

BUSINESS PLAN
PLANA GNOTHACH
2017-2018



CROFTING COMMISSION
COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD

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FOREWORD

The Crofting Commission has published a new Corporate Plan covering the period from 2017-22 and this Business Plan both looks back at our achievements in 2016-17 and presents our ambitions for the first year of that new Corporate Plan in 2017-18.

2016-17 was a challenging year for the Commission for a variety of reasons. The Board took some decisions in relation to Grazings Committees early in 2016 that proved to be very controversial and this led to a large volume of extra work for the organisation, including an unprecedented number of Freedom of Information requests. It also saw the Scottish Government request a Governance Review of the organisation and in particular the circumstances around the three cases in question. The Commission has welcomed this review and will build an action plan for improvement following the recommendations of the report.

The first six months of the year saw the bedding in of our new core business system that was launched in February 2016, with staff getting training on the system, improvements being identified and new functionality being delivered. This also resulted in diversion of staff time for a period but the system is now running well and delivering benefits to the organisation. It will continue to be enhanced over the coming months and will provide a real opportunity for improved management information and delivery of services to crofters.

We also continued our rollout of delegated decision making to officers through the year, adding more functions to those that are delegated, based on the positive experience of the initial functions such as Assignment where we saw a 38% reduction in average turnaround times.

I joined the Commission in October 2016 and I now look forward to my first full year as Chief Executive in 2017-18, which will be a busy and exciting one with a large number of new Commissioners; we very much look forward to working with them all. We will continue with the work on delegation and take further, bolder steps working with landlords to address residency and occupancy issues on their estates. We will continue to pursue the Scottish Government goal of delivering all public services Digital First by developing our first online services to customers; and we are very keen to participate in all the upcoming discussions around new Crofting legislation, ensuring that our experience of delivering the Crofting Act is used to inform this key piece of work.

We will also continue our work with stakeholders in relation to providing Grazings Committees with a Grazings Regulation template that is fully fit for purpose and accompanying guidance that will provide support to Committees and more clarity of their role.

Bill Barron – Chief Executive

OUR VISION

Crofting is known to have economic benefits for Scotland, but over and above that it is clear that where there are crofts, there are SSSIs, bird life, sympathetic land use, population retention in rural areas, and so on and the Commission plays an integral part in ensuring that crofting thrives. By thoughtful and effective regulation, the Commission can contribute in a variety of ways, enabling through its decision making, support for individuals, creation/support of a local business and population retention. In other circumstances, such as compliance with Duties for crofters and owner-occupier crofters, the Commission can actually make a direct difference over time, by ensuring residency of crofts, therefore supporting population retention, and good land management through cultivation and maintenance of croft land.

Our vision therefore is a simple one:

To be a guiding regulator that uses its powers to support the crofting system

OUR PURPOSE

Whilst the Commission's functions are laid out in the 2010 Act, we do have control over how we carry out these functions and feel it is our responsibility to carry them out efficiently, accurately, consistently and wisely, in order to ensure that we provide not only a good support to the crofting system, but also a good service to the crofting communities that we serve.

Our purpose is therefore:

To regulate the crofting system fairly and reasonably to protect it for future generations

OUR VALUES

The Commission has developed corporate values which reflect what is important to us as an organisation and are at the heart of how we strive to operate on a day to day basis. They are therefore also integral to how we will address these priorities.



Passion
for our work



Caring
about our
communities
and our
environment



Positive
teamwork



Commitment
to quality and
doing things
better



Learn
Educate
Innovate

WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY ACHIEVED

In our Business Plan for 2016-2017, we identified various key milestones that we wanted to achieve that would help us work towards delivery of our Corporate Outcomes and we have made significant progress with these.

OUTCOME ONE	All crofts are occupied, well managed and cultivated or put to alternative suitable purposeful use	
	CROFTING DUTIES	We revised the process for where the Commission takes responsibility for letting of crofts and took the first steps to implement the revised procedure and streamline the process. We also started discussions with private landlords about working with them to address any residency or occupancy issues on their estates.
OUTCOME TWO	All common grazings are regulated and shared management practices are the norm	
	GRAZINGS CENSUS	We launched the first Grazings Census in March 2017
	GRAZINGS REGULATIONS	We worked with stakeholders throughout the year towards the preparation of new template Grazings Regulations and accompanying guidance to help clarify the role of Grazings Committees and establish best practice ways of operating.
OUTCOME THREE	We have effective crofting legislation that is modern, relevant and aligned with the needs of crofting communities and long term National Objectives	
	CROFTING ELECTIONS	We worked with Scottish Government and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to support the second Crofting Elections, providing information as required and preparing the Electoral Roll.
	CROFTING LEGISLATION	We continued to work with the Crofting Stakeholder Forum in advancing the work done on the five priorities for crofting which will help inform the preparation of any new legislation. We also participated in sessions at the REC Committee on Crofting and workshops run by Scottish Government regarding the new Bill.
OUTCOME FOUR	Crofting is regulated in a fair, efficient and effective way	
	PROCESS IMPROVEMENT	We continued our review of Regulatory processes to ensure that they are fully compliant with current legislation and as efficient as possible within that.
	DELEGATED DECISION MAKING	We continued the rollout of delegation of regulatory decision making to officers
	RECORDS MANAGEMENT	We agreed our Corporate Retention policies and started the implementation of new Records Management procedures.
	CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT	We developed the initial stages of a Corporate Development approach aimed at ensuring we have a high performing workforce.

