



Corporate Plan
Plana Corporra
2019-22



**CROFTING COMMISSION
COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD**

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Introduction

The first five years of the Crofting Commission from 2012-2017 saw times of significant change, with the bedding in of new legislation bringing new functions and responsibilities to the Commission. As a result, we have spent considerable effort in ensuring that these changes were introduced, revising or creating new business processes where necessary, and working with our partners in Registers of Scotland to ensure that the introduction of the Crofting Register was successful.

Other significant areas of work for us have been the launch of the annual Crofting Census in 2014 and the introduction of a new core business system in February 2016. All of these projects will, in their own way, contribute to the future of crofting by safeguarding and indeed improving the information and evidence that we hold about crofts, the land they occupy and the people that sustain these rural communities.

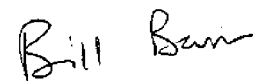
Since the 2017 Crofting Elections, under a largely new Board, we have increased the priority given to residency and land use enforcement, and to communicating effectively with customers, and have appointed a new panel of assessors to help the Commission stay in touch with crofting opinion. We have improved the delivery of regulatory work by making the Register of Crofts available online and by consolidating the 'delegation of decision-making' which began in the Commission's first five years.

Looking ahead to the remainder of the period 2017-2022, we will build on these changes by continuing to improve the way we work, ensuring that we are able to provide the best possible service to our customers. We also look forward to the introduction of new legislation and the change and challenges that it may bring.

This Corporate Plan lays out where we will focus our work over the next three years, when we expect to see our focus shifting away from the implementation of new processes and systems, towards continuous improvement in all areas of our work. As well as continued process improvement in our handling of regulation and registration business, and in our governance, this will see us:

- Working proactively with crofting communities to ensure that crofts are lived on and managed
- Working with our assessors, stakeholders and Government to develop ideas for reform of crofting legislation
- Advancing the Scottish Government's digital agenda by introducing online provision of our services.

To that end, we have laid out five Outcomes in this plan which will support our aspirations and enable us to continue to support the unique system of crofting and the people and communities that it defines.



Bill Barron
Chief Executive

Who we are, what we do

The Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 created the Crofting Commission, which came into being on 1 April 2012, taking over from the Crofters Commission.

It is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) which operates on a day-to-day basis independently of the Government, but for which Scottish Ministers are ultimately responsible. The Commission consists of six Crofting Commissioners elected from six geographical areas in the crofting counties, and three Commissioners appointed by the Scottish Government, and it is led by a Convener. The Commission is supported by a staff of some 55, led by a Chief Executive (who is appointed by Scottish Ministers in consultation with the Convener of the Commission). The Commission's Headquarters is in Great Glen House, Inverness.

The Crofting Commission's principal functions are regulating crofting, re-organising crofting, promoting the interests of crofting and keeping under review matters relating to crofting. The Act also places a duty on the Commission to investigate reports of breaches of duty by tenants and owner-occupier crofters. It can advise the Minister on matters relating to crofting and it can also collaborate with other bodies for the economic

development and social improvement of the crofting counties. However, it cannot act as a lobbying body. As a public body, the Commission is subject to, and has duties under, a range of other legislation, but this Plan focuses on the Commission's duties and powers under the Crofting Acts.

There are currently in the region of 20,000 crofts in the crofting counties, which encompass Argyll & Bute, The Western Isles, Highland, Moray, Orkney and Shetland. Around 75% of crofts are tenanted and the remaining 25% are owned by the crofter. In addition to this, there are in the region of 1,000 common grazings with around 50% of them having a grazings committee. In total, the land in crofting tenure equates to around 1.7 million acres, or 700,000 hectares.

The Commission receives around 1,000 regulatory applications each year, as well as processing thousands of requests for information from crofters, solicitors and other stakeholders acting on behalf of crofters. We also receive and process around 1,000 applications for croft registration per year prior to them being submitted to Registers of Scotland for inclusion on the Crofting Register. The Commission is responsible for first registration of common grazings..

Our vision

Our twin responsibilities, of regulating and promoting crofting, are both focussed on securing the benefits that the regulated crofting system brings to crofters and the wider community, in terms of population retention, economic resilience, and land use that is both productive and sustainable. Our vision therefore is a simple one:

That crofts and crofting communities continue to enhance the social, cultural, economic and environmental fabric of the crofting areas

Our purpose

The Commission's powers and duties give us many opportunities to interact with crofters and crofting communities, whether we are making a decision on a regulatory application, investigating a case of absenteeism or neglect, supporting a grazings committee, or gathering evidence about the strength of crofting communities. In all our interventions we seek both to respect and uphold the rights of crofters, and to protect and promote crofting opportunities for the future. By thoughtful and effective regulation, the Commission can contribute in a variety of ways, enabling through its decision-making support for individuals, creation and support of local businesses, and population retention. In other circumstances, such as enforcing compliance with crofters' residency and land use duties, the Commission can 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 purpose is therefore:

To regulate the crofting system fairly, and to protect and strengthen 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.



