

# **SCOTLAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (SRDP) 2014-2020: CONSULTATION RESPONSE:**

## **The Woodland Crofts Partnership**

The Woodland Crofts Partnership (WCP) is a partnership of 3 third-sector organisations seeking to promote and develop woodland crofts. It comprises the Scottish Crofting Federation, the Community Woodlands Association and the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation and apologise for the lateness of our submission.

Because of this, and the fact that our partner organisations have individually submitted full responses to the consultation, we are highlighting only a limited number of key concerns specifically relating to the development of and support for woodland crofts.

We are not following the format of the consultation questionnaire, but have indicated which questions on that are particularly relevant to our comments.

### **1. Support for New Entrants**

*(relates to consultation question 14)*

We recognise the difficulties new entrants face and fully support measures & incentives to support them. However we are concerned the focus to date has been specifically on new entrants to agriculture, rather than new entrants to land management more generally, where the issues are similar.

In particular, the issue of new entrants to forest management - for example through woodland crofts, woodlots or other tenure arrangements - needs to be highlighted and appropriate measures and incentives under SRDP developed to support them. Without this it will be hard to encourage a diversity of woodland management, and local rural development through forestry, both of which are needed to provide future resilience and support the development of a forest culture.

### **2. A Holistic View of Crofting Support**

*(related to consultation questions 10, 11, 12, & also relevant more generally)*

In past years changes in crofting legislation have broadened the range of management activities which meet the requirement (under the Statutory Conditions) to 'cultivate' the croft. This is welcome and provides backing in law for essential diversification of croft enterprises. However we believe that crofting support through CCAGS has not fully reflected these changes. Both the language of the scheme and its specific support measures are focused primarily on 'traditional' agricultural management activities.

We believe that the scope of CCAGS should be broadened to reflect the full range of opportunities available to crofters under current definitions of 'cultivation'. Alternatively, any Crofting Support Scheme under consideration should be similarly broad in scope. This would help end the current anomaly where a crofter has a more or less automatic entitlement to support for a shed for agricultural use - but would need to apply competitively to Rural Priorities with a broader business proposal to gain support for a shed for forestry purposes. However each use of the land is equally valid under crofting law.

### **3. Support for Occupier-Managers**

*(related to consultation question 7, & also relevant more generally)*

One of the ways crofting helps support livelihoods is through crofters themselves carrying out management rather than using contractors. This is culturally important, can be more flexible and cost-effective, and any grant support available then contributes directly to croft incomes. This is equally true of woodland crofters and others who manage woodland themselves under other tenure arrangements.

It is important in reviewing SRDP that this opportunity is recognised and supported, for example through retaining the option of Standard Cost payments. Proposals to scrap Land Managers Options must be carefully considered: there is value in a non-competitive scheme, but only if available options are targeted appropriately. If LMOs are retained they should be refocused to be of more benefit to smaller-scale land managers.