We also set ourselves some performance improvement targets in our 2016-2017 Business Plan and achieved the following results:

Result key: **no or little improvement** **improvement but target not achieved** **target achieved or exceeded**

BUSINESS OBJECTIVE 1 – SYSTEM AND PROCESS REVIEW		
Measure	Target	Result
A reduction in turnaround times to reach a decision on regulatory applications for a registered croft	Decrofting chsgg 6 weeks (↓50%)	Decrofting chsgg 14.4 weeks (↓27%)
	Decrofting feu 6 weeks (↓61%)	Decrofting feu 9 weeks (↔0%)
	Apportionment 28 weeks (↓60%)	Apportionment 43 weeks (↓38%) ¹
	Assignment 16 weeks (↓33%)	Assignment 14.6 weeks (↓38%)
	Letting 16 weeks (↓33%)	Letting 21.8 weeks (↓9%)
	Division 16 weeks (↓33%)	Division 24 weeks (↔0%) ²
	Decrofting Part 16 weeks (↓36%)	Decrofting Part 21 weeks (↓16%)
	Decrofting Whole 20 weeks (↓30%)	Decrofting Whole 74 weeks (↑150%) ³
	A reduction in turnaround times for croft registration applications	23 weeks (↓45%)
A reduction in the number of upheld complaints made to the Commission	25% Upheld (↓4%)	25% Upheld (↓4%)
An increase in the number of hits on the Grazings Regulations page on our website	4,989 hits (↑10%)	4,494 hits (↓1%)
A reduction in the number of general enquiries being handled by staff	924 enquiries in Q4 (↓25%)	Implementation delayed so no measure of impact available
BUSINESS OBJECTIVE 2 – IMPROVE OUR EVIDENCE BASE		
Measure	Target	Result
A reduction in the processing time for completed census returns	12 weeks (↓30%)	8 weeks (↓52%)
Work with Scottish Ministers to reduce vacant crofts	10 crofts re-let	Implementation delayed due to resourcing issues so target not achieved
Reduce the number of vacant crofts where the Commission has terminated the tenancy	1 croft vacant	Implementation delayed due to resourcing issues so target not achieved
BUSINESS OBJECTIVE 4 – CHANGE THE WAY WE WORK		
Measure	Target	Result
A reduction in the cost of file storage	Cost for year £9,413 (↓5%)	£11,902 (↑20%) ⁴

A reduction in the number of late FOI responses	1 late response (↓50%)	2 late responses (↔0%)
Increase in overall staff satisfaction	Upward trend	Implementation delayed so no measure of impact available
A decrease in levels of staff absence through sickness	4.5 Average Work Days Lost/FTE (↓20%)	4.9 Average Work Days Lost/FTE (↓14%)
Establish average turnaround time to fill vacant posts	16 weeks	15.6 weeks

Comments

¹ The revised apportionment process was launched later in the year than hoped, however, we still saw some improvement which we would hope would continue in the new financial year.

² No improvement was seen in the Division process, however, it will now be included in the delegated decision making structure and we would then expect to see an improvement following that implementation.

³ The whole croft decrofting process will undergo a complete review in the new financial year to identify efficiencies that can be gained.

⁴ Continued implementation of our Records Management procedures were delayed this year due to resourcing issues,

PURPOSE OF THE BUSINESS PLAN

We have identified five key Business Objectives for the coming year, which will help us work towards delivering our Corporate Outcomes and some milestones and improvement targets associated with each Objective. This Business Plan explains what these are and how we will measure success against each of them.