Caring for crofting communities and environment



Positive teamwork



Commitment to service quality and improvement



Encouraging staff and commissioner development



Being fair and impartial

Outcome one

Crofts are occupied and managed

We will use our powers consistently and over the long term to regulate and encourage the active use of crofts, and to support population retention and growth by requiring compliance with crofters' duties. Where possible, we will work with others to increase the understanding of the value of croft land as an asset which can contribute to the sustainable development of crofting communities and the financial viability of croft households.

Key objectives:

- Provide information to crofters explaining their responsibilities and their options for resolving any breaches of duty
- Proactive action taken on reported and other suspected breaches of duty
- Targeted regulation that ensures crofts are occupied and managed, working with local crofting communities, stakeholders, partners and landlords to facilitate the process
- Continuing high return rates for the Crofting Census, and targeted investigations of non-responders

What will success look like?

- We see reported breaches of duty being resolved successfully with a positive outcome
- We see a reduction in the number of vacant crofts
- We see higher rates of residency and cultivation of crofts
- We see a high return rate on the annual Crofting Census

Outcome two

Common grazings are regulated and shared management practices continue

Shared management and productive use of the common grazings are important for the sustainability of crofting. In order to help support this, the Commission can work with grazings committees to agree grazings regulations in order to promote effective management of common grazings.

Key objectives:

- Encourage use of the new Common Grazings Regulations template and revised guidance
- Provide practical assistance and support to grazings committees, on request, as our resources permit
- Increase the number of regulated common grazings by working with crofting communities
- Increase awareness of the importance of regulated grazings, using routes like the Assessors network

What will success look like?

- We see an increase in adoption of the new grazings regulations
- We see an increase in the number of regulated common grazings
- We see an increased number of common grazings registered on the Crofting Register

Outcome three

Crofting is regulated in a fair, efficient and effective way

The Crofting Commission is committed to high standards of customer service, especially in our regulatory work. We believe that continuous improvement within the organisation is vital and that by investing in the people and systems that will deliver the Regulatory processes of the Commission, it will ensure that it is better prepared to meet the challenges it faces as an organisation and deliver improved services to the crofting communities that we serve.

Key objectives:

- Ensure that our policies and decisions are fully compliant with the Crofting Acts
- Provide high quality information to crofters, agents and solicitors, helping them to navigate the application process
- Enhance the information openly available through the online Register of Crofts
- Improve our decision-making processes, to maximise efficiency without compromising fairness
- Improve performance in customer service by implementing business systems that provide additional online services to crofters such as online application facilities

What will success look like?

- We see improved turnaround times for Regulatory applications
- We see improved quality of applications and improved Customer Satisfaction rates
- When our decisions are challenged, the great majority of them will be upheld by the Land Court
- We see an increase in services available to crofting communities and other stakeholders through digital delivery
- Empowerment of staff to take decisions at the appropriate level, continues to enhance customer service

Outcome four

The future of active crofting is supported by well-informed engagement with stakeholders.

The diverse work of the Crofting Commission brings our Commissioners, staff and assessors into contact with crofters, grazings committees, landlords, crofting organisations, public sector agencies and Government, and gives us a particular knowledge of crofting and a unique ability to 'keep under review matters relating to crofting'. We can use our influence to promote crofting both now and for the future. To support this, we will continue working closely with key crofting stakeholders, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Ministers on a variety of issues and to identify and prioritise areas of action.

Key objectives:

- Develop and maintain a clear focus on priorities and actions by actively engaging with stakeholders, and by drawing on grass roots knowledge of the Commission's assessors and other crofters
- Work with Scottish Government and other key crofting stakeholders to help identify priorities for legislative change
- Work with Highlands and Islands Enterprise to promote economic and social growth across the crofting areas of Scotland
- Provide evidence to aid discussions and proposals for development by utilising information from the Crofting and Grazings Census
- Increased engagement with the crofting public to promote understanding of crofting and the Commission's role

What will success look like?

- We see an increase of collaborative working with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and other stakeholders, on joint initiatives
- Crofters and others engage with commissioners and assessors in an open and constructive debate about the future of crofting.
- There is continued recognition of the value of crofting in sustaining biodiversity and reducing food miles

Outcome five

Our workforce has the right skills and motivation to perform well, our governance processes are best practice.

We believe it is important to have a high performing workforce both now and in the future. We know that to achieve this, there needs to be investment in staff and in the organisational structure and systems so as to enhance the capability of the organisation. The Commission believes that this investment will result in finding new and better ways to achieve our outcomes, channelling the collective knowledge and energy of our staff to create lasting improvements in the service we provide.

