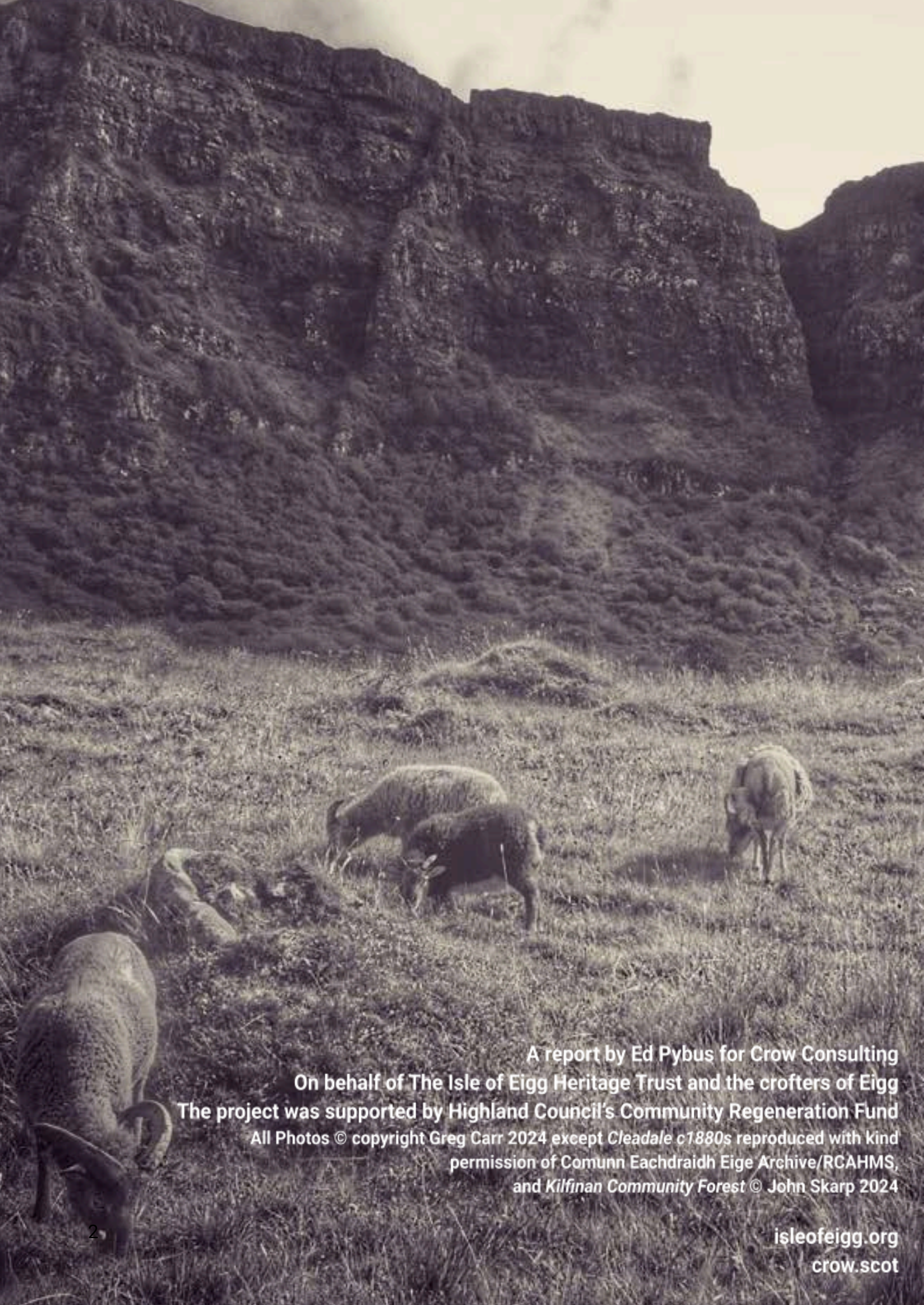


Cultivating Change: Crofting on Eigg

April 2025





A report by Ed Pybus for Crow Consulting
On behalf of The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust and the crofters of Eigg
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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Summary | 5 |
| Eigg | 9 |
| Crofting | 11 |
| Crofting on Eigg | 12 |
| Opportunities and Challenges for Eigg's crofters | 16 |
| Common Themes | 16 |
| Food production | 19 |
| Case Study : Livestock and Horticulture at Knockfarrel Produce | 21 |
| Case Study - Horticulture production at West Coast Organics | 25 |
| Land management | 29 |
| Fairer Funding | 34 |
| Better Infrastructure | 40 |
| Case Study – Collective selling with The Green Bowl | 43 |
| Working together | 46 |
| Case Study - Croft creation at Kilfinan Community Forest Company | 48 |
| Planning for the Future | 50 |
| Next steps | 56 |
| Appendix | 58 |
| Appendix 1 - Stakeholders contacted as part of this project | 59 |
| Appendix 2 - What we did, how we did it, and why | 60 |
| Appendix 3 - Agricultural Funding | 61 |
| Appendix 4 - Business Funding | 62 |
| Appendix 5 - Carbon Offsetting | 64 |
| Appendix 6 - Common Grazings | 65 |
| Appendix 7 - Regulation and Limits | 67 |
| Selected Bibliography and Further Reading | 71 |

Introduction

This project, and report, began when the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (IEHT) wanted to look at how best to support crofting on Eigg. From the initial meeting onwards, crofters have led this project.