The Corporate Outcomes and Objectives that support each are

Outcome One	Crofts are occupied and managed	Objectives 1, 3
Outcome Two	Common grazings are regulated and shared management practices are the norm	Objectives 1, 3
Outcome Three	Crofting is regulated in a fair, efficient and effective way	Objectives 2, 4
Outcome Four	We work with stakeholders to inform and support the future of active crofting	Objective 3
Outcome Five	Our workforce have the right skills and motivation to perform well, our governance processes are best practice	Objective 5
Outcome Six	We reduce our impact on the environment	Objective 2

The sections below detail each Objective in turn and show how the actions in this Business Plan support the high level indicators from our Corporate Plan 2017-22. They also identify the performance indicators and targets that will be monitored and reported on throughout the year in our quarterly Performance Management Reports that are presented to the Board.

BUSINESS OBJECTIVE 1 – DELIVER RESULTS FOR CROFTING

Corporate Outcomes: **One, Two**

By encouraging crofters to comply with their Duties and working with crofting communities and stakeholders, we can increase the number of crofts that are occupied and managed. We can also work with these communities and stakeholders to promote better understanding of common grazings and how they are regulated.

Narrative

Over this coming year, as well as investigating any reported breaches of duty, we plan to engage with landlords and communities to see occupancy and management of crofts increase in their townships. We will help and advise them on what options can be taken, and work with them to re-let vacant crofts, address succession issues and help them understand how best to ensure that all crofts are managed in a positive way. We will continue working with our stakeholders to deliver revised and fit for purpose template Grazings Regulations and accompanying guidance.

Key Milestones

Date	Milestone	Outcome
April 2017	Engage with first private landlords	ONE
May 2017	Conclude consultation on new Grazings Regulations template	TWO
Oct 2017	Implement new Grazings Regulation template and guidance	TWO

Key Performance Measures

Number	Aim	Baseline	Target/Indicator	Measure	Outcome
1.1	Improve occupancy and residency of crofts with each private estate which engages in work with the Commission	Set for each estate once known	An increase in occupancy	Total number of occupied crofts for each estate	ONE
1.2	A reduction in the time taken to let a vacant croft where the Commission has terminated the tenancy	No previous measure taken but some cases were over 12 months.	90% occupied within 6 months from when the Commission becomes responsible for re-letting	Time taken from date Commission becomes responsible to date new let is approved	ONE

1.3	Reduction in the number of vacant crofts on Scottish Ministers estates	tbc	A decrease in vacant crofts	Total number of vacant crofts	ONE
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BUSINESS OBJECTIVE 2 – CONTINUE OUR PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Corporate Outcomes: **Three, Six**

We believe that continuous process improvement is vital in helping us deliver decision making that is compliant with the legislation, consistent and fair and that also delivers value for public money. We also want to reduce our impact on the environment by promoting awareness and adoption of best practices in our operational delivery, which will reduce our carbon emissions.

Narrative

We plan to continue our process improvement work over the coming year, with continued roll out of delegated decision making (where staff take more straightforward decisions rather than individual Commissioners) and the introduction of improved monitoring of workloads to identify pressure points and prevent delays. We also plan to carry out complete reviews of some key processes this year to ensure that they are both compliant with the current legislation and as streamlined as possible. This year will see us beginning to implement new Corporate Retention policies which will help us manage our information better and therefore deliver improved processing to staff and more efficient service to our customers.

Key Milestones

Date	Milestone	Outcome
Aug 2017	Establish new reports on CIS for monitoring turnaround times accurately	THREE
Oct 2017	Begin implementation of Corporate retention policies	THREE
June 2017	Implement new Delegated Decision structure	THREE
Oct 2017	Complete review of Decrofting Part and Whole Croft, 50B Applications and Enforcement of Duties processes	THREE

Key Performance Measures

Number	Aim	Baseline	Target/Indicator	Measure	Outcome
2.1	A reduction in turnaround times for croft first registration	Average by end of 2016-17 was 14.8 weeks	19% reduction to 12 weeks	Average time taken to process a first registration application for an individual croft	THREE
2.2	A reduction in turnaround times for Regulatory Applications for registered crofts	Averages in weeks at end of 2016-17 were: Assignment: 14.6 Letting: 21.8 Decrofting Whole: 74 Decrofting Part: 21 Decrofting CHSGG: 14.4 Decrofting Feu: 9 Apportionment: 43	<i>The potential targets (if any) for turnaround times will be reviewed once more accurate reports are available which take into account registration, and also where applications are delayed by third parties</i>		THREE
2.3	A reduction in our storage of paper files	30,840 files in storage at end of 2016-17	10% files destroyed	Percentage of files currently in storage destroyed	THREE
2.4	A reduction in our consumption of consumables through increased use of digital communication	2016-17 total cost was £17,514 (estimated)	10% reduction	Percentage reduction in postage costs, indicating less printing of letters	SIX
2.5	A reduction in our CO2 emissions from travel	4,237,174 CO2 tonnes emitted (tCO2e) as submitted in report to Sustainable Scotland Network for 2015-16	5% reduction	Percentage reduction in our CO2 emissions as submitted on Climate Change report	SIX

BUSINESS OBJECTIVE 3 – IMPROVE OUR EVIDENCE BASE

Corporate Outcomes: **One, Two, Four**

By using the crofting and grazings census, we can identify areas where our input is required and also provide information to Scottish Government and other stakeholders to inform and support the future of crofting.