Key objectives:

- An appropriately skilled staff and Board who are fully equipped to fulfil their responsibilities and potential
- A 'no-blame' teamwork culture in which Board and staff work together in their respective roles
- Improve our efficiency and accuracy, and ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act
- Ensure Governance processes are best practice
- Efficient use of physical resources, to minimise our carbon footprint

What will success look like?

- We see proactive Workforce Planning used within the organisation
- Continued investment in the development of staff and the Board
- We see increased job satisfaction across the organisation
- We see robust risk management in line with best practice

Measuring our success

Each of the outcomes detailed in this plan will be delivered through actions in our annual Business Plans which will also detail specific performance improvement targets for each year. Our progress against these targets will be reported annually in our Annual Report which will also reflect our overall progress against the high-level success criteria identified in this Corporate Plan and in particular the following:

High Level Indicator	Objective
Number of vacant crofts	Decreasing
Number of breaches of duty resolved through Commission action	Increasing
Number of regulated grazings with committee in office	Increasing
Regulatory application turnaround times	Decreasing
Customer satisfaction rates	Increasing
Staff engagement rating	Increasing
Corporate carbon emissions	Decreasing

Over the period of this Corporate Plan, measures for each of these key success criteria will be developed, if not already in place.

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 Scotland's Economic Strategy. We believe that we contribute to five of the National Outcomes as summarised below.

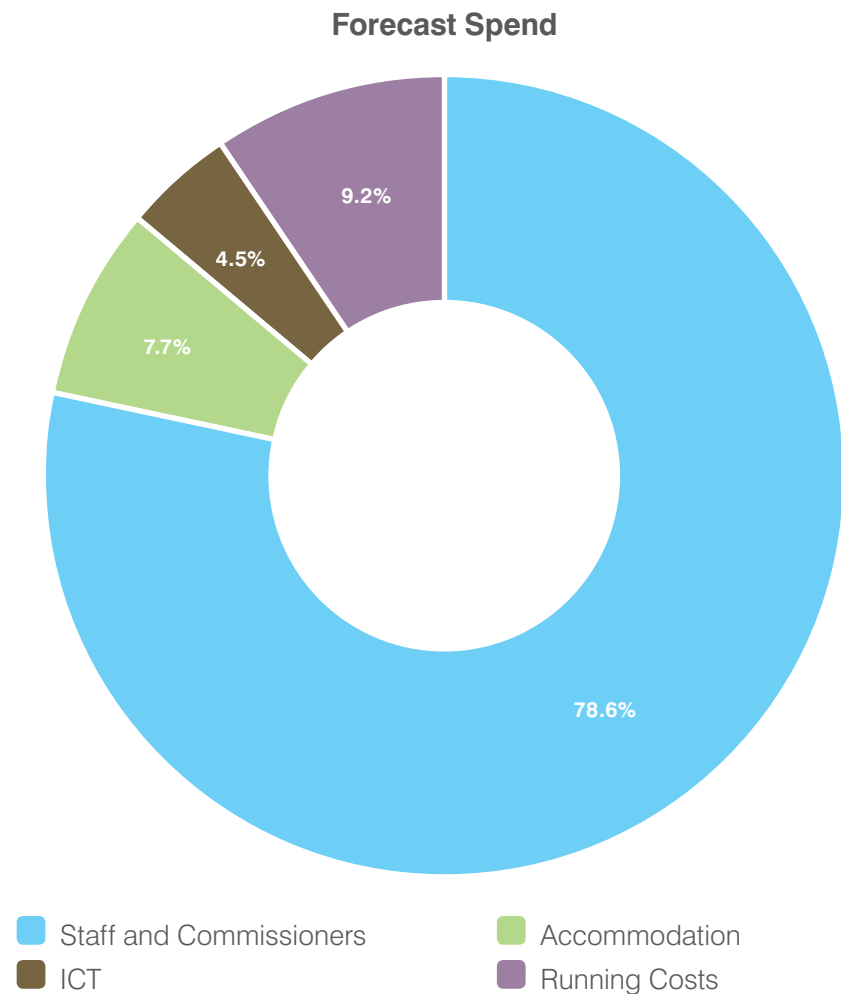
National Outcomes	Crofting Commission outcomes	How we contribute
We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment.	1 2 3 4	We recognise the potential that lies within crofts and common grazings and we believe that by ensuring crofts are well managed and by facilitating development of crofts and common grazings through our decision making, we can enable an increase in productive use of croft land for a diverse range of activities. We 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 live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.	1 2	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 census, we will 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 have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy.	1 2 4 5	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 reduction 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.
We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.	3 4 5	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 has been allocated grant in aid of 2.697m for 2019/20, with additional funding of £61k to be provided to mitigate the impact of the increased employer pension contributions.

For planning purposes, we assume that the core budget will remain at the current level in real terms, for the duration of this plan.

A high-level breakdown of our 2019/20 budget is shown here.





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