the SCF board in March 2020. Beth Rose was ratified as a director, having been co-opted onto the SCF board in August 2020. Sadly, Beth has recently stood down, due to other demands on her time.

Following the AGM, guest speaker Ian Davidson talked about the Scottish Government Scottish Land Matching Service. A very interesting question and answer session followed and all agreed that the service had good potential to free up unused land. Ways in which it could be promoted to crofters were identified.

Yvonne concluded the meeting with thanks to Ian and to all for their participation.

MEMBERS PAGES

How we work – and how you can help



SCF'S GOVERNING body is its board of directors, people from a variety of crofting backgrounds with an array of expertise needed to run the organisation.

The board is advised on policy positions by a council of representatives, crofters representing crofting areas or specialisations. Specific tasks and topics are worked on in detail by our working groups, comprising members of the board, council and others with appropriate expertise.

Directors are responsible for the governance of the company and, as SCF is a charitable company, they are also known as trustees.

We aim to have diversity of representation on our board and council – from women and men of all ages – and are always interested in hearing from members who might consider bringing their skills and experience to enhance SCF's role as the only organisation solely dedicated to campaigning for crofters and fighting for the future of crofting.

SCF directors serve a three-year term, which may be extended for a further three years by mutual agreement. The work is varied and interesting. It ranges from forming policy and representing SCF and crofting interests to policy-

Getting involved is an opportunity

makers at national, UK and EU level; the judicious running of the organisation; problem-solving and helping members; encouraging others to become members and participate; and much more.

SCF board meetings take place four times a year. Until this year, two meetings were face-to-face every six months, along with the council. The other two board-only meetings used to be by teleconference. Due to the pandemic we have moved to meeting by video-conference, which is working well and we had our first AGM by Zoom this year. Our working groups meet online when necessary.

Directors and council members are all volunteers who give their own time willingly to help their fellow crofters and the crofting cause. While our work is important and serious, our meetings are informal and friendly. Getting involved is an opportunity to extend your networks and can be fulfilling and enlightening.

If you feel you have the time, commitment and enthusiasm to devote to the preservation and future of crofting development, do get in touch with Patrick Krause or company secretary Fiona Mandeville for more information, sending an outline of your skills and how you see the future development of crofting and SCF.

For the SCF board we welcome members with experience of crofting; crofting policy; business management; financial administration; crofting law; rural development; communications; but board skills are not restricted to any of these. We are looking for commitment to crofting and our communities and a willingness to get involved as part of our team. These attributes are the main consideration. The current SCF board co-opts and the AGM ratifies new appointments.

The path is likely to start with an opportunity to join one of our working groups, progression onto the council and ultimately the board. Advice and support is always available from other board and council members and staff.

This link will take you to the "meet the team" page on our lovely new website: www.crofting.org/about-scf/scf-team.

MEMBERS PAGE

GDPR and SCF Privacy Policy

THE SCF Privacy Policy was introduced in 2018 in order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and built on the existing SCF Data Protection policy.

The GDPR sets out seven key principles which should lie at the heart of our approach to processing personal data. These are:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency
- purpose limitation
- data minimisation
- accuracy
- storage limitation
- integrity and confidentiality (security)
- accountability

SCF has to consider what is relevant and appropriate and we need to be confident that process and purpose are transparent to members, that the purpose is something that the individual member would reasonably expect and that we act within our lawful basis (legal obligation and legitimate interest).

Members' details are stored on a database in HQ where they are accessed by staff. Occasionally members' information is shared with your representatives on our board or council in order that they can carry out their work in helping members with individual problems, servicing members, recruitment and so on. Our privacy policy needs a small amendment to reflect this – ie the line that says "Your data is accessed by our staff only for the purposes set out above" will be amended to say "Your data is accessed by our staff and members of our board and council only for the purposes set out above." The amended version follows.

Fair Processing Notice (Privacy notice)

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) is a membership organisation solely dedicated to campaigning for crofters and fighting for the future of crofting.

We take your privacy seriously and this privacy notice sets out how we will use your data, who we will share it with, how we keep it secure and your rights as a data subject.

What we need from you

When you join as a member of SCF, renew your membership or take part in training, we will ask you for the following personal information:

- contact details – name, address, email address and phone number;
- date of birth – to calculate your membership category;
- payment details – bank account number and sort code;
- equality information – your gender, disability needs, etc;
- any additional information for the purposes of making a training event booking, including your next of kin, relevant health conditions, etc.

If you do not provide us with the personal information that we need, this may affect our ability to offer you our membership services or limit your training opportunities.

Why we need your personal information

We need to collect your personal information for legitimate purposes and so we can (i) manage your membership (ii) manage bookings for training courses and events.