Narrative

The crofting census has helped us improve our data quality significantly over the last three years and built a better understanding of the number of crofts that are occupied and managed. The issue of the grazings census gives us an opportunity to increase our understanding further by building a picture of the general condition of common grazings and how they are being used. We can use all this information to inform both our policy and decision making and also to inform Scottish Government and other stakeholders, particularly whilst work is ongoing on new legislation. In order to do this, we need to continue to promote the return of both census forms so that our information is as complete as possible.

Key Milestones

Date	Milestone	Outcome
May 2017	Complete analysis of Assessor Report	FOUR
May 2017	Produce Consolidated Paper for Crofting Stakeholder Forum	FOUR
June 2017	Complete 3 year analysis of Crofting Census	FOUR
Dec 2017	Issue annual Crofting Census	ONE

Key Performance Measures

Number	Aim	Baseline	Target/Indicator	Measure	Outcome
3.1	Number of Grazings Census forms completed	420 Committees invited to complete the survey in March 2017	10% forms completed	Percentage of returns within 9 months of issue	TWO
3.2	An increase in response rate to the Crofting Census	76% returns at end of March 2017	80% census forms returned for 2017 Census	Percentage of returns	ONE

BUSINESS OBJECTIVE 4 – IMPROVE OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROVISION

Corporate Outcomes: **Three**

By changing and expanding how we deliver our services to customers, we can provide a faster, more consistent and more informative service to our customers, thereby improving customer satisfaction and confidence.

Narrative

With the continued improvements to our processes and the planned expansion of service provision to include online access to information, we should see a corresponding increase of customer satisfaction in our services. Over the last two years, we have seen a drop in the number of complaints about our services being upheld. We want to see that continue but also now broaden how we collect customer feedback and will therefore seek to introduce a routine feedback process into our case processing for certain functions during this year. This will allow us to determine our baseline customer satisfaction levels.

Key Milestones

Date	Milestone	Outcome
Aug 2017	Launch Register of Crofts Online	THREE
Dec 2017	Launch Customer Feedback Service	THREE
March 2018	Approval of Implementation Plan for Online Applications	THREE

Key Performance Measures

Number	Aim	Baseline	Target/Indicator	Measure	Outcome
4.1	A reduction in the number of General Enquiries handled by staff	4,110 – Total number of general enquiries dealt with in 2016-17	15% reduction	Percentage decrease in the number of General Enquiries handled by staff	THREE

4.2	An increase in the proportion of FOI requests processed within statutory timescale	97% issued on time in 2016-17	Maintain current level	Proportion of FOI requests that are issued within the statutory 20 day timescale	THREE
4.3	An increase in the proportion of complaints made to the Commission that are not upheld	75% not upheld in 2016-17	3% increase to 78% not upheld	Proportion of complaints made to the Commission that are decided as being not upheld	THREE
4.4	An increase in the proportion of FOI Reviews which uphold the original decision	87.5% upheld in 2016-17	2.5% increase to 90% Upheld	Proportion of FOI reviews that uphold the original decision	THREE
4.5	An increase in the proportion of Complaint appeals to the SPSO which are not upheld	Only one in 2016-17, not upheld	90% Not Upheld	Proportion of Complaint appeals to the SPSO which are not upheld	THREE

BUSINESS OBJECTIVE 5 – IMPROVE OUR WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Corporate Outcomes: **Five**

By ensuring that our staff and Board members have appropriate training and continued investment, we can develop a high performing workforce and create lasting improvements in the service we provide.

Narrative

In the coming year, we will continue work on our Corporate Development Plan, working with the Staff Engagement Group to identify where changes can be made, or new initiatives established across the organisation to improve in various areas such as staff development, training provision and working practices. March 2017 saw the arrival of several new Board members and we will begin a series of training activities with them to establish a high performing Board that can lead the strategy of the organisation over the next 5 years.

