

## Common Grazings—The benefits for crofters of a Grazing Committee

This short guide explains the role of a committee, and the many benefits as a result of being “in—office”



### What Are Common Grazings?

Common Grazings are a core feature of the crofting system and are normally attached to a specific crofting township, with shares in the common grazings associated with individual crofts. The Common Grazings provide a communal asset for the crofters and sometimes non crofters, who are recorded as shareholders for that area.

These shareholders can utilise this communal land by exercising certain rights defined by legislation, which are:

- To graze livestock,
- To extract peat and thatching material for domestic use.
- To gather seaweed for using on their croft holdings.
- To plant trees.
- To use the land for purposes other than grazing or woodlands, if not detrimental to the interests of the owner.



### What are Grazings Committees?

Shareholders in a common grazing appoint a Grazings Committee which is then responsible for the management and maintenance of that common grazing

A Grazings Committee’s term of office extends for a three-year period and is then recorded with the Crofting Commission as soon as possible to be officially recognised.

### A Grazings Committee has the authority to:

- Manage the Common Grazings on behalf of all the shareholders, fostering strong communities and delivering economic benefits to the locality.
- Create new or amend existing regulations which following confirmation by the Crofting Commission will assist in the overall management of the Grazings. These regulations also identify all those who share in the common grazing along with the number and type of stock that can be grazed.
- Carry out maintenance and/or replace the existing fixed equipment with the ability to apply for grant assistance towards the costs incurred. (Contact your local SGRPID office for further guidance: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/contact-us/> )



- Carry out improvements or significant upgrades to both the grazings and its fixed equipment, with the ability to apply for grant assistance towards these costs. (contact the Commission grazings team for further guidance).
- Deal with the day-to-day management and financial business relating to the Common Grazing.
- Ensure stock grazing is carried out properly by all shareholders, allocating any unused shares seasonally to ensure the grazing is used beneficially.
- Hire or purchase bulls/tups, which has the advantage of reducing overall production costs for shareholders through the sharing of costs.
- Progress any other purposes, other than grazing or woodlands, proposed by a shareholder. To do so, the Grazings Committee must advertise and arrange for a meeting of shareholders to discuss and vote on the matter.
- Complete a report to the Crofting Commission every five years, raising any issues of non-residency, inactivity, misuse or neglect, and any other matter the Commission may require.



#### Other roles within crofting legislation:

- The Crofting Commission must consult with the Grazings Committee when considering an application by a shareholder to apportion any part of a common grazing.
- Only a Grazings Committee can take forward a crofter forestry proposal on a common grazing.
- Only a Grazings Committee can take forward a proposal that part of a common grazing be used for purposes other than grazings or woodland.
- A Grazings Committee is entitled to report any suspected breach of a crofter's duty.
- A Grazings Committee may make representation on any croft related application within its community; particularly where it may be of relevance to a share in a common grazing.
- A Grazings Committee can ask for a review of an apportionment.

#### In addition, a Grazing Committee plays an important role through:

- Providing a recognised point of contact for any parties, who may be interested in approaching the shareholders with potential economic/development opportunities, which could be carried out on the Common Grazings.
- Promoting and organising communal working activities.
- Retaining a valuable source of historic and local knowledge regarding the crofting in the locality.
- Providing an avenue for issues to be raised locally within the crofting community and providing advice and discussion that may assist parties to reach agreement.



The Crofting Commission recognises the importance of local grazings committees. The members of a grazings committee take on the responsibility of managing their local Common Grazings, on behalf of their fellow shareholders.

The Crofting Commissions Grazings Team is always ready to engage with crofters, and to assist with the appointment of a Grazings Committee. It will also provide support and assistance to the Committee members throughout their term of office, upon request.