**CROFTING COMMISSION MEETING**

**18 March 2021**

Report by the Chief Executive

**Final Report – STWG Women on Board**

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| **SUMMARY**  The STWG has focused on a range of practical steps which can be taken to encourage greater engagement on the Board by women, has compiled information relevant to the completion of a public report under the Gender Representation Act and puts forward a series of Recommendations to the Board in this paper. |

**BACKGROUND**

Under the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018, the Scottish Government introduced a gender representation objective that 50% of Appointed members to public Boards should be women, with a deadline of 31 December 2022 to achieve this. In the case of the Crofting Commission, the Act implies that the gender representation objective would be satisfied if at least one of the Appointed Commissioners were female.

There will be 1 new Appointment to the Commission Board in 2022. And in addition, there will be elections to the Commission Board in the same year.

Under Regulations which came into force on 29 May 2020, Scottish Government and public bodies share a duty to report on activity undertaken to encourage women to come forward for Appointment vacancies, in order to meet the objective.

Under the Regulations, Scottish Government must state whether the named public body has achieved the objective of 50% female representation by 30 April 2021; how many vacancies there are for Appointments to the body; for each vacancy, how many of the applicants are women and details of the steps taken to encourage applications from women.

The public body likewise must report on steps taken to encourage women to apply for vacancies. The report must be accessible to the public and can be made in another document (for example, an Annual Report). The report will have to be prepared according to Guidance to be issued by Scottish Government and be made public by April 2021, and thereafter updated every two years.

**CURRENT POSITION**

With a reporting deadline of April 2021, the Commission decided in the summer of 2020 to takes steps to demonstrate its commitment to increasing female representation on the Board and a Short -Term Working Group was established. The group consists of 3 female officers from the Commission, 2 female Assessors and 2 Commissioners. It was decided at the outset that the group would work pro-actively on both encouraging women to apply for appointment vacancies and also to stand for election to the Board.

The STWG has met on 3 occasions and agreed a range of practical actions (see **Annex A** Action List) and has compiled a Stakeholder’s list, which facilitates speedy dissemination of information to a broad network of interest groups. This has allowed, for example, invitations to be issued to attend video Board meetings, which are now built into the Commission’s processes. By increasing the visibility of Board meetings, it is hoped proceedings are demystified, as well as broadening an understanding of the work of the Commission.

The STWG has also established contact with the relevant officers in the Public Appointments office and has the timeline and associated flowchart covering the appointments procedure, which allows us the plan campaigns to tie in with the official process. The same has also been established for the elections process.

Head of Compliance has held meetings with officers from the Public Appointments office and worked through the Good Practice guidance issued by the SG Equality & Diversity Unit (see **Annex B**) to ensure the Commission makes best use of positive opportunities.

The pro-active work begun by the STWG includes the drafting and circulation of a Questionnaire **(see Annex C for information**) to survey women on possible barriers to participation and how these might be mitigated, articles, blogs and films featuring members of the group, as well as training and direct approaches to individuals. This work will continue and will have a dual aspect with, on the one hand, officer led liaison with Scottish Government, to maximise publicity and information sharing and, on the other hand, networking, informal engagement, and promotion led by other members of the group.

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| **Impact:** | **Comments** |
| Financial | N/A |
| Legal/Political | Duty to submit public report on activity by April 2021 under Gender Representation Act 2018 |
| HR/staff resources | Impact – Head of Compliance (as Equality & Diversity Lead Officer) |

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| **RECOMMENDATION**  The group recommends the following actions to the Board:   * Each Commissioner to identify any suitable candidates and impress upon them the importance of having their voice heard as a Commissioner * To support the ongoing promotion of the role of Commissioner via social media, mainstream media and through networking * To encourage Assessors to consider standing for election, with a personal letter from the Convener * Think about reaching out to other under-represented groups, not just women * Take every opportunity to encourage women or minority group crofters (or others) to get involved, whether that is as an Assessor or in a Commissioner role * Showcase innovative or inspiring work on crofts using social media * Invite women or people from under-represented groups to attend Board meetings. |

Date 23 February 2021

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