



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofters point to better use of money and land

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has criticised the Scottish Government's award of £1,000,000 to a single land-owner, MacLeod of Skye, as "pandering to green tokenism with public money that could be better spent."

"This is a considerable award for the government to make," said Yvonne White, chair of the SCF, "a million pounds of public money given to an individual laird for his 'rewilding' project, planting trees on, what could be, productive agricultural land. It prompts the question as to whether this is the best use of public funds and of agricultural land in what could well be quite challenging times ahead regarding food security.

"Planting trees is good on the whole and Scotland needs a lot more trees, but they should be planted in appropriate places. Surely there must be other areas on the 42,000 acre estate suitable for trees, rather than sacrifice a farm? Skye is very short of good land so it seems a waste of a scant resource. And a farm – or indeed the division of a farm into crofts – means people, young families, which are also a scant resource.

"Having consulted members in the locality, this raises many questions", Ms White continued. "Was the possibility of alternative use of the farm even considered – for example the creation of crofts and the community benefit this brings with new entrants? Were local people asked if they thought changing the land use from food to forestry a good thing? Will there be any public benefit, apart from simply there being trees? What impact will the trees have on the surrounding grazing, on deer management for example?

"The Scottish Government carries out an assessment before allocating a grant, but we question whether one million pounds of public money has been spent in the most effective way to achieve the best results. Or is it simply government ticking a box in trying to achieve a national tree-planting target? Is it pandering to green tokenism with public money that could be better spent, that could achieve so much more for the local people?"

END

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Notes to editors

Please contact SCF office for high resolution photos