



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Crofting Federation sees hope, despite an uncertain future**

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) says crofting has a future despite the uncertainties of the coming years, but warns that crofters will need to stand together to ensure that future.

“Following an extremely thought-provoking SCF annual gathering in Applecross, on the place of crofting in Europe,” said Russell Smith, chair of the SCF, “and given the result of the Crofting Commission elections, it is clear that crofting has a future – but it is something we will have to fight for.

“Speakers at our gathering presented plenty of evidence to show that a sustainable future for rural communities, food production and the environment depends on small-scale holdings with a range of activities and an holistic approach to rural development. Brexit doesn’t seem to have anything positive to offer Scotland but a fresh look at a replacement for the Common Agriculture Policy will be a vital opportunity to find a policy that works for crofting.”

The SCF annual gathering 2017 on the theme ‘Crofting’s Place in Europe’ was held in Applecross with Scottish policy heavy-weights Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity Fergus Ewing; Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland’s Place in Europe Michael Russell and CEO of the Crofting Commission, Bill Barron. The context of crofting within rural development was set by an impressive line-up of academics and activists from Scotland, UK and Europe. An enterprising crofter from Rogart, Robin Calvert, responded with the ‘View from the fank’.

Mr Smith continued, “Participants were given the opportunity to voice their opinions in question-and-answer sessions with the speakers and in break-out groups that considered the question ‘What is important for crofting in an agricultural policy for Scotland?’. All groups concluded that crofting needed a stand-alone programme as it doesn’t benefit from being in the ‘one size fits all’ approach currently taken to agriculture. Furthermore, it was felt that a Scottish policy has to focus on integrated, targeted, rural development, not continue the current bias on shoring-up industrial agriculture. All recognised that the payment regions have not worked for crofting and must go.

“With the results of the Crofting Commission elections, we hope to see the end of the unrest within the crofting regulator. Four new commissioners have been elected to join the board along with two who had uncontested seats and three appointments. Looking at the number of votes cast though, it is very disappointing that Scottish Government did not take the opportunity to revise the voting constituencies before this election, so again the proportions are all wrong. In the Western Isles particularly; even the second-placed had more votes than the total votes cast for all three winners of the other contested constituencies, yet has no place on the board.

It is now for the Commissioners to settle in and to get on with the important role they have in overseeing the strategic direction of the Crofting Commission. In the potentially difficult negotiations ahead, we need all crofters and Commissioners to present a united voice for crofting. We look forward to working with the new commissioners to achieve this end.”  
END

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**Notes to editors**

- Pictures can be found at: <http://www.crofting.org>