

**CROSS-PARTY GROUP on CROFTING**  
**Meeting 19 of Parliamentary Session 4**  
**Scottish Parliament, room Q.1.04**  
**Wednesday 29 January 2014 at 17.30**

**MINUTES**

**Present:**

Jamie McGrigor MSP<sup>1</sup> (Chair)  
Rhoda Grant MSP (Vice-chair)  
Patrick Krause SCF (Sec)  
John King RoS  
Uisdean Robertson CnES  
Robin Haig  
Brian Inkster SLE  
Lucy Sumsion NFUS  
Pam Rodway SAS  
Drew McFarlane-Slack SLE  
Gordon Jackson SG  
Neil Ross HIE  
Susan Walker CC  
Richard Frew SG  
John Brownlee SG  
Ullrich Kockel HWU  
Iain MacKinnon SCF  
Gary Cocker Office of Jean Urquhart MSP  
Douglas Pattullo office of Jamie McGrigor MSP  
Clare Slipper NFUS

**1. Welcome and Apologies.**

Rhoda Grant welcomed everyone on behalf of Jamie McGrigor who was delayed. Apologies were received from:

Jean Urquhart MSP; Derek Flyn SCF; Russell Smith SCF; Norman Leask SCF; Karen MacRae SCF; Dave Thompson MSP; Rob Gibson MSP; Angus MacDonald MSP; Tavish Scott MSP; Murdo MacKay CnES; Billy McKenzie SG; Gwyn Jones EFNCP; David Atkinson SCRG; George Farlow HC; Sandy Murray NFUS; Fiona Mackenzie UHI; Kevin Patrick LANTRA; Jean Balfour SLE; Catriona MacLean CC; Colin Kennedy CC; Nigel Miller NFUS; William Neilson NFUS.

The Chair then asked for a minutes silence in remembrance of John Farquhar Munro, who used to chair the group, who died recently. The Chair will write to John's wife Celia expresses the group's condolences.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

Minutes of 18 December 2013 agreed subject to amendment:  
Item 3 last para, CC had responded that it is inappropriate to give names out.

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<sup>1</sup> **Acronyms:** CAB Citizens Advice Bureau; CC Crofting Commission; CnES Comhairle nan Eilean Siar; EFNCP European Forum for Nature Conservation & Pastoralism; HC Highland Council; HIE Highlands & Islands Enterprise; HSCHT Highland Small Communities Housing Trust; HWU Herriot-Watt University; JHI James Hutton Institute; MSP Member of the Scottish Parliament; NFUS National Farmers Union Scotland; RoS Register of Scotland; SAS Soil Association Scotland (Crofting Connections); SCF Scottish Crofting Federation; SCRG Scottish Churches Rural Group; SG Scottish Government; SLE Scottish Land & Estates; SPICe Scottish Parliament Information Centre; RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; UHI University of Highlands and Islands; WCP Woodland Crofts Partnership.

### **3. Matters arising**

A reply from the minister for environment Paul Wheelhouse had been received indicating that the remaining money, that had been put aside for a discount for group applications, would be given to RoS to fund a post of community mapping facilitator.

**Action: circulate the letter.**

### **4. Crofting Development Update: "Public Support for Crofting Development"**

A comprehensive presentation was given by Neil Ross HIE and Susan Walker CC with inputs from SG and RoS.

#### *Discussion*

SLE asked why landlords don't appear in the crofting development diagram. HIE pointed out that the presentation is about public sector support.

Chair asked for more detail on financial figures such as how much was in the budget for crofting development pre-2010, how much now, who has the money, where is it allocated etc and as HIE hadn't got them, as they hadn't been asked in advance to provide them, chair asked that they be made available at the next meeting.

It was asked how Local Authorities are involved. CnES was given as an example; it has a Joint Consultative Committee which discusses crofting issues and has a development manager who takes a role in crofting development.

It was pointed out that having two definitions of 'crofting community' in legislation one in the crofting act and one in the land reform act is very confusing especially as HIE seem to use one and CC the other.

It was asked if any of these bodies involved in crofting development would respond to the SRDP and direct payments consultations. HIE, CC, local authorities would be responding. CC had also assisted with the CPGoC report on SRDP.

It was asked when the housing grant will be increased as it is way out of kilter with actual house building costs. SG responded that it will be reviewed.

It was asked how leader fits in with crofting development. SG responded that if a crofting community went to an LAG with the proposal that fulfils the LAG objectives they will look at it.

CC emphasised that 'community action' is at the heart of crofting development, for example the SRDP proposes funding to set up grazings committee facilitation, and an integrated land management plan suitable for common grazings, HIE part-funds the crofting skills development course run by SCF, CC support about 100 assessors who work in their crofting communities, the duty to report is about collecting much needed statistics order to advise crofting development, and so on.

