



## NEWS RELEASE

**Use Immediate**  
:

**Date: 09/07/08**

### **'MUDDY WATERS' NEED TO SETTLE SAYS SCF**

The Scottish Crofting Foundation have been urging crofters to make their views on the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting Final Report, which was presented to the Minister for crofting Michael Russell on 12<sup>th</sup> May, known.

SCF Chairman Neil MacLeod said "we have been getting feedback from crofters all over the crofting counties on what they think about the 'Shucksmith Report' and we have been getting a mixed reaction as you would expect. There are genuine concerns and some fears born of misconceptions, which is understandable as it is a very comprehensive report covering huge issues, and there are also many positive reactions being voiced too. SCF is holding public meetings and ex-members of the committee of inquiry are very generously attending these meetings to answer queries. It is early days and we need to help settle out the muddy waters and to gather opinion in order to direct how the SCF responds to the reform as it develops.

"It seems pretty clear that people want a Crofters Commission to exist but want it to be restructured, with more democracy and a clear remit to support crofting – 'fit for purpose' as I have heard many crofters say. Then there would be no need to farm crofting development out to HIE – the 'crofting commission' could manage the crofting development unit suggested by the committee."

MacLeod continued "There is concern about the 'burdens' suggested which need to be listened to. We all know that crofting regulation has always been a burden – that is what a regulated system is about. The fact that the regulations have repeatedly not been enforced has perhaps led some to have a false expectation about their rights and responsibilities as a crofter. This is a delicate area and we urge the government to tread warily. But it is essential that we keep focused on the fact that the majority who took part in the Inquiry felt that the good of crofting has to come before individual short-term gain. Crofters know that it is by having crofting working well that we all gain."

A fundamental aspect of the Inquiry final report is access to crofting by younger families. This could be achieved, they suggest, by enforcing regulation to get crofts back into use or made available, by dampening the land speculation market and increasing payment for 'public goods' carried out by crofters. They also recommend more active participation in regulation and development by crofters themselves.

MacLeod again "It is essential that crofters' hard-won rights are protected whilst also regulating fairly and appropriately to an area. The idea of the Local Crofting Boards suggested is questioned as crofters do not want to see neighbour sitting in judgement of neighbour. I think this may be because of an uncertainty over the size of the boards. If there are 7 or 8 for the whole of the crofting counties, as suggested, or less, they will each cover an area big enough to not involve local relationships but small enough to reflect the differences of the crofting areas. Yes, size does matter!".

END

<u>Contact:</u>	Neil MacLeod, Chairman	01851 702673 / 07785942222
	Norman Leask, Parliamentary spokesman	01595 693714 / 07957 936831
	Hugh Donaldson, Vice-Chairman	01967 431815 / 07880 553989
	Patrick Krause, Chief Executive	01599 566 365 / 07739 941199

### **Notes to editors**

| Pictures can be found at: <http://www.croftingfoundation.co.uk/index.php/home>