The report aims to provide an overview of crofting on Eigg - to help tell Eigg's story and to increase understanding of crofting within the IEHT and the wider community. This report does not aim to explain the system in detail but seeks to provide a brief overview of key aspects of crofting.

The report also highlights the challenges crofters face, and explores ideas for strengthening and growing crofting on the island. Many of these ideas may also be relevant to other crofting communities across the North and West of Scotland as they plan for the future.

Throughout the project, it has become clear that the challenges faced by crofters on Eigg are also seen across crofting communities in Scotland. These challenges are numerous, interconnected, and pose risks to the realisation of the benefits of crofting. At worst, they could lead to the gradual disappearance of crofting. Across Scotland, we must ensure we are not sleepwalking into economic clearances of crofting areas.

“Crofting has the potential to be the low-carbon model of living that we need more of, combining the production of food, fuel, and energy with economic activity.”¹

Fortunately, Eigg has a community and a landlord committed to supporting crofting. However, for crofting to truly thrive, systemic change is needed at the national level. This change is vital not only for Eigg, but for Scotland as a whole. Crofting should not be viewed as a fringe activity but as a central part of Scotland's strategy to achieve a just transition, to become a Good Food Nation², to retain rural populations, and to build community wealth and a wellbeing economy.

This report is not the final point, but a step on the way. The process of creating this report has already led to some positive outcomes - a better understanding of crofting, a sharing of ideas and challenges and the first steps towards creating a new grazings committee.

In this report I have tried to distil down six months of conversation, research and observations. A huge thanks to everyone who has given time and shared their stories, the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust board members who have supported this project and most of all the crofters of Eigg. I hope I have accurately reflected the issues they face and offered some solutions. And of course, for any errors in the report, I take full responsibility.

Ed Pybus

January 2025

¹ Alison Strange, On Crofting, Landlordism, Rewilding and Depopulation, available from : <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2023/04/08/on-crofting-landlordism-rewilding-and-depopulation/>

² For more information see : <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-good-food-nation-plan/pages/1/>

Summary

Crofting on Eigg

Eigg is a special place for many people both in Scotland, and further afield. Its varied history of ownership, which finally resulted in it being one of the first communities to fund and achieve a community buyout, means it has inspired many other communities across Scotland, who have looked to Eigg as a model. Since 1997 the island has been owned and managed by The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust.

Crofting is an equally special form of land tenure, with a similar history of struggle. Prior to crofting legislation many small-scale tenants had very few legal rights and could be easily evicted. After years of agitation, hardship, and a Royal Commission, greater protections were given to crofting tenants by the 1886 Crofters (Scotland) Act. These hard-won protections enabled crofters to feel secure on their land, and allowed them to invest in improvements.

Crofting has a long history on Eigg. Crofts were typically of insufficient size or fertility to sustain a family, ensuring the crofter was also available as labour for the landlords needs. Crofts were created on Eigg in 1810 to ensure the landlord had sufficient labour for the harvesting and processing of kelp, which was highly profitable for the landlord. Since then there have been many reorganisations of crofting, the most recent in 2004 when the trust created four new crofts.

There are currently 22 crofts on Eigg, split into two townships: Cuagach and Cleadale. The total area of land currently under crofting tenure is approximately 300ha, around 1/10 of the island. 16 crofts are owned by IEHT and tenanted, 6 are owned by the tenants. None of the crofts are vacant. In total there are 19 tenants some of whom tenant or own multiple crofts. Five crofters are currently absent. There are two common grazings in Eigg, one for the Cuagach crofts and one for the Cleadale crofts. The Cuagach common grazings are approximately 64 hectares. The Cleadale common grazing are approximately 79 hectares.

Crofts on Eigg have a long history of growing food and fodder. Today, many crofters grow small amounts of food, with some growing enough to be self-sufficient in fresh produce. Keeping livestock has always been central to crofting on Eigg. Historically, crofters were only allowed to keep cattle and horses. While this restriction no longer applies, there remains a tradition among crofters of raising cattle rather than sheep on the island.

At present a minority of crofters keep livestock on their crofts. Livestock need to be taken to Mull to be slaughtered, creating additional costs, transport problems and potentially causing animals distress.

