

# SUPPORTING CROFTING COMMUNITIES

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How Highlands and Islands Enterprise  
contributes in partnership with others



Highlands and Islands Enterprise  
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean



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Crofting is a form of land tenure, unique to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, which continues to be a vital component of this regional economy in the 21st century.

Within crofting communities individual crofts, which are generally small in size, usually occupy the better land, while areas of poorer quality hill ground are shared by crofters for grazing livestock.

The sharing of common grazings within crofting townships has established communities within which crofting plays a central role, with crofters joining forces to manage assets for the benefit of the whole community.

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### **HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE) AND ITS PARTNERS**

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) recognises the importance of crofting communities in attracting people to live and work in these areas, while also creating local employment opportunities. HIE works with whole crofting communities – including those with and without direct access to crofting.

HIE works in partnership with several other bodies which support individual crofters and crofting activity, to ensure that crofting communities continue to thrive, becoming more resilient and able to meet opportunities and challenges. Key partners include the Crofting Commission, the Scottish Government (in particular the Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate, SGRIPD), local authorities including Business Gateway, Registers of Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The main organisations and services which support crofters and crofting communities are listed on page 8 of this publication.

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## COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT

Through each of HIE's eight area teams – covering Shetland; Orkney; Caithness and Sutherland; Moray, Inner Moray Firth; Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross; Outer Hebrides, and Argyll and the Islands – the agency works directly with a broad range of local communities.

HIE's approach mirrors the way it supports client businesses to grow, and is called community account management (CAM). It recognises that each community is different, but all are resourceful, and many face similar issues such as demographic change, housing, service provision and employment opportunities.

Within HIE account managed communities, there is recognition of the contribution that crofting community development can play in addressing these issues. As a result, many of those communities have prioritised projects associated with crofting community development.

HIE's assistance takes many forms and is always tailored to suit the needs and ambitions of each account managed community. In many cases, HIE has funded the employment of a local development officer who helps the community create growth plans to develop and deliver projects which make a real and practical difference. These projects are invariably led by the communities themselves, and typically generate income as well as providing services and jobs.

Examples include setting up and managing renewable energy projects, and running social enterprises, both of which generate profits to be re-invested in initiatives which benefit the community. In August 2014, HIE was working with a total of 42 account managed communities, 15 of which featured crofting in their growth plans.

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## COMMUNITY RENEWABLE ENERGY

Through supporting account managed communities, HIE has helped local people deliver several successful renewable energy installations. Examples include several communities in the Outer Hebrides which have recognised the potential of using less productive, often communally-owned, ground to develop renewable energy projects which generate not just power, but wider community benefits as well.

HIE's work developing Local Energy Economies – using the energy innovatively within the communities in which it is generated – already involves the Wester Ross village of Applecross and has huge potential for other crofting communities.

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## ACCOUNT MANAGED COMMUNITIES

- HIE supports 42 account managed communities, of which at least 40 would be regarded as crofting communities.
- 15 of HIE's current account managed communities have crofting elements to their growth plans: Rum; Tiree; Colonsay; Barra and Vatersay Coigach; Ross of Mull and Iona; Glendale and Duirinish; Helmsdale and District; Durness and Laide; Melness, Tongue and Skerray; Galson; Applecross; Raasay; Scourie and Lochcarron

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## CROFTING SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMME (FIGURES FROM SCF'S ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2014)

- HIE aims to support 480 participants in Entry Level / Intermediate Courses and 40 Practical Skills Learners in 2014-2017
- 130 Entry Level participants achieved in Year 1, exceeding target of 120

### By July 2014:

- 425 people had attended Practical Skills Training Courses
- 161 had participated in Entry Level / Intermediate Courses
- A new e-learning Entry Level module had been developed along with Napier University

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## CROFTING CONNECTIONS

- 127 schools (110 Primary and 17 Secondary) participating along with 75 crofters, 107 community volunteers, 105 small businesses and 49 NGO/LA/Agency staff.

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## COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR LARGER-SCALE, INCOME-GENERATING, RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS (CRISP)

- HIE has contributed £412,000 to renewable energy projects, £151,790 of which has assisted six projects with crofting tenure elements.
  - HIE has facilitated finance via the Community Renewables Investment Fund (REIF) to three major projects driven by crofting communities.
  - To date this has entailed £1.54m of direct finance with support to access around £18.7m from market sources endorsed by the Scottish Government.
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Lochs show

## GEOGRAPHICALLY FOCUSED COLLABORATION

In September 2013, HIE proposed further public sector collaboration to enhance the vitality and resilience of crofting communities, the crofting system and opportunities for individual crofters to diversify their activities and make the best use of opportunities for funding and other support.

