



NEWS RELEASE

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And the SCF Young Crofter Award goes to

Helen O'Keefe, in Elphin, Sutherland, has been chosen as SCF Young Crofter of the Year. Judges representing Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF), The MacRobert Trust and the Crofting Commission made their choice from exceptionally worthy submissions.

Donald MacKinnon, chair of the SCF, said, "We got an extremely high calibre of entrants for this round of the SCF Young Crofter Award, which is generously supported by The MacRobert Trust. It is an inspiration to see young folk doing such a very wide variety of activities on their crofts and they all fully deserve to be recognised for their efforts and enterprises. The judges, representatives of SCF, The MacRobert Trust and the Crofting Commission, certainly found what they were looking for – inspiration, enterprise, commitment and community involvement, in abundance. From the wide range of nominations, all very worthy ambassadors for crofting, we narrowed it down to a shortlist – Adam Veitch from Banavie, Cheryl McIntyre from Skye and Helen O'Keefe from Elphin. But of course there can only be one winner and Helen seems to be some sort of human dynamo!"

In little over 3 years Helen has increased a flock of Shetland sheep from 6 to nearly 100, a portion of the flock are crossed with a Beltex ram, she sells breeding and store lambs, mutton, fleeces and yarn. She produces and sells eggs, fruit and veg and set up the phenomenally successful online food hub 'The Green Bowl' (recently featured on BBC Alba), offering meat, vegetables and fruit from a range of growers from Elphin to Ullapool, Coigach and Assynt. She also runs the Elphin Tea Rooms, a popular tourist stop-off, in which she offers croft produce and home-baking. She serves the township as Grazings Clerk and has been very active in developing projects for various schemes. Helen is known in her participation of training events, the 'Women in Crofting' network and is a Soil Association Scottish Farmer Ambassador. And there is more ...!

Chris Hockley, CEO at The MacRobert Trust, said, "The MacRobert Trust is really pleased to continue to support the award for Young Crofter of the Year. We are always keen to help and support young people in agriculture helping themselves and their community through dedication, hard work and enterprise, inspiring others by their efforts as they realise their own goals; this award epitomises all those attributes in a sector so very close to the MacRobert's hearts."

Convener of the Crofting Commission, Rod MacKenzie, said, "It is extremely encouraging that there is so much enthusiasm, energy and innovation from the young crofters who were nominated for this award. The Crofting Commission acknowledge the demand from young people who wish to occupy a croft and make a contribution to the sustainability of local communities, local food networks and population retention especially in remote areas of the crofting counties."

On being notified of her win Helen said, "I am absolutely delighted to receive this award. It's a real honour because I know there are a lot of other young crofters doing incredible things out there. It's great that SCF have this award to showcase the work of young crofters, and maybe help inspire other young people to pursue crofting as a career. Thank you to the judges for choosing me for this honour, and thank you to my township - I couldn't have achieved this award without their help and support - but that's part of what crofting's about, isn't it!"

Chris Hockley added, "I know the competition was tight but I am particularly delighted that Helen O'Keefe has won the award – she has such energy and determination and achieved so much in her short time in crofting – a truly worthy winner; many, many congratulations."

END

Notes to editors

Please contact SCF office for high resolution photos

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