

CROFTING COMMISSION

MINUTE OF BOARD MEETING HELD IN ST KILDA, GREAT GLEN HOUSE 17 DECEMBER 2025 AT 9:00hrs

Present:	Andrew Thin	Chair
	Mairi Renwick Mackenzie	Commissioner
	Iain Maciver	Commissioner
	Colin Kennedy	Commissioner
	Rod Mackenzie	Commissioner
	Donald MacDonald	Commissioner
	Duncan Gray	Commissioner
	Stephen Webster	Commissioner
	Fiona McLeman	Commissioner
	Gary Campbell	Chief Executive
	Aaron Ramsay	Director of Operations and minute-taker
	David Findlay	Commission Solicitor
	Heather Mack	Head of Policy
	Lynne Hendry	Policy officer (closed session)
	Finlay Beaton	Grazings manager (closed session)
	Daniel MacLean	Grazings officer (closed session)

Members of the public as observers.

1 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, with Commissioner Maciver providing a welcome in Gaelic.

Before starting the business of the meeting, the Chair wished to record thanks to Board colleagues and staff for their work. The Chair also noted a recent trend of increased assignments, citing this as an indicator that the Commission's duties strategy was working.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

3 BOARD MINUTE FROM 29 OCTOBER 2025

The Board Minute of 29 October 2025 was approved with no amendments.

4 REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

All the action points recorded were either discharged, on the agenda or scheduled for future Board meetings.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the previous Board meeting.

6 PRESENTATION FROM FRANCESCO BERTOLDI – UPDATE ON NATIONAL ISLANDS PLAN

Francesco Bertoldi was welcomed and gave a short presentation via Teams to the Commission Board as an update on the current Islands Plan. Mr Bertoldi noted that the plan had now been laid before parliament and was in a 40-day review period, due to conclude around 30 January 2026. The plan is due for full implementation from financial year 2026/27.

At the end of the presentation, the Chair thanked Mr Bertoldi and opened for questions. Some points around ferries, harbours and tunnels were raised and responded to.

The CEO thanked Mr Bertoldi.

7 AUDIT & FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee delivered an update to the Board. A key point highlighted was the current underspend, with an acknowledgment that the Commission Executive Team were presenting options to utilise this.

Commissioner Webster was invited to give an update on the working group formed to oversee the replacement of the Crofting Information System. Commissioner Webster noted that until funding has been confirmed, significant work could not be committed to but that elements of planning were underway.

Some questions were asked around the plan to utilise an element of the underspend to scan files in File Vault, which were answered by the CEO.

The Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee detailed the positive position of the Commission in terms of low complaint numbers and improvements to the management of the main switchboard.

The Chair noted that the current Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee wished to stand down and asked for nominations for a new Chair. Commissioner Gray nominated Commissioner Webster, which was seconded by Commissioner Kennedy. No other nominations were put forward so the Chair confirmed Commissioner Webster was willing to accept and, upon positive confirmation, welcomed him as the new Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee.

8 SUBLET AND SHORT TERM LET POLICY

The Head of Policy introduced a paper covering an interim policy statement on Sublets and Short Term Letting. The Chair refreshed that these interim policy statements are a key priority for both the Board and the Scottish Minister, and that they were working towards a refresh of the Commission Policy Plan in 2027.

The Board had a lengthy discussion around the paper with mixed views being presented by various Commissioners. Several Commissioners queried the wording and intention of the legislation on subletting. The Commission solicitor clarified that policy cannot override law and that each case is considered on its own merits. After some discussion, Commissioner Rod Mackenzie proposed that the paper be approved as it was written,

with Commissioner Gray seconding this. An amendment was put forward by Commissioner Webster which was seconded by Commissioner Kennedy. The amendment covered two changes: clarifying the wording around a “reasonable degree of long-term commitment” and changing the last entry in the table on page four of the paper to be 10 years for new entrant crofters where the applicant is not meeting their residency duty.

The Chair put this to a vote, with two voters in favour of the proposal put forward by Commissioner Mackenzie and six in favour of the amendment put forward by Commissioner Webster.

The amended proposal was accepted and an action given to the CEO to make the requested amendments with no requirement for the paper to return to the Board.

Action Point 1	CEO to work with Head of Policy to make the amendments as requested to the interim policy statement.
-----------------------	---

9 CONSENT TO BE ABSENT POLICY

The Head of Policy introduced a paper covering an interim policy statement on consent to be absent, noting specifically that this was now more detailed around timescales based on feedback from the Board scoping meeting.

The Board discussed the paper and various aspects of it were challenged and discussed. After some discussion, the Chair summarised that the Board appeared happy to approve the paper as written, with no objections.

The paper was approved with no amendments.

10 UPDATE ON ANNUAL NOTICE CAMPAIGN

The Commission CEO introduced an oral update on the 2025 Annual Notice. The CEO noted that 13,588 letters were to be issued on 5 January 2026. This year all letters were being sent via Royal Mail with a 2-3 day delivery window. The online portal would also go live from 5 January 2026. Both of these things would be highlighted through updates placed on the Commission’s website.

The CEO also updated the Board that two agency staff members had been employed to assist with incoming calls and chasing exercises. This would therefore be the first year that the Annual Notice had been fully covered by Corporate and Customer Services without support from other teams for these functions.

In response to some questions raised, the CEO confirmed that this year the wording had been updated to include the recently approved new action on residency checks and that non-returners may be followed up.

Commissioners noted they would be very welcoming to offering assistance where they could for any crofter who was struggling to do a return.

11 WINTER PUBLIC MEETINGS PROGRAMME

The Chair introduced the topic by noting an ambition for Commissioners to have several more public meetings before the end of March 2026, with a focus on the annual notice.

Commissioners then had a discussion on the topic and although the Chair confirmed that the timing and format of meetings were down to each individual Commissioner to determine, it was requested by the CEO that the Commission Comms Officer be kept informed of all meetings to aid co-ordination and promotion.

12 REGULATORY APPLICATION TURNAROUND TIMES UPDATE

The Commission CEO introduced the paper, which looked at current regulatory turnaround times against a previous comparable period. It was widely recognised that performance was very good, with the CEO and Chair both noting that median turnaround times were probably as low as could be expected when taking statutory elements, such as advertising, into account.

Commissioner Gray noted that the target KPIs set for regulatory turnaround times were considered stretching but had been significantly surpassed. Thanks were passed onto the teams involved.

Commissioner Kennedy also wished it noted that the performance turnaround over the last two years coincided with the time the new CEO had been in post and wished his excellent performance to be noted also.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

25 February 2026 – St Kilda, Great Glen House.

The Chair noted that if the weather were particularly bad, the in-person format would be reviewed nearer the time.

14 ANY URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to discuss.

15 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair thanked everyone for their engagement and input, and closed the meeting.