We will use your personal information to:

- provide you, as an SCF member, with core member services, including your membership card and renewal notice, together with other relevant communications from time to time;
- provide you with updates on training courses, whether you are an SCF member or not;
- send you, as an SCF member, a monthly e-newsletter and *The Crofter* journal;
- engage with you, as an SCF member, on subjects relevant to our role representing you, including obtaining your views in surveys for research purposes, informing you of events and requesting your involvement in our campaigning activity;
- raise awareness of crofting through photographs, videos and live-streaming at events and training – we will use this for promotion, education and development purposes;
- respond to your requests for information, comments, complaints or concerns.

Why we need your personal information – legal obligations

We are under a legal obligation to process certain personal information relating to our members for the purposes of complying with those obligations under:

- The Companies Act 2006 – to maintain a register of our members, which includes name, address, the date admitted to membership and the date on which that membership ceased, the holding of general meetings, including issuing notices and voting arrangements.
- The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 – to check that our tutors and volunteers are able to undertake regulated work with vulnerable groups when required.
- The Equality Act 2010 – which requires us to process personal information so as to make reasonable adjustments where necessary.
- We use aggregated and anonymised reports of personal information for equality monitoring purposes, thereby enabling us to evaluate and promote equality of opportunity in both the work place and training, relating to age and gender.

Other uses of your personal information

We may ask you if we can process your personal information for other purposes. When we do, we will provide you with an additional privacy notice, explaining how we will use your information for these purposes.

Who we share your personal information with

We may share personal information with professional and legal advisors for the purpose of obtaining advice. SCF employs third party suppliers to provide services. These suppliers may process personal information on our behalf as "processors" and are subject to written contractual conditions to process only that personal information under our instructions and to protect it.

In the event that we share personal information with external third parties, we only share such information strictly required for the specific purpose

and take reasonable steps to ensure third parties only process the disclosed personal information in accordance with those purposes.

These third parties include:

- Parseq, who process direct debit payment instructions securely on our behalf;
- 34SP provides and maintains our IT servers and email accounts;
- Mailchimp distributes some of our email communications, including our monthly e-newsletter;
- Ritsons Chartered Accountants prepare SCF end-of-year accounts;
- Inksters Solicitors provide legal helpline service to members;
- Training tutors undertaking our training courses.

How we protect your personal information

Your personal information is stored in our membership and/or training databases, which are password protected. Paper records are stored securely in lockable cabinets. Your data is accessed by our staff and members of our board and council only for the purposes set out above.

How long we keep your personal information

We only keep your personal information for as long as necessary. This is to provide you with our membership services and/or records beyond the lifetime of a given training project, for audit purposes.

We will review and delete your personal information where you have not renewed your SCF membership with us after the auditing period is complete or, for the lifetime of any given training project, whichever is appropriate.

Data retention in relation to finances is required to ensure Gift Aid claims remain valid and that SCF's financial audit trail is in line with accounting standards.

We keep certain personal information in order to confirm your identity, whilst you were an SCF member and the duration of that membership. We do this to comply with the Companies Act 2006, which requires us to keep a register of our members.

You have the right to:

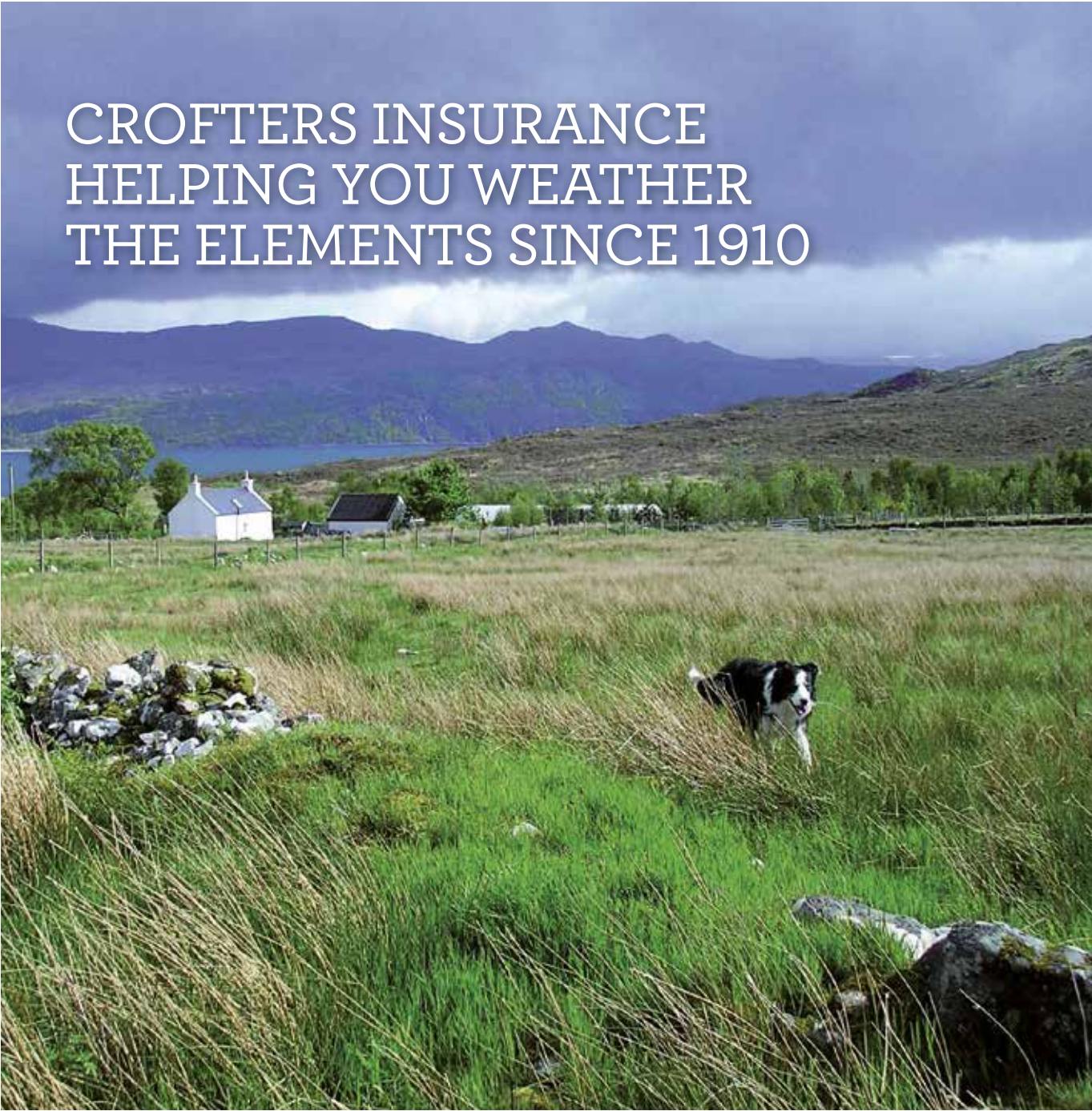
- request that we correct your personal data, if you believe it to be inaccurate or incomplete;
- request that we delete your personal information;
- access the personal data that we hold about you through a subject access request.

