



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation supports Scottish Government approach to law reform

The Scottish Crofting Federation has supported the two-phase approach to crofting law reform, as outlined by the Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing in giving evidence to the Rural Economy Committee.

“No one would deny that crofting law is complex,” said Russell Smith, Chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF). “It is in need of reform and this is, thankfully, underway. SCF is firm in its belief that reform needs to be done in a measured, methodical way, especially because of its complexity. Rushing forward into a wholesale writing of new law would create the likelihood of crofting law not getting changed in this parliamentary life, or indeed for a very long time bearing in mind how long it has taken to get to this point.”

Mr Smith continued, “The Cabinet Secretary in charge of the reform of crofting legislation, Fergus Ewing, gave evidence to the parliamentary Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee last week. In answer to why he was ‘tinkering around the edges’ or taking a ‘piecemeal approach’ Mr Ewing was clear that Scottish Government are taking ‘a strategic approach to deal with things in stages that are likely to be efficacious’. SCF believes this to be the correct way forward and that it is by no means ‘piecemeal’. It is actually tackling the most comprehensive reform, and doing it in two phases to ensure that it happens. The first phase will deal with the most urgent and pragmatic amendments that will make a real difference to crofters. Identification of these issues is already well underway by stakeholders and amendment to legislation is realistic in this parliamentary session. The second phase will deal with more complex issues that will take more time to formulate and gain consensus for. The work for the second phase will start now, in parallel with phase one but the legislation will go through Parliament in the next session.”

Mr Smith concluded, “It is understandable that some are getting impatient, as crofting law reform has been a very difficult journey, not without setbacks. It is therefore even more critical to take a phased approach to ensure that we get it right.”

END

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Notes to editors

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