



NEWS RELEASE

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'DO NOT REINVENT THE WHEEL' SAYS CROFTING FEDERATION IN RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON SMALL LANDHOLDINGS REFORM

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has responded to the Scottish Government's proposals to reform small landholding tenancies, by calling for small landholders in Scotland to be brought under crofting law and to be given access to the channels of support that exist for crofters.

"The Scottish Government's proposals could introduce elements from agricultural tenancies to the legislation that applies to small landholding tenancies", explained Donald MacKinnon, chair of the SCF. "Additionally, Scottish Government consulted about the need for an umbrella organisation for small landholders. It is unclear to us why they are using limited resources to reinvent the wheel, as a trialled and tested framework for protection of small-scale tenants already exists in Scotland in the form of crofting law, with the Crofting Commission there to regulate and SCF there to support."

Until 1955, all tenanted small landholders across Scotland were protected under the same laws, and rights of security of tenure, fair rent, and payment of compensation for improvements still apply to crofters and small landholders alike. Yet, when in 1955 crofting tenure was limited to the crofting areas in the Highlands and Islands, small landholdings outside of those areas became stuck in a regulatory framework that has not kept up with the times. This is the reason why, since 2013, the Scottish Government has been running consultations and working groups to review the law. The last consultation on reform closed at the end of last week.

"The proposals provide no safeguards to protect land for agricultural use and food production, and to protect extensive farming systems in High Nature Value areas" continued Mr MacKinnon. "It is of great concern to us that where SCF advocates increasing numbers of small, tenanted holdings across Scotland, some of the proposed measures could have the opposite effect."

Mr MacKinnon concluded: "Bringing small landholdings into the crofting framework would not only be the most logical step, but also the most efficient and best use of public funds. We urge the Scottish Government to focus its efforts and resources on reforms that are urgently needed. This includes agricultural payments under a new Agriculture Bill, and a new Crofting Bill, which brings opportunities to fix current issues within crofting law and to make it fit for a wide rollout".

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