



COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY ON CROFTING

PROGRAMME OF EVIDENCE-GATHERING PUBLIC MEETINGS

LIONACLEIT 06 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.

2. What impact do crofting activities have on the landscape and on nature? Please tell us about these activities and the effect they have in your area.

- **Crofting is the sustainable way of looking after the environment**

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 not sufficiently economic to depend on it**
- **Freight costs very high without subsidy**

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.

- **To build houses – need to decroft to get a mortgage. CHG very low in relation to cost of house**
- **If you don't have a house how can young people come back?**
- **A thriving crofting community needs jobs in the area**
- **Needs to be incentives for young people to come in New Entrants Scheme – not a lot of money**



9. *Should crofters be allowed to sell their crofts, or croft land, to the highest bidder? Do you think croft assignments and sales should be regulated and, if so, how? Please tell us how what you say applies to your local area.*

- **Hard to make intractable rule**
- **More community say in assignments, community would make recommendation**
- **Follow up 5 year plans, have probationary approval period**
- **In some areas, depending on land quality, population might be more important than land use**
- **Derelict crofts back into use, ask for it to be assigned if not used better in x years (but good land use very subjective). Also sometimes, skills are an issue**
- **Problem with directing tenancies, along lines of set criteria – could be other neglected crofts etc in area, unless strict regulation**
- **Commissioners/ Assessors – accountability and representation**

10. *How do you think land reform, and the community ownership of crofting estates in particular, will affect crofting in the future? Does community ownership alter the need for regulation of crofting in any ways? Do crofters need protection from community landlords, as they did from private landlords? Should crofting tenants of community landlords retain the right to buy? Please also tell us how what you say applies to your local area.*

- **Regulation needed even when community landlord/organisation**

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.*

- **Crofter-friendly support schemes are needed – flexible to take account of local conditions**
- **Better support for young entrants**
- **Generate more jobs and job-sharing**
- **Community development schemes were helpful e.g. fencing beach areas, tourism**
- **CC should give better support to grazings committee**



13. *What is it about crofting which is important to you? Please tell us what features of crofting matter most to you and why. (It may help you to think which aspects of crofting you most want to continue.)*

- Way of life, good way to bring up children.
- Gives people something to do and holds/ anchors them in the place. Have your own patch and privacy
- Wouldn't like to lose livestock element. Land without livestock would go rank. Want to have something to sell at the end of the year
- Crofting supports and looks after a unique environment and biodiversity (here in Uists) which exists nowhere else

14. *Are there any other points you wish to make which would be relevant to the Committee's terms of reference?*

- Crofting is the sustainable way of looking after the environment
- Crofting a valuable concept of living
- Crofting a CULTURAL LANDSCAPE
- Disadvantages – uneconomic; young people cannot afford to buy a croft
- Negotiated agreements for absenteeism without confiscation