Key Milestones

Date	Milestone	Outcome
April 2017	Launch enhanced Training Liaison Officer role	FIVE
April 2017	Board induction process starts	FIVE
April 2017	Publish latest Staff Survey Results	FIVE
Oct 2017	All Staff Training Day	FIVE

Key Performance Measures

Number	Aim	Baseline	Target/Indicator	Measure	Outcome
5.1	An increase in our staff satisfaction level	Tbc from March survey results	% increase - tbc once survey results have been analysed	Average percentage of staff who answered either Strongly Agree or Agree to survey questions	FIVE
5.2	A decrease in levels of short term absence through sickness	From SG figures, current at end of quarter 3 is 4.9 AWDL	10% decrease to 4.4 AWDL	Average Work Days Lost per FTE (AWDL) as provided by SG reporting	FIVE

MEASURING SUCCESS

In our Corporate Plan 2017-22 we identified a set of high level performance indicators and below we show the link between this year’s business plan targets and those indicators:

High Level Indicator	Objective	2017-18 Business Plan direct measures	2017-18 Business Plan related measures
Number of occupied crofts	Increasing	1.1, 1.3	1.2
Number of actively managed crofts	Increasing		1.1, 1.2, 1.3
Number of regulated grazings with committee in office	Increasing		3.1
Number of common grazings registered on Crofting Register	Increasing		
Regulatory application turnaround times	Decreasing	2.1, 2.2	
Customer satisfaction rates	Increasing		4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5
Staff engagement rating	Increasing	5.1	5.2
Corporate carbon emissions	Decreasing	2.5	2.4

NATIONAL OUTCOMES

The outcomes of our Corporate Plan are aligned with those of others in the public sector to bring about delivery of the Scottish Government’s National Outcomes contained in the Scottish Government Economic Strategy. We believe that we contribute to five of the National Outcomes as summarised below.

National Outcomes	CC Outcomes	How we contribute
We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services that we need	ONE TWO THREE	We recognise the potential that lies within underused crofts and common grazings and we believe that by ensuring crofts are well managed and by facilitating development of crofts and common grazings through our decision making, we can enable an increase in productive use of croft land for a diverse range of activities.
We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others	ONE TWO	We understand that crofts without a resident crofter or crofter family can create holes in communities which can have far-reaching impacts and through the use of information from the crofting and grazings census, we will develop geo-pilot projects to take action on residency and make a contribution to maintaining sustainable communities. In addition, we will work with communities to help them understand the value of croft land as an asset and encourage more grazings committees into office to help fulfil the land’s potential through better management of shared assets.
We value and enjoy our built or natural environment and protect it for future generations	ONE TWO FOUR	We acknowledge the detrimental impact that unworked crofts have on the well-being and productiveness of crofting communities and the land they occupy. By working with crofters to ensure they are fulfilling their duties in relation to cultivating and maintaining the land and working to increase the number of grazings committees in office, we can contribute to better land management across the crofting counties.
We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production	ONE TWO SIX	We recognise the potential within croft land to support local food and drink production, and also within common grazings to support renewable energy and carbon production and we will be mindful of this through our decision making, enabling use of crofting assets to support these industries. Within the organisation, we will ensure that our working practices are mindful of our carbon footprint and energy consumption and will progress changes to reduce these.
Our public services are high quality, efficient and responsive to local people’s needs	THREE FOUR FIVE	By providing evidence based information to Scottish Ministers and working with other crofting stakeholders, the Commission has a vital role in ensuring that the legislation and policies regarding crofting are fit for purpose both now and in the future. Further, by ensuring that our workforce are high performing and that the organisation operates in a straightforward and transparent way through process review and change, we can deliver significant improvements in service to the people of Scotland.

BUDGET INFORMATION

The Crofting Commission was allocated grant in aid of £2.397m for 2017/18, around 70% of which is directly allocated for staff salaries and the remainder covers costs associated with Board members and the standard running costs of the organisation. As the Commission has had a number of new responsibilities added to its functions with the introduction of all elements of the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, it also has agreement for the drawdown of some additional pressure funding over its core budget, if required, bringing the total available budget to £2.707m

In terms of the Business Objectives for 2017-2018, we can estimate the cost of delivery for each objective. The table below indicates the number of FTEs estimated as working on each objective and the Approximate Cost is based on the associated salaries for those FTEs, plus any other associated costs. Fixed running costs (for instance for our occupation of Great Glen House) are incorporated on a pro-rata basis per FTE.

Business Objective	FTEs	Approximate Cost
Deliver Results for Crofting	5.3	£211,082
Continue Our Process Improvement	29.5	£1,343,503
Improve Our Evidence Base	2.9	£177,639
Improve Our Customer Service Provision	6.9	£367,197
Improve Our Working Environment	7.6	£608,792
	52.27	£2,708,214