



NEWS RELEASE

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Scottish Crofting Federation Gathering to be held in Stornoway!

The Scottish Crofting Federation is hosting its 2024 Gathering – “Crofting: A Tradition for the Future” on 23rd November in the Caberfeidh Hotel in Stornoway. The event features an opening keynote speech by Jim Fairlie, MSP; a panel discussion with Pàdruig Moireasdan, Sally Reynolds, Andy Wightman and Megan MacInnes on the theme of “Sustaining Community: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”; a choice of workshops on a wide variety of topics; and an optional visit to Sweeny’s croft in Ness.

The main theme of the Gathering is that, with the right support, crofting traditions of sustaining local communities, retaining young people, enabling access to land, and nature-friendly, local food production, offer solutions to modern problems of depopulation, affordable housing, food security and climate & biodiversity breakdown.

Jonathan Hedges, Chair of SCF, says “the recently released “Value of Crofting” report highlighted what we already knew, that crofting is needed more than ever in the current climate. However, these are challenging times and changes in policy do not always support the small-scale in general, or crofting in particular. Our Annual Gathering will weave together the traditional and the modern, the inspirational and the practical - much as crofting does itself - to define a resilient model of modern crofting and to set out what is needed to sustain this into the future”.

The Gathering is open to anyone and everyone with an interest in crofting and what it means for the future of our rural and island communities and for sustainable food production in Scotland.

Donald MacKinnon, a crofter from Arnol on the West Side of Lewis and former SCF Chair says, “I’m delighted that the SCF Gathering is taking place in Lewis this year. Crofting is still at the heart of communities in the Western Isles, and we’ve seen a real resurgence of interest among young people here wishing to remain in their communities and croft”.

Megan MacInnes is one of the panel speakers at the Gathering and comes from a crofting family in Applecross, where she still lives. Megan believes that “crofting has played such an important role in sustaining the Highlands and Islands until now and is critical to our futures. I am really excited to be attending the Gathering and being part of discussions about how to make that a reality.”

On the day before the main Gathering, SCF is holding a smaller community-focused event that celebrates 100 years of crofting communities in community ownership in the Western Isles. This will also be a forum for discussion about how to maximise the benefit going forward to both crofting and community management of land. The Friday event - “Crofting and Community Ownership: Past, Present

and Future” – is part of Community Land Scotland's *Linn an fhearainn / 100 Years of Community Ownership* programme.

“It’s going to be a busy and inspiring couple of days, and we are ambitious about what can be achieved” says Jonathan Hedges. “We want to reconnect with what unites us as crofters and restore the fire in our bellies to champion and sustain crofting communities in the modern world”.

SCF is very grateful for grant funding from Muaitheabhal Community Wind Farm Trust and Western Isles Development Trust, and for sponsorship from Harris Tweed Hebrides, North Uist Distillery, Polycrub, Dingwall and Highland Marts Ltd, NFU Mutual, Shearwell Data Livestock Systems, Camus Consulting Crofting Law Specialists, and Anderson MacArthur Solicitors. Tickets are available through the SCF website.

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