



NEWS RELEASE

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“CROFTING AND MARINE ACTIVITIES GO HAND IN HAND” SAYS CROFTING FEDERATION IN RESPONSE TO HPMA PROPOSALS

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has taken a firm stance against Scottish Government proposals to restrict almost all types of human activities in 10% of Scottish seas and have emphasised the importance of low-impact fishing and seaweed harvesting for crofters in coastal and island communities.

“Crofting is essentially a part-time activity with households relying on income derived in many cases from complementary marine-based employment in sectors such as fishing and aquaculture”, explained Donald MacKinnon, chair of the SCF. “The direct link between small-scale and low-impact activities on land and at sea, which often goes back generations, means that relocation will be very difficult for many crofters. A loss of local employment opportunities will, therefore, have a devastating impact on crofting and crofting communities.

“The proposals fail to take into account potential knock-on effects including impacts on crofting and crofting’s potential to deliver on many rural policy outcomes such as population retention, language and cultural heritage, local food production and the environment,” continued Mr MacKinnon. “There has clearly been a groundswell of anger across the Crofting Counties from Kintyre to Shetland and every coastal and island community in between, about these proposals. This isn’t because people are against environmental and marine protection. Indeed, crofters understand the principles of crop and grazing rotation and the need for responsible management of the land and sea - we’ve been doing it for generations.”

Regarding the potential wider impacts on crofting, Mr MacKinnon said, “We know that the Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon is committed to crofting, and this was clear through the National Development Plan for Crofting which we welcomed in 2021. Many of the aims in this document - such as doing ‘all that we can to ensure full occupancy’ of crofts - could potentially be hindered if proposals like HPMA from other ministerial portfolios make it more difficult for active crofters to stay in their community.”

Mr MacKinnon concluded, “Fragile areas – whether on land or at sea – should be protected for current and future generations. Yet, it needs to be recognised that humans make up a key part of these ecosystems and that they are part of the solution. Involving local people in conservation should be a priority and sustainable use should be actively encouraged and supported”.

END

See also SCF’s full response to the HPMA consultation: <https://www.crofting.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SCF-Response-HPMA-Consultation-April-2023.pdf>