

CROFTING COMMISSION

MINUTE OF THE COMMISSION MEETING HELD IN GREAT GLEN HOUSE AT 9AM ON 27 NOVEMBER 2024

Present:	Malcolm Mathieson	Convener
	Andrew Thin	Commissioner
	Mairi Renwick Mackenzie	Commissioner
	Duncan Gray	Commissioner
	Iain Maciver	Commissioner
	Duncan Macaulay	Commissioner (via Teams – morning session only)
	Colin Kennedy	Commissioner
	Donald Macdonald	Commissioner
	Rod Mackenzie	Commissioner (via Teams)
	Gary Campbell	Chief Executive
	David Findlay	Commission Solicitor
	Jane Thomas	Director of Corporate Services and minute-taker
	Michael Nugent	SG Bill Team (item 12)
	Bill Barron	SG Bill Team (item 12)
	Alastair Graham	The Lines Between (item 12 via Teams)
	Carol Kelly	The Lines Between (item 12 via Teams)
	Observers	Members of staff and public via Teams

1 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies were received from the Director of Operations, who was on leave. The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting, with a greeting in Gaelic, followed in English.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declared interests raised.

3 BOARD MINUTES FROM 9 OCTOBER 2024

Approval of the Minute was proposed by Commissioner Gray and seconded by Commissioner Renwick Mackenzie.

4 REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

All Action Points had either been cleared, were on the agenda for the meeting or are in preparation for delivery as planned.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no Matters Arising.

6 AUDIT & FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

(a) Update from Vice Chair of Committee

The Vice Chair reported that there were no major issues of concern to raise with the Board. He did, however, wish to emphasise the need for the Commission to consider the wider picture in which a public body must operate today, with huge pressure on public finances. The recently announced increase in employers' National Insurance contributions adds to this pressure and, though the Commission has a supportive sponsor division, it is vital for the organisation to demonstrate that gaining best value in everything it does is paramount.

It is vital to focus on efficient use of public resources and this must be part of the culture of the way every individual works in the Commission. He cited the way that the Commission and RoS work together as an example that does not maximise efficiency. The CEO confirmed that this has been raised with sponsor and the Bill team are open to considering ways to include reform in the Bill, to stipulate that registration is overseen by one organisation and not split between two, as at present. If this results in the Commission taking over this responsibility in full, the necessary resources will need to be provided.

On a governance point, the Board agreed to amend the committee Terms of Reference to remove the clause stipulating that the Chair of the Board must also chair all committees.

Members discussed assorted options to push productivity forward, including the use of AI. The CEO confirmed these operational issues are being considered, particularly by the IS team.

The Convener noted that Commissioner Mackenzie is stepping down from the committee and wanted to thank him for his valuable contribution to this key role.

(b) Draft Minute from 6 November 2024

The draft Minute was noted.

7 REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE REPORT -Q2-JULY-SEPTEMBER

The Performance Report shows that most measures are recorded with a Green RAG status, with just two Key Milestones flagged as Red. CEO explained what these relate to, which the Board are aware of. Likewise, two Performance Measures are flagged as Red with the majority Green. CEO reminded the Board that the target set on a Grazings measure will be revised in the next Business Plan, to ensure it is a target which the Commission has the power to complete.

Commissioners saw this as a good report for the quarter, showing that staff are driving improvements, and that the organisation has also saved 2% as per the emergency spending controls issued by the Scottish Government. This is good evidence that we are focused on best value in the use of public resources. Commissioners reflected that the challenge will be to keep this up in the coming year, with the need for the Board to keep providing clear direction for staff and the CEO to follow.

The CEO welcomed the support of the Board for the approach being taken and, for context, highlighted that finding the 2% saving came at a cost, as it represents *not* doing something and not recruiting, which then has a knock-on effect in terms of what can be delivered. For example, the IS team is carrying two vacancies and, consequently, expansion of the digital platform, which has the support of the Board, is impacted. Commissioners accepted this but repeated the need for all staff to focus on doing what we do more efficiently.

8 REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER – Q2 JULY-SEPTEMBER

Commissioners commended the format of these regular papers, which they find easy to digest and an improvement on previous formats. The Convener reminded the Board that the AFC considered the register on 6 November, asking the Vice Chair for any comments. The budget risk was highlighted and in light of this, the need to continue to communicate to external stakeholders, to ensure they are aware of the improvements being delivered.

Vice Chair explained that efficiency savings are required so that resources can be shifted into the RALUT team, for example, to deliver the Outcomes desired by stakeholders.

The Convener thanked AFC members for their scrutiny of the risk register and, with Commissioner Mackenzie stepping down, asked if anyone wished to take his place. Commissioner Gray was proposed by Commissioner Mackenzie, seconded by Commissioner Kennedy, and accepted the position.

Commissioners wished to see the reintroduction of a rolling programme to allow non-AFC committee members to attend meetings as observers. This will be arranged.

As this was the Convener’s last Board meeting before his term of office expires at the end of December, members wanted to thank him for all the efforts he has put into the role, both public-facing and behind the scenes, recognising that much has been achieved, especially in the last year. The Convener expressed his confidence in the future of the Commission and that continuing progress would be made.

Decision	<i>Commissioner Gray was proposed by Commissioner Mackenzie as his replacement on the Audit & Finance committee. The proposal was seconded by Commissioner Kennedy and accepted by Commissioner Gray.</i>
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Action Point 1	Draw up rolling programme to ensure all non- AFC Board members attend an AFC meeting each year.
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9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

26 February 2025 – St Kilda, Great Glen House.

10 ANY URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

11 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Convener then closed the meeting, remarking on the pleasure he has taken from the role he has fulfilled over the last 8 years, confident that the Commission has a bright future.