This geographically focused collaboration has been designed to build on existing collaborative work on specific issues including research, co-operatives, stock clubs, marts, and micro abattoirs.

Pilot projects which will be established during winter 2014/15 are expected to integrate and focus support from public sector partners to deliver greater impact through acting together.

What is envisaged is that, in an account managed crofting community which is working with HIE to design and deliver a growth plan, the Crofting Commission will support croft occupancy and purposeful use, Business Gateway will guide and assist croft business development opportunities, the Scottish Crofting Federation will offer access to skills and training opportunities, and the

Scottish Government (through SGRIPD) will provide localised grant support to individuals – all delivered in a carefully integrated and co-ordinated manner. Other organisations which are also expected to play a role include Scottish Natural Heritage and Registers of Scotland.

This collaborative, multi-agency approach will aim to bring forward the development and resilience of crofting communities. If the pilots are successful, HIE expects to continue to work with partners to co-ordinate more widely in crofting communities across the region.

## CROFTING SKILLS

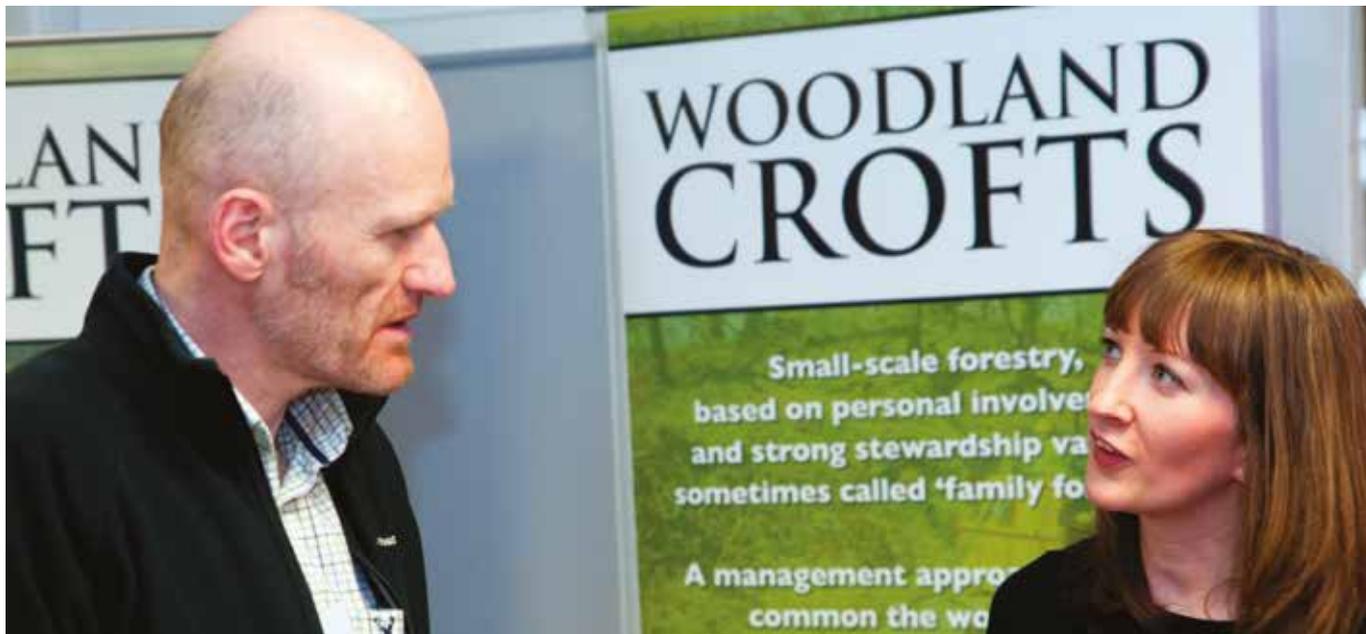
Newcomers and existing crofters can benefit from an extensive programme of practical training delivered by the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) with funding from HIE and the Scottish Government Skills Development Scheme.

Courses in subjects as varied as dry stone dyking, fencing, soil analysis, sheep shearing, livestock husbandry, poultry keeping, deer management, fruit growing and thatching are available across the region.

## SUPPLY CHAIN SUPPORT

HIE has funded the Community Retailing Network, now part of the Plunkett Foundation, which supports rural communities to establish co-operatives and community enterprises, including food initiatives.

In 2013 the Plunkett Foundation successfully ran a series of workshops in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and Shetland, bringing together local food producers and community shops with the aim of increasing the availability of local food in the local shops.



Community Housing Seminar at the Macphail Centre, Ullapool, March 2014.

### CROFT CREATION

Through its community account management work, in recent years HIE has helped create several new crofts on the island of Rum.

