

# CROFTING COMMISSION

## MINUTE OF THE COMMISSION MEETING HELD IN GREAT GLEN HOUSE AT 9AM ON 9 OCTOBER 2024

Present:	Malcolm Mathieson	Convener
	Andrew Thin	Commissioner
	Mairi Renwick Mackenzie	Commissioner
	Duncan Gray	Commissioner
	Iain Maciver	Commissioner (until 2pm)
	Duncan Macaulay	Commissioner (via Teams until 12pm)
	Donald Macdonald	Commissioner
	Rod Mackenzie	Commissioner
	Gary Campbell	Chief Executive
	Aaron Ramsay	Director of Operations
	David Findlay	Commission Solicitor (via Teams)
	Jane Thomas	Director of Corporate Services and minute-taker
	Joseph Kerr	Head of Regulatory Support (via Teams for item 9)
	Heather Mack	Head of Policy, Grazings & Development (item 14)
	Lynne Hendry	Development Officer (item 14)
	Observers	Members of staff and public via Teams

### **1 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME**

The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting, with a greeting in Gaelic, followed in English. Apologies were received from Commissioner Kennedy and observers to the meeting were welcomed.

### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

### **3 BOARD MINUTES FROM 21 AUGUST 2024**

The Minute of the meeting of 21 August was approved.

### **4 REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Action Points were reviewed. All had been cleared or are scheduled as papers for future Board meetings. On Action Point 7 relating to digital applications, Commissioners wished to relay the positive feedback they are receiving from crofters and agents using the process.

### **5 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

There were no Matters Arising from the Minute.

## **6 REVIEW OF AREA (SIZE) OF HOUSE SITES TO BE DECROFTED/TRUNCATION OF OBJECTIONS**

The CEO presented the paper, explaining that both procedural changes agreed by the Board, on the decrofting of house sites area size and truncating of objections, were working well. The new policies were set to be reviewed in October 2024. However, there have been very few cases to date affected by the changes. Therefore, it was recommended that a full review, with an analysis of the impact of the changes, be conducted in 12 months time.

The Board agreed with this proposal, requesting that any review considers any noted impact there has been on the Landlord's interest.

## **7 DISPLAYING ADVERTS AND REGULATORY APPLICATIONS ON WEBSITE**

The paper was presented by the Director of Operations, who explained that while developing a digital strategy that included the need to display adverts on the website was being treated as a priority, it was not possible to move to digital only at present, due to the wording of the Act and that the move was not risk-free.

He explained that a change to the legislation is required and that there are capacity issues if the Board chooses to prioritise this action over others in development for the website and digital applications. The preference would be to include this in the 12-18 month plans for development, which include the production of more data for the Board, including Roadmaps on the future direction and a mapping tool, which should reduce delays.

Commissioners agreed to this approach but wished to see the planning required developed, so that once the legislation changes to allow a paperless process, the organisation can make the change quickly.

In response to a question relating to reports that crofters are unaware of what is happening in their area, Director of Operations drew attention to planned improvement one in the paper, on setting up email notifications. Commissioners looked forward to this change and supported the plans. The Convener wished to convey thanks to the IS team and the Board's support for the work being done to push forward the digital agenda.

## **8 CROFTING COMMISSION FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT REVIEW**

The paper was introduced by the CEO, with the background provided by the Convener, who explained the significance of the Framework Agreement with the Sponsor Division. The Agreement is reviewed every three years, and, at a recent meeting, the AFC agreed that the current review, due in November, offers the Commission an opportunity to align the document with the Scottish Government's template NDPB Framework introduced in June this year.

The Vice Chair of the AFC referred to the Wider Scope audit conducted by Deloitte, which produced a series of Recommendations. There is a need to ensure that the Framework Agreement embeds procedure relating to the relationship between the Board, the CEO and Sponsor Division, highlighted in the Recommendations.

Commissioners requested that a copy of the report is forwarded to them.

The Board agreed with the proposal that the AFC will undertake a thorough review of the Framework Document, and it was confirmed that this will be done in collaboration with Sponsor Division, who have agreed that they will receive a first draft from the AFC, with tracked changes. The final draft will then come back to the Board for approval.

<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Forward copy of Wider Scope external audit report to Commissioners.</b>
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## **9 CHANGES TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

Head of Regulatory Support joined the meeting via Teams for this item. He explained that there were three principal changes proposed in the paper. One is to drop the terms 'incomplete' and 'invalid' from certain cases, fulfilling the criteria set out at 2.1. In addition, the paper proposes that the description of 'caseworker' in Tier One cases should be extended to A4 officers and sets out at 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 the administrative steps to be allowed at Tier One.

The Board recognised the proposals as a helpful clarification and a welcome example of devolved decision-making, empowering staff at all levels. They wished to see this emphasis continue to empower and motivate staff to come forward with ideas and suggestions. The recommendations set out in the paper were approved.

<b>Decision</b>	<b><i>The Board approved the recommendations set out in the paper for (i) changes to the Scheme of Delegation and (ii) changes to the delegation parameters relating to a decision on whether or not one or more statutory duty is being complied with.</i></b>
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## **10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

27 November 2024 – St Kilda

## **11 ANY URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business in the open session of the meeting.

## **12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Convener thanked everyone for their contributions and engagement and closed the meeting at 2.45pm.