On being asked if the presentation answered SCF's queries on crofting development the response was that the presentation was very comprehensive and the SCF are ardent promoters of community action, and that the effort put into the preparation of the presentation was appreciated. However as the people who had prepared the SCF paper on crofting development were not present they may wish to comment on whether a presentation addressed the points brought up in the paper at the next meeting.

CnES felt that there could be more to be done for crofting skills training, especially longer courses. SAS responded that the Crofting Connections project worked with schoolchildren and that SCF's skills training programme worked with everyone beyond school, with short courses. However a pilot is being planned to fill that gap.

**Action: presentation and notes to be circulated by sec.**  
**Action: financial figures to be provided by HIE.**

## **5. CAP reform and SRDP process Update**

Gordon Jackson presented a summary of the pillar 2 SRDP and the current consultation (closing 28 February) and John Brownlee presented a summary of pillar 1 Direct Payments and the current consultation (closing 17 March). Notes for both have been circulated.

### *Discussion:*

It was queried why Scotland is keeping a minimum size of 3ha to qualify as a holding. SG responded that England, Wales and N.Ireland are going for 5ha minimum but Scotland has more small units so will keep 3ha. It was pointed out that this minimum excludes many small crofts and that in Europe many countries have one hectare as a minimum.

It was asked if in the current pillar 1 scenario would there be more or less winners or losers. SG responded that there is an equal amount of winners and losers.

It was asked whether the pillar one consultation actually cubes real figures. SG responded that yes there were figures suggested: €20-€25 for rough grazing, €200-€250 for the other region. It was pointed out that crofters who had tried the ready-reckoner found that they would be losing out with payments of only €25. CnES felt that €35 is a minimum needed.

It was commented that the difference in payments for the two regions is huge. Chair pointed out that crofters would mostly be in the poorly paid rough grazing region, well off farmers would be in the other region receiving high payments. He suggested this was due to the NFUS lobby. NFUS responded that their interest is in activity and that they assumed most inactivity would be in the rough grazing area hence the low payments.

It was pointed out that with such low payments it would drive crofters not only to inactivity but to land abandonment. If crofters stop producing store animals all, including the farmers on high payments, will lose out.

It was agreed that crofters need to be encouraged by all organisations to respond to the consultations. It is important to get as many individual responses as possible. SCF particularly need to get their members to respond.

It was asked why the advisory service was to be expanded. Scottish government responded that the rationale is in the consultation information but in brief, crofters had found it difficult to get into the SRDP and it had therefore been suggested that an advisory service should be provided to help. In fact there had been calls for a better advice service from across the board.

There seems to be an inconsistency in the suggestion that CCAGS be closed. In the report presented by this group the suggestion that a scheme should be open to all small holdings was rejected and in the stage I consultation there was no mention of opening the scheme to all of Scotland. Scottish government responded 60% of respondents in stage one were in favour of expanding the crofting scheme.

SG also pointed out that there has been a lack of uptake of the CCAGS budget and in the suggested scheme the budget has been increased relative to the potential uptake. This was queried as the budget has not been increased relative to the potential numbers of applicants if the scheme is opened to all small farms in Scotland. SG said figures could be provided for circulation.

It was suggested the size of holding - 3 to 50 ha - would exclude crofts both too small and too large. This would not be right. SG responded that nothing is fixed yet, it is out for consultation only and there is room for fine tuning for eligibility.

A query was raised by SCF about the single authority being suggested by Brian Pack in his 'red tape review' for the Government's delivery of rural and environmental affairs. This new body would comprise RPID, SNH, FCS and CC. The SG presentation stated that the Government's "rural delivery partnership" for the new SRDP and direct payments will comprise RPID, SNH and FCS; i.e. it does not support the inclusion of the CC in Pack's proposal. So the query was why the difference and why is there no significant reasoning in the interim 'red tape review' to explain the proposal to scrap the CC as an independent body and to put its functions into the proposed single authority.

SG had no response at this time.

It was agreed that this should be an item on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Action: Brian Pack to be invited by sec to attend the next meeting.**

**Action: Gordon to provide breakdown of figures on CCAGS and C&SFSS.**

## **6. Progress regarding crofting law**

including The Sump and consolidation of Acts

SG posted a stakeholder group to discuss crofting legislation in December and will hold the next in March.

The sump has a great deal of material. The administrators are reviewing what has been received at [sump@croftinglawgroup.org](mailto:sump@croftinglawgroup.org) and they will also be reviewing the Crofting Commission's sump. The Crofting Law Group's (CLG) sump will remain open until 28th February. Anyone can lodge matters there. After that, the matters raised will be assessed and circulated to CLG members and those others who have participated.

It was asked if the administrators filter the responses coming into the sump. It was responded that they would only do this if the material coming in was not applicable, was out with the remit of the sump.

## **7. AOB**

Sea eagles. It was agreed that a discussion on sea eagles should be on the agenda for the next meeting with some people invited such as a crofter, someone from SNH, and someone who has been involved with a sea eagle review.

**Action: Sec and SLE to contact participants.**

## **8. DONM**

Wed 12 March 17.30