Several other communities are also recognising that creating new crofts can play a part in helping to retain and grow population.

HIE has also worked with partners to develop a strong rationale for the creation of innovative woodland crofts.

As a result, new woodland crofts have now been successfully established in Mull, and the Community Woodlands Association is supporting communities to create more around Kilfinnan Forest, Colintrave, Glendaruel, Raasay and Lochcarron.

### COMMUNITY ASSET ACQUISITION

HIE has a long track record of investment in community asset acquisition and is a core source of advice and support for crofting communities contemplating land ownership.

HIE is also working in partnership with the BIG Lottery Fund across Scotland to deliver the Scottish Land Fund which creates significant opportunities for crofting communities and others to grow through owning and managing their own assets.

With awards ranging from £10,000 to £750,000, and a total value of £9m over four years, the fund is currently open for applications until 30 November 2015.

The appetite for community ownership is nowhere more evident than the Outer Hebrides, as the listings below demonstrate.

As well as showing the extent of current update, this table shows the prospect of communities acquiring a further 100,000 acres of land, supporting a population of over 4,000 people. Throughout the Outer Hebrides, the areas and communities involved are overwhelmingly under crofting tenure.

### HIE/SLF SUPPORTED LAND ACQUISITIONS

Galson Estate	56,000 acres
Bhaltos Estate	1,705 acres
North Harris Estate	63,523 acres
Scalpay Estate	1,735 acres
West Harris Estate	16,254 acres
South Uist Estate	93,000 acres
Paicr Estate (funding approved)	26,774 acres
<b>Total</b>	<b>258,991 acres</b>

### COMMUNITIES CONSIDERING LAND ACQUISITIONS

Bays of Harris Estate	31,998 acres
Barvas Estate	34,600 acres
Great Bernera Estate	5,397 acres
Barra and Vatersay Estate	16,890 acres
Carloway Estate	11,454 acres
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,339 acres</b>



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### CROFTING CONNECTIONS

Crofting Connections is an innovative educational project which will enable young people, aged 3-18 and living in rural communities across the Highlands and Islands, to learn about crofting past, present and future.

The traditional crofting principles of providing food, shelter, clothing, energy and entertainment are very much aligned with the 21st century desire for sustainability and offer tremendous opportunity for outdoor learning and place-based education. This £325,000 project is delivered by Soil Association Scotland and funded by HIE, the Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Heritage Lottery Fund and some small private trusts.

Crofting Connections is currently working with 127 schools covering every part of the region. The project is also attracting an 'in kind' contribution, valued at £150,000, from crofters, farmers, volunteers, business people and public and third sector employees. The project is firmly aligned with the Curriculum for Excellence and creates a natural link to sustainable living and working in places where people and the environment are valued and nurtured. It is also providing valuable professional development opportunities for teachers.

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### CAPACITY BUILDING

Strong leadership and management skills are essential within HIE account managed communities to sustain momentum and ensure that the potential identified in growth plans can be fulfilled, both now and in the future.

HIE also provides access to a range of capacity building programmes and opportunities for aspiring leaders, who are involved with and contributing to our account managed businesses, social enterprises and communities.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We have commissioned The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust to develop a publication illustrating the options for developing affordable housing opportunities on croft land. This will demystify the process and provide a diverse range of case studies to showcase the community-led housing developments that have been achieved.

"Chan eil gach iuchair  
san tìr an crochadh  
ri aon chrìos."

"All the keys in the land do not hang from one belt"

# SUPPORT FOR CROFTING

Extensive support for crofters, crofting communities and the crofting system is provided through a broad range of public and third sector organisations. These collectively deliver regulation, statutory and discretionary funding programmes, collective representation plus individual and group member services. The diagram below indicates key organisations and the focus of their support.



## USEFUL CONTACTS

Many of the major organisations and services which support crofters and crofting communities are listed below, in alphabetical order:

### BUSINESS GATEWAY

Business Gateway is delivered through local authorities and offers advice and guidance to small and new start companies.

**W:** [www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)  
**E:** [info@bgateway.com](mailto:info@bgateway.com)  
**T:** 0845 609 6611

### BÒRD NA GÀIDHLIG

Bòrd na Gàidhlig works to promote and improve the status of Gaelic throughout Scotland.

**W:** [www.gaidhlig.org.uk](http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk)  
**E:** [oifis@gaidhlig.org.uk](mailto:oifis@gaidhlig.org.uk)  
**T:** 01463 225 454

### COMMUNITY LAND SCOTLAND

Community Land Scotland works to represent the Scottish community landowning movement in different arenas of associated activity.

