

**CROSS-PARTY GROUP on CROFTING**  
**Meeting 23 of Parliamentary Session 4**  
**Scottish Parliament, room CR.1**  
**Wednesday 20 August 2014 at 17.30**

**MINUTES**

**Present:**

Jamie McGrigor MSP<sup>1</sup> (Chair)  
Patrick Krause SCF (Sec)  
Lucy Sumsion NFUS  
Sandy Murray NFUS  
Susan Walker CC  
Robin Haig observer  
Dave Thompson MSP  
Gordon Jackson SG  
Ian Davidson SG  
Willie Fergusson Lantra  
Rob Gibson MSP  
Douglas Pattullo office of Jamie McGrigor MSP  
Andrew Midgley SLE  
Ross McLaren SCRG  
Jean Urquhart MSP  
Caroline Matheson CFS  
Tom Edwards SPICe

**1. Welcome and Apologies.**

Jamie McGrigor welcomed everyone and invited introductions. Apologies were received from:

Derek Flyn SCF; Russell Smith SCF; Fiona Mandeville SCF; Pam Rodway SAS; Neil Ross HIE; Colin Kennedy CC; John Brownlee SG (Ian Davidson sub); Brian Inkster CLG; Jean Balfour SLE; Nigel Miller NFUS; Uisdean Robertson CnES; Murdo MacKay CnES; Fiona Mackenzie UHI; Rhoda Grant MSP; Richard Frew SG; Billy McKenzie SG; Angus MacDonald MSP; George Farlow HC.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

Minutes of 18 June 2014 agreed subject to Item 4; page 4; NFUS also received a letter from the Minister re. crofting stakeholder group.

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<sup>1</sup> **Acronyms:** CAB Citizens Advice Bureau; CC Crofting Commission; CFS Care Farming Scotland; CLG Crofting Law Group; 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; LANTRA Land-based & Environmental Industries; 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; SNH Scottish Natural Heritage; 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

Item 3. The group agreed that Brian Pack should be invited to the cross-party group again now that his research report has been published.

**Action: Brian to be invited to next or subsequent CPGoC meeting.**

### 4. Care Farming and Social Crofting

Caroline Matheson, Care Farming Scotland (CFS), gave a presentation on care farming / social crofting (this has been circulated).

CFS was launched six years ago and there are around 15 care farms in Scotland now. Care farming promotes mental and physical health through giving people the opportunity to spend time working on the land. Those who can benefit include people with learning difficulties, work-related stress, mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems or employability challenges. It is more than just social inclusion, it is also about learning practical skills – e.g. grow-your-own – and increasing employability.

It is planned to hold an event later this year in order to disseminate information and encourage more farms and crofts to participate. They won't make a lot of money out of this, but it pays more than money.

The term 'care farming' hasn't been very popular in Scotland. In Ireland they call it social farming, and it is being suggested that in the context of crofting it be called social crofting.

There is ongoing discussion on the standards required, for example Protection of Vulnerable Groups, Health and Safety, liability insurance and so on. England has comprehensive rules and it is possible that Scotland will adopt or adapt them.

We need to put together evidence to convince the Health Commissions, for example from the work Social Farming Across Borders (SoFAB) are doing in Ireland. SoFAB want to collaborate with Scotland. The health commissions are providers such as health trusts, GPs, and third sector like Barnardos for example.

*Discussion:*

What sort of work can you ask service users to do?  
Anything really, depending on ability; "old-fashioned farming".

Can SRDP help?

SG: yes, Leader could be the appropriate mechanism and transnational projects can be funded by Leader.

Will the crofter need public liability insurance?

Yes, farmers and crofters need third-party liability insurance the same as for any visitors on their unit, not something special for providing care.

SoFAB have made some films using European funding (the link to the films has been distributed).

Are the English standards "severe"?

Yes, they are very strict which is why there is discussion about adoption / adaptation of them; we don't want to discourage farmers and crofters from participating due bureaucracy.

Care farming doesn't seem to have really taken off here, has not reached a critical mass. How can this be addressed?

By using the Irish model, by funding and by additional promotion. Most importantly by actively recruiting farmers and crofters. CFS can provide training and Leader funding could potentially provide the "facilitator".

## **5. Crofting Development**

The Scottish Government Crofting Stakeholder Forum (SGCSF) had its first meeting on 2 July and the next will be on 10 September. The purpose of the forum is to facilitate SG and stakeholders discussion of items of common interest, opportunities and challenges concerning crofting. In the first meeting the remit was agreed. This, and the list of invited attendees, is available from SG.

The SGCSF can also provide the opportunity to discuss issues in more detail than time allows in the Cross Party Group on Crofting (CPGoC) and can report back to the CPGoC.

The group agreed the crofting development should remain on the CPGoC agenda as a standing item and that HIE should give a regular update on crofting community development along with SG on progress made in crofting development.

## **6. CAP and Crofting**

Voluntary Coupled Support (VCS) will need to be agreed with the UK government; UK government have notified the EC of the proposed scheme which will apply only in Scotland. The proposal is three schemes - mainland beef, island beef and a sheep scheme.

The front end loading of the beef calf scheme has been lost due to the three new schemes.

Is there any detail on the sheep scheme?

No detail yet just that it will probably apply to region three and probably on ewe hoggs only in order to avoid complications with tagging. There will also be a smaller number of animals to deal with and hoggs go away for wintering.

The three regions are Region 1 permanent grass and arable, Region 2 the 'better' quality rough grazing and Region 3 the very extensive rough grazing (LFASS category A).

Will crofters be able to ascertain what region they are in?

Yes and SG will help to give an indication of region. Roughly speaking, if the land was LFASS category A then it will be R3. Some areas don't have an LFASS grazing category so will be R3 automatically.

It sounds like it will be very difficult to ascertain land that is mixed?

SG will provide a decision-making tree.

Will it be sorted by Christmas?

Hopefully.

What if a new entrant takes over land that hasn't been used?

They will appeal to the national reserve.

There will be a flat rate on calves? The higher rate on the first 10 has been lost?

Yes, crofting will lose out.

Could the island uplift be applied to some mainland areas?

No, it is a UK scheme.

Could it be applied to crofting areas?

No crofting areas comprise a mixture of land quality.

What is the timescale for announcing more detail?

SG are constantly updating and announcing.

The SRDP has been submitted to the EC. It was hoped that SG would receive some informal feedback but apparently will not; formal feedback will come in mid-September.

There will be roadshows covering pillar 1 in November and December and then further roadshows covering pillar 2 in early 2015.

Is there any clarification on payments?

Not yet but it is estimated that the regions will receive €220, €35 and €10 per hectare respectively.

Will there be any incentive to improve land?

No, the regions are fixed.

Will payments be made in December 2015?

Probably not as many as in 2014 due to complexity; there are lots of issues to deal with. But SG will do its level best.

Is it expected that there will be delays?

Yes

Will there be notification of delays?

People should be planning on delays. All payments have to be cleared by June 2016.

## **7. Progress regarding crofting law**

The sump will issue a paper by the end of August inviting comments.

## **8. AOB**

The meeting in November will feature forestry on croft land.

The group agreed that it would be useful to get somebody from the Scottish Rural Parliament to the next meeting.

***Action: Scottish Rural Parliament to be invited to attend the CPGoC in October.***

## **9. DONM**

08 October