



COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY ON CROFTING

PROGRAMME OF EVIDENCE-GATHERING PUBLIC MEETINGS

TARBERT 05 JUNE 2007

FLIPCHART OUTPUTS FROM GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Eighteen public meetings were held by the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting over the summer of 2007 as a key element of its evidence-gathering activity.

At each meeting, small, informal, group discussions were held and participants invited to discuss questions from the Committee's formal Call for Evidence paper, and to raise any other key issues. The groups then distilled the conclusions of their discussions into a few main points that were written onto flipchart paper, and stuck up on the wall for all at the meeting to read.

The following **text in blue** is transcribed as accurately and fully as proved possible from the hand-written flipcharts (there were some legibility issues), and is presented below following the most appropriate Call for Evidence question. Not all of the questions were addressed by all the meetings.

This material is being collated, analysed, and considered by the Committee as key evidence for its Inquiry, along with the written evidence submitted through the formal Call for Evidence, the results of a household survey, and the discussions of many other meetings.

3. Does crofting support diverse cultures, including the Gaelic language? Please tell us how it does this and whether what you say applies particularly to your local area.

- **Crofting doesn't support cultural diversity**
- **Cultural diversity is associated with other factors e.g. migration / population change**
- **Depopulation is a key issue**
- **Decline in Gaelic & decline in crofting intertwined**
- **Some indigenous crofters are abusing the system – asset stripping**

4. How important is crofting agriculture to you economically? How important do you think it will be in the future as agricultural subsidies (including Single Farm Payments, Less Favoured Area Support Scheme, agri-environment payments, Land Management Contracts, and CCAGS payments) change? Are there other changes ahead which you think will affect crofting agriculture?

- **Crofting agriculture not important to individuals**
- **But crofting activities in a community important to the economics of the area**
- **Future support schemes not designed to support agriculture**



5. Do you think that it is a good thing that crofters generate income from sources other than agriculture? Is this adequately supported? Please tell us about your own experience.

- Yes, always been the case that income sources outside crofting important.
- Croft still provides an important contribution.
- Geographical targeting for investment in tourism, to reflect local opportunity
- Lots of examples of other opportunities – tourism, horticulture (modest market, but worth meeting), renewable energy, weaving
- Building grant is vital to getting a start. Croft income would pay loan.

6. Should there be stronger regulation of land use to prevent neglect of crofts or absenteeism? How do you think appropriate use of croft land should be secured?

- Yes, use of sublets (secure and longer to encourage investment) to address unused land. Accept that some folk won't use land (want house in community) and use sub-lets to make land available to other, active people.
- Enforce / monitor 5 year plans.
- Forced sub-let for continued neglect by resident
- Giving Commission power to direct assignation on basis of criteria, weighted according to community interest

8. How serious are problems of access to affordable housing in the crofting counties? What are the impacts on the demand for crofts and croft land (whether inbye or common grazings)? How helpful are croft house grants, rural home ownership grants, housing association lettings, etc.? What do you think should be done? Please also tell us how what you say applies to your local area.

- Break link between croft purchase and house-site acquisition
- Avoid need for disingenuous 5-year plans by those who only want a home

12. What changes do you think would help to bring this about? For example, should there be changes in the way crofting is regulated? Should there be changes to the Crofters Commission? Should there be changes to existing grant regimes? Please explain why you hold your particular views.

- Devolved and strengthened regulation by grazings committee