**W:** [www.communitylandscotland.org.uk](http://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk)  
**E:** [info@communitylandscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@communitylandscotland.org.uk),  
**T:** 01859 502063

### COMMUNITY WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION

Among other things offers:

- advice on woodland establishment and management
- woodland products/crafts
- creation of woodland crofts

**W:** [www.communitywoods.org](http://www.communitywoods.org)  
**E:** [admin@communitywoods.org](mailto:admin@communitywoods.org)  
**T:** 01309 674004

### CROFTING COMMISSION

The Crofting Commission regulates crofting and promotes occupancy of crofts, active land use, and shared management by crofters as a means of sustaining and enhancing rural communities.

**W:** [www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk)  
**E:** [info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk](mailto:info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk)  
**T:** 01463 663439

### FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND

Advises and implements forestry policy to protect and expand Scotland's forests and to increase their value to society and the environment.

**W:** [www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk)  
**E:** [fcscotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:fcscotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)  
**T:** 0300 067 5000

### HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) has a unique remit which integrates economic and community development across more than half of Scotland. Read more about our Strengthening Communities activities, including *Our Gaelic Plan* and our *Ambitious for Culture* policy on our website. Community-led projects benefiting crofting communities are delivered through our eight area teams, located across the region. See the Regional Information section of our website for local details.

**W:** [www.hie.co.uk](http://www.hie.co.uk)  
**E:** [info@hient.co.uk](mailto:info@hient.co.uk)  
**T:** 01463 234171

### JUST ENTERPRISE

Supported by the Scottish Government, Just Enterprise is a comprehensive programme designed to help social enterprises and entrepreneurs achieve their trading ambitions.

**W:** [www.justenterprise.org](http://www.justenterprise.org)  
**E:** [support@justenterprise.org](mailto:support@justenterprise.org)  
**T:** 0141 425 2939

### NFU SCOTLAND

NFU Scotland is the country's leading agricultural organisation representing farmers, crofters, growers and other supporters.

**W:** [www.nfus.org.uk](http://www.nfus.org.uk)  
**E:** [webmaster@nfus.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@nfus.org.uk)  
**T:** 0131 472 4000

### PLUNKETT FOUNDATION

Plunkett Foundation Scotland:

- inspires more communities to consider community ownership
- develops networking opportunities
- supports rural shops

**W:** [www.plunkett.co.uk](http://www.plunkett.co.uk)  
**E:** [kirsty.maccoll@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:kirsty.maccoll@plunkett.co.uk)  
**T:** 0845 217 8978

### REGISTERS OF SCOTLAND

Registering crofts (individually and collectively) and common grazings.

**W:** [www.ros.gov.uk/croftingregister](http://www.ros.gov.uk/croftingregister)  
**E:** [CroftEnquiries@ros.gov.uk](mailto:CroftEnquiries@ros.gov.uk)  
**T:** 0141 306 1510

### SCOTTISH CROFTING FEDERATION

The Scottish Crofting Federation is a member-led organisation dedicated to:

- promoting crofting
- safeguarding the rights, livelihoods and culture of crofters and their communities

**W:** [www.crofting.org](http://www.crofting.org)  
**E:** [hq@crofting.org](mailto:hq@crofting.org)  
**T:** 01599 530005

### SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

The Scottish Government aims to support a vibrant agriculture and rural sector throughout the country.

**W:** [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural)  
**E:** [ceu@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ceu@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)  
**T:** 0131 556 8400

### SCOTTISH LAND AND ESTATES

Promoting and representing the work and contribution which members make on farms, landholdings and estates.

**W:** [www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk](http://www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk)  
**E:** [info@scottishlandandestates.co.uk](mailto:info@scottishlandandestates.co.uk)  
**T:** 0131 653 5400

### SCOTTISH LAND FUND

The Scottish Land Fund supports rural communities to become more resilient and sustainable through the ownership and management of land and land assets. It is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered in partnership by the Big Lottery Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

**W:** [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_scottish\\_land\\_fund](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_scottish_land_fund)  
**E:** [enquiries.scotland@biglotteryfund.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.scotland@biglotteryfund.org.uk)  
**T:** 0845 410 2030

### SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

Promotes care for the natural heritage, wildlife, habitats, rocks, and landscapes of Scotland, to which crofting makes a unique and powerful contribution.

**W:** [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)  
**E:** [enquiries@snh.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@snh.gov.uk)  
**T:** 01463 725000

### SOIL ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND

Bringing Soil Association expertise closer to producers, consumers and policy makers in Scotland. Promoters of organic growing.

**W:** [www.soilassociation.org/scotland](http://www.soilassociation.org/scotland)  
**E:** [producer.support@soilassociation.org](mailto:producer.support@soilassociation.org)  
**T:** 0131 666 2474