



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Scottish Crofting Federation broadly welcomes Michael Gove's views on future agricultural policy**

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has largely welcomed the Secretary of State for Environment, Michael Gove's views on agriculture set out in his paper 'Farming for the next generation'.

"The Secretary of State's vision for a fairer agricultural system that, supported with public money, delivers more public benefit is to be welcomed", said Russell Smith, Chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation. "His paper, spoken to last week at the Oxford Farming Conference and at the larger Oxford Real Farming Conference, has brought a great deal of comment," Mr Smith went on. "This is not surprising given that it marks the potential end of a very unfair regime that, as Mr Gove says, 'gives the most from the public purse to those who have the most private wealth'. We may at last see a real shift from the 'perverse outcomes' to 'the presumption that we should only support clear public goods the market will not, left to itself, provide'."

Mr Smith continued, "SCF welcomes proposals to continue support payments until 2022 and the suggestion that in a subsequent transition period England would see the capping of maximum payments. This could quickly and easily get rid of the major iniquities of the current system and has been voiced by SCF in our proposals for a future Scottish scheme.

"Mr Gove has also declared his support for a theme close to our hearts, that of rural resilience; I quote, 'There are any number of smaller farm and rural businesses which help keep communities coherent and ensure the culture in agriculture is kept healthy... Whether it's upland farmers in Wales or Cumbria, crofters in Scotland or small livestock farmers in Northern Ireland, we need to ensure support is there for those who keep rural life vital'. Advocates of crofting have said this for decades and it is heartening to hear this coming from Westminster. We of course hope to see it borne out in Scottish policy with the continuation of crofting grants and an equitable less favoured areas scheme that compensates for hardship, replacing the current income support that, as Mr Gove put it, 'gives the most from the public purse to those who have the most private wealth', a situation that clearly has to end.

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