



### **Evidence reports published by the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting**

The Committee of Inquiry on Crofting has published two reports today, (Wednesday 31 October) examining the evidence collected during its public consultation over the summer months. Over 150 flip charts produced during the 17 public meetings attended by 850 people as well as nearly 300 written responses to calls to evidence have been analysed.

The reports, 'Summary of Evidence from Public Meetings' and 'Analysis of Written Responses to the Call for Evidence', have been published on the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting's website [www.croftinginquiry.org](http://www.croftinginquiry.org). The reports provide the Committee with important evidence which is being considered alongside that collected from various other meetings and commissioned research.

Approximately 850 people attended the series of public meetings throughout June, July and August to make their views known about the future of crofting. A range of topics were discussed including the regulation of crofting, the speculative demand for housing, and the contribution of crofting to sustainable rural communities.

These issues were reflected in the response to calls for evidence to which nearly 300 written submissions were received. Overall, individuals submitted 84% of the responses and 16% were submitted from organisations. Of the individual submissions, 78% were from current crofters.

The reports find that most people consider that crofting contributes to population retention in remote areas and to a rich culture and diverse habitats in many of the crofting areas. Meeting attendees felt that to encourage new entrants and to retain people involved in crofting, there is a need for affordable housing, access to existing crofts, improved economic returns from crofting and better grant schemes.

Although agriculture is still thought to be at the heart of crofting, many contributors felt that income derived from agriculture is a relatively small proportion of household income and opportunities for diversification and off-croft employment are critical to crofting.

In all areas, the lack of affordable housing was a pivotal issue and the demand for and price of crofts was putting crofts out of reach of many local people. In terms of selling

crofts to the highest bidder, opinion is divided, although those who did support a free market in crofts recognised that it is contributing to the demise of crofting.

Professor Mark Shucksmith explains the next phase for the Committee on Inquiry on Crofting:

“The Committee is now considering all the evidence gathered during the public consultation period and starting to formulate our vision for the future of crofting. At the beginning of next year we will share our ideas with crofting communities and others with an interest in rural Scotland.”

The final details of this further engagement with crofting communities have still to be finalised but will include a series of public meetings during January.

**ENDS**