



Committee Of Inquiry On Crofting: 1st COMMITTEE MEETING
8th – 9th May 2007, Inverness

PAPER 1/5 - TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

A - TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee of Inquiry on Crofting will engage proactively with crofting communities and others with an interest in sustainable rural development in the crofting counties and other areas of Scotland where crofting may have a role to play.

The Committee will identify and report on the features of crofting which distinguish it from other systems of land tenure and which are unique to the context of sustainable rural development in Scotland.

The Commission should draw on evidence and provide an analysis of the extent to which crofting, as currently regulated and incentivised, contributes to achieving the following outcomes across rural Scotland as a whole:

- sustaining and enhancing the population;
- improving economic vitality;
- safeguarding landscape and biodiversity; and
- sustaining cultural diversity.

Having regard to the mainstream programmes of the Scottish Executive, local authorities and other agencies, and in the light of its engagement with rural stakeholders, the Committee should identify a vision for the future of crofting in contributing to the goals outlined above. It should have specific regard to -

- the nature and impact of European and domestic programmes of public sector support for rural Scotland;
- the realities of existing, and likely future, funding levels;
- the constraints imposed by European law, European Community rules and the reserved powers of the UK parliament and government;
- the economic contribution of crofter agriculture to the local economy, and the significance of current public support in that contribution;
- the extent to which occupiers of small farms and crofts generate income from sources other than primary agricultural production, and the availability of financial assistance to encourage that;
- the demand for, and availability of affordable housing generally in the crofting counties, and the role of croft house grants in contributing to local housing supply; and
- the market for crofts, in particular their availability for exploitation by young people and new entrants.

In the light of the analysis and vision, the Committee should identify any administrative or legislative changes needed in:

- the basis for regulation;
- the role and functioning of the Crofters' Commission as a regulator; and
- the role of other regulations and incentives with an impact on crofting.

The Committee should provide a clear economic analysis of the impact and sustainability of the changes it recommends, including on the market in crofting land and housing.

B - WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's work will fall into four main phases:

Phase 1. Establishment of the Committee

1. Appointment of the Committee members and initial meetings
2. Agreement of the approach and work programme/ project plan
3. Establishment of the secretariat as a 'virtual office'
4. Agreement of stakeholder engagement plan, communications strategy and appointment of communications consultant
5. Commission papers on - analysis of changing context; distinctive features of crofting; crofting's current contribution; assessment of statistical base.
6. Identification of further evidence to be commissioned including consideration of whether to review relevant international experience
7. Website established and call for evidence

Phase 2. Engagement with Crofting Communities

1. Visits to crofting areas – public meetings and events,
2. Meetings with stakeholder organisations and networks
3. Futures seminar for Committee
4. Collection of additional evidence by a variety of means
5. Papers commissioned during Phase 1 to report
6. Preparation of working papers for discussion by Committee during Phase 3

Phase 3. Deliberations of the Committee

1. Consideration of Phase 2 evidence submitted and collated
2. Development of an agreed Vision for the future of crofting
3. Discussion of means of realising this vision
4. Formulation of draft recommendations
5. Commissioning of economic analysis of the impact of the proposals

Phase 4. Testing proposals and reporting

1. Engaging again with crofting communities to test ideas
2. Refining and amending proposals as appropriate
3. Drafting and agreeing final report by December
4. Publication of Final Report during February
5. Launch event February 2008

The Committee of Inquiry has a total budget of just under £600k.
March 2007