There is an unsubscribe button at the end of all email communications sent to you through Mailchimp.

If you have any questions at all about this privacy notice please call us on 01599 530005 or email us at hq@crofting.org

You can also contact us in writing at: Scottish Crofting Federation, Unit 26 Kyle Industrial Estate, Kyle, IV40 8AX

If you are dissatisfied with how we deal with your personal information, you have a right to raise a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office – www.ico.org.uk



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Farewell to Lucy



WE ARE losing one of our valued employees, Lucy Beattie, as she embarks upon the marathon journey of a PhD.

Lucy has been wonderful to work with – creative, diligent, fun ... the list of complimentary adjectives is very long! She is one of those people who has boundless enthusiasm and manages to cram more into 'the unforgiving minute' than it is right for a mere mortal to do.

We wish you all the very best in your endeavours, Lucy, and hope that Dr Beattie comes back to SCF.

Here is a message from Lucy:

Farewell from Lucy:

I've been working in the SCF training department on and off since 2012 but at the end of September I left to

pursue full-time academic research with UWS in Paisley, although I will still be home based in Loch Broom.

From the very first days of working with SCF I enjoyed every minute. The first gig, doing night classes on IACS and the CAP, which could have been very dry, was quite the opposite, with a great class of crofters from Inverasdale who were great craic and kept the banter going.

After this, working with Tina, Donna, Cathy and Ailsa, we ran a couple of long-term training projects which took me as far afield as Barra, Raasay, Lewis and Kilmartin. These projects were just truly inspirational to work on. Not only to see the progress that folks made but also to learn new things from meeting such a wide variety of people.

SCF is a great organisation to work for. The staff, the board and council and numerous other volunteers are such a dedicated team. I will miss them. However, I am still a member of SCF. I am a farmer, not a crofter, but living in a crofting area I recognise all the challenges of production in remote and rural areas. I am therefore very passionate about the work of the organisation.

*Le gach dùrachd
Lucy*

Thank you

TO OUR 2000 members, we offer a very heart-felt thank you for your support.

And a special thank you goes to the 900 who have been with us for over 20 years. That is commitment – and it is really appreciated. Over two-thirds of the 900 have been with us for over 30 years!

You helped to form this union and have kept it thriving as the crofters' representative.

It is very encouraging to see that our younger membership is growing – and you are very welcome. You are the future of this well-known and respected organisation – the only organisation that is dedicated to fighting for the future of crofting.

Without the support of all our members, which enables SCF to continue its important work, crofting would be facing even greater challenges.

SCF e-newsletter

Are you getting the SCF monthly e-newsletter?

Straight to your in-box every month, it keeps you up-to-date with crofting news, training, funding and events. If you would like to start receiving it just get in touch with HQ – 01599 530005 or email hq@crofting.org with your email address.



GREETING CARDS

Pack of 10 - £5 + P&P



How to contact us

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Company Number SC 218658
Charity Number SC 031919

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