

PRESS RELEASE

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Crofting Bill Stage 2: Significant improvements, yet some dangerous setbacks

Stage 2 amendments to the Crofting and Scottish Land Court Bill have brought a number of significant improvements campaigned for by SCF.

These include strengthening the definition of environmental use of crofts, tightening up various rules around owner-occupiers compliance with duties, including a provision that may pave the way for more scrutiny over transfer of owner occupier crofter status in the future and taking steps to prevent the splitting of grazing shares without formal approval from the Crofting Commission, thereby preventing accidental separation or separation without good reason.

There are also welcome improvements related to how those in breach of their duties will be restricted in terms of which regulatory applications they can progress and a generally stronger approach to compliance with duties throughout the Bill.

Further, the government has signalled an openness for more discussion on a number of points raised by MSPs, including pathways towards a comprehensive crofting reform to be brought forward in the next parliament.

The biggest area of concern that remains however, is related to provisions around crofter-led initiatives on common grazings where some problematic changes have been introduced which, on the face of it, weaken the original wording and give landowners more extensive grounds to object to such initiatives with the Crofting Commission left to decide whether these are substantial enough or not.

SCF Chief Executive, Donna Smith, said

“Whilst we very much welcome the general path this Bill is taking, we will be urging the government to consider making significant changes to the Bill at stage 3 with respect to crofter led environmental initiatives on common grazings to ensure that any benefits derived from these belong to active crofters. The concern is that without this, there is a real risk that “green” lairds will take advantage of the situation and will try to force crofters into unfair agreements over carbon credits.”

Donna continued,

“We look forward to continuing constructive dialogue with both the Government and cross party MSPs over the coming weeks on these matters.”

For further information or interview requests, please contact mike@crofting.org or donna@crofting.org

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

About the Scottish Crofting Federation

The Scottish Crofting Federation is the only organisation solely dedicated to supporting crofting in Scotland. Our mission is to ensure the sustainability of crofting for future generations and advocate for crofting so that its value is recognised from within communities to government. We support crofters to meet the challenges of a changing world and champion the need for crofting to remain accessible and affordable for young people in crofting communities. As a member-led organisation, SCF works to secure a thriving future for crofting, rooted in community, culture and care for the land.

About the Crofting and Scottish Land Court Bill

The Crofting and Scottish Land Court Bill is a Scottish Government bill intended to modernise crofting legislation and improve the operation of the crofting system. Its aims include strengthening compliance with crofting duties, updating definitions around croft use, improving regulatory processes, and making changes to how the Crofting Commission and the Scottish Land Court operate. The Bill also seeks to support sustainable land use, including environmental activity on crofts and common grazings, while ensuring crofting continues to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits for crofting communities.