

Minute of SCF Annual General Meeting
15th July 2022 at 2pm by Zoom



- 1 SCF chair Donald MacKinnon welcomed SCF members, board and council representatives and staff to the meeting.
- 2 **Apologies** were received from Robin Haig, David Muir, Jonathan Hedges, Lis Phillips, Padruig Morrison, Yvonne White and Agnes Rennie.
- 3 The **minute of the AGM of 6th October 2021** was approved, proposed by Fiona Mandeville, seconded by Russell Smith. There were no matters arising.
- 4 **Chair's report** – The pandemic has continued to impact the organisation. We are making the most of online meetings which has enabled us to reduce our travel and attend more meetings than we usually would in person. However, it has been good to return to some in-person meetings and attend the Royal Highland Show.

We are currently holding a series of local in-person local SCF meetings in conjunction with QMS. Having already held meetings in Skye, Fort William and Shetland, more meetings are planned for Lewis, Harris, Orkney, Wick and Strathpeffer.

SCF has been focusing on a number of key areas over the past year. The future of agriculture policy remains a priority and we are engaging in forums and lobbying to ensure that the new policy works for crofters and crofting. We aim to respond to more proposals as they become clearer in the coming months. Looking for member input of their experience of the National Test Programme. Chair feels that there are many opportunities in the new agricultural policy.

The agricultural bill consultation comes out in the summer. We will be submitting a response to that and will consult our members for input.

Crofting Law reform continues to be a priority for SCF and we received assurances from the cabinet Secretary that a bill will be put forward in this parliamentary term. Work on this has started.

We will be looking to incorporate some of the thinking around our 'Access to Crofts' campaign into any proposals for crofting law. We continue to meet with the Crofting Commission to discuss a wide variety of issues and topics.

We have spent a large amount of time on wildlife management policy over the last year with representation at the National Goose Forum, Local Goose Management Groups, Local Deer Management Groups and the National Sea Eagle Management Stakeholder Forum. On geese, we've been campaigning after the withdrawal of funding and a subsequent meeting with minister Mairi McAllan resulted in funds being directed to geese management on the Islands. It's recognised that it is not enough, and we will continue to push for more funding.

The climate emergency dominates much of policy just now. We ensure we align our proposals with the principles of carbon reduction and increasing biodiversity. Crofting has a positive story in both these fronts but we also need to be aware of some of the challenges. On carbon credits, we urge caution and need more information to be made available.

We received a grant from the People's Postcode Lottery Fund to promote Scottish Crofting Produce (SCP). Beth Rose is working on this project and has been making good progress.

The project Crofting Diversity Pays! Project has completed its second phase.

We have secured funding to look at the contribution of crofting with changing policy on agriculture, climate change, emissions reduction, biodiversity, rewilding. An event is to take place in the autumn.

In the past year we have encountered some staff and board changes. For many years on the board and with a term as chair, Yvonne White came to the end of her term as a director. She is, however, remaining on the council. Chair wishes to thank her for her work. Sandra and Erin remain in the SCF office; we have lost Helen but have now recruited Deanna as a replacement. We have also recruited Miranda as a policy and projects co-ordinator. This is an important appointment for SCF, which will benefit the membership and support Patrick and the board. Chair wishes to thank the staff and volunteers for all the work they do for the organisation.

- 5 **SCF's annual accounts** have been signed off. No comments were made. Proposed by Fiona Mandeville, seconded by Russell Smith.
- 6 **Appoint of auditors.** It was agreed to re-appoint Ritsons Chartered Accountants as independent examiners of the company accounts. Proposed by Eleanor Arthur, seconded by Russell Smith.
- 7 **To amend articles 10.11(a), (b) and (c)** of SCF's Memorandum and Articles of Association, to clarify the number of years a chairperson remains on the SCF board. Article 10.11(a) will become Article 10.12(a). Articles 10.11(b) and 10.11(c) will become Article 10.12(b).

Proposed amendment to be adopted: *10.12(b) A director shall ordinarily serve two consecutive years as chairperson. This period may be adjusted with agreement of the chair and the board. The time served as chairperson does not count towards the maximum time served as a director permissible as per Article 10.11. If willing, and agreed by the board, the retiring chairperson may complete any outstanding time as director subject to Article 10.11.*

Fiona explained that the aim is to clarify the period in which a person stays on the SCF board if they have served as chair. A board member can stand for three years and then a further three years with the approval of the rest of the board. A chair's term is two years, which is not included in the term as a director. Jim was concerned that the second sentence of the amendment is not specific enough in terms of a period of time: in effect, there is no limit to the period of extended time. Eleanor suggested that the sentence be reworded to include a maximum period of extension and proposed that the period of extension is no more than one year (i.e. a possible total of three consecutive years as chair).

After discussion, **the amendment to be adopted** was agreed by all, proposed by Eleanor Arthur, seconded by Neil Ferguson.:

*10.12(b) A director shall ordinarily serve two consecutive years as chairperson. This period may be adjusted in exceptional circumstances, with agreement of the chair and the board, for a maximum of one year. The time served as chairperson does not count towards the maximum time served as a director permissible as per Article 10.11. If willing, and agreed by the board, the retiring chairperson may complete any outstanding time as director subject to Article 10.11. **Amendment agreed by all.***

- 8 **AOCB – None**

This concluded the business part of the AGM. Chair invited members to raise any issues for discussion.

- 9 **Open floor session** – Topics discussed included agricultural support (why does "Preparing for Sustainable Farming" not have "Crofting" in the title? Patrick to ask SG), housing costs and bracken control.

This was followed by **guest speaker** Bill Baron, Crofting Commission Chief Executive, who addressed the gathering and responded to questions.

Donald MacKinnon thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 4pm.