Historical photos from the late 19th century show very few trees in Cleadale and Cuagach, aside from those on the farms at Laig and Howlin and the hazel woodlands at the cliff's base. This was a result of land management decisions made by crofters and landlords over the previous generations. In recent decades, some crofters have been planting trees as an integral part of their land management.

Opportunities and Challenges for Eigg's crofters

The vision for crofting on Eigg is one that shows that crofting is a viable business, that attracts young people to stay, return, or move to Eigg. This vision includes a mix of

businesses, with sustainable food production at its core. Tourism and other businesses have an important contribution to make. It is a vision where all crofts are being used, where each croft retains its independence, but where there are more opportunities for working in community. And it is one where the whole township manages the land sustainably to ensure it remains both productive and supports biodiversity.

Throughout this project, many innovative and exciting ideas have been discussed. To create a crofting plan designed by and for the crofters, I asked them about their vision for both their own crofts and the wider community. As part of the process of developing this report, I spoke to 17 out of the 19 tenants. I also gathered input from external stakeholders. This report highlights ideas that come from discussions with crofters, both individually and in groups. It also includes input from the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, as well as insights from other stakeholders and examples from other communities.

Several common threads emerged:

Food Production

Crofting has always been primarily about food production. As we look for more sustainable ways to grow food and adapt to the effects of climate change, small-scale local food production will be essential. Crofting is uniquely positioned to play a vital role in this future. However, crofting on Eigg faces significant barriers to achieving this.

One key barrier is the slaughter and processing of livestock. There is currently no viable option that allows crofters to directly market their meat, and without this, small scale livestock production on Eigg is financially precarious. In the longer term the barriers to small scale slaughter facilities need to be addressed, and in the short term there needs to be a way for small scale meat producers to get their products directly to market.

For small scale horticulture to be viable, there needs to be investment in the infrastructure needed, and changes to funding that will allow small producers to compete.

Land Management

Crofters feel a strong responsibility to care for the land. They want to balance the needs of both the crofter and the land, ensuring it remains productive. Crofters have a deep connection to the land, whether they can trace their roots back through generations or have more recent ties. Sustainable land management includes both the sustainable grazing of animals and the planting of trees. The successful development of crofting on Eigg will balance these two priorities to meet the needs of the crofting community as a whole.

Fairer Funding

Like all businesses, there is a wide range of support available for crofters, however crofting has specific needs, and the funding systems that are available are often complex and bureaucratic and crofting can often lose out. Without clear fair funding available, crofting will be unable to continue to deliver the wide range of social, community and environmental benefits it currently provides. Agricultural funding must put the needs of small scale producers at the centre of policy – recognising that small scale producers are the ones who will enable Scotland to be a sustainable, self-sufficient food producing nation, and that crofting provides vital infrastructure that supports rural communities. The

failure to provide sufficient funding for small scale horticulture needs to be addressed, as does the uncertainty around the longer-term changes to agricultural funding.

Better Infrastructure

Crofting cannot achieve its full potential without the infrastructure needed to support croft-based businesses and communities. Many of these issues apply to the wider community on Eigg, and other areas of Scotland, but some gaps have a specific impact on crofting. Housing, transport and access to markets are all key infrastructure that needs to be in place for crofting to thrive.

Working Together

Each crofter has a clear vision for their own croft, and they also recognise that crofting is a communal activity. Working well with the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, as landlord, and the wider Eigg community is important for the success of crofting. This report discussed some ideas for how the community can work together to realise this vision.

Planning for the Future

A vision for crofting must also look to the future. When crofting is seen as a viable way to earn a living, young people are more likely to stay on, or return to, Eigg creating a sustainable community. Planning around succession, developing businesses, sharing skills as well as tourism and volunteering will all play their part.

Climate change

Climate change presents both risks and opportunities for crofting. Some crofters are concerned that efforts to reduce CO2 or changes in land use could impact their current practices. There are worries about the costs of adapting to climate change and how unpredictable weather could affect crops, livestock, and infrastructure. However, crofting also offers a way to help mitigate climate change. Crofting already produces high-quality, sustainable local food with a low environmental impact. As Scotland moves towards a more sustainable food system, crofters will have new opportunities to play a key part in this.

Next Steps

This report explores these issues in detail, drawing on the experiences of Eigg's crofters to create some key recommendations to help grow and strengthen crofting on Eigg. These specific recommendations focus on the subjects of this report - IEHT and the crofters. However, many of the issues crofters are facing require action from those outwith Eigg, and responsibility for many of these decisions ultimately lies with the Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers.

Throughout this report there are a number of potential calls, either to support some of the proposal in the report, or to make policy changes. I hope this report helps to provide some of the evidence the crofting community, IEHT, and others need to push for the policy changes that are essential to ensure crofting on Eigg, and across Scotland, is better supported.



Eigg

Eigg has been inhabited since Neolithic times, its fertile soils attracting settlers after the retreat of the last ice sheets. This long history has left a rich archaeological legacy, *'from bronze age hut-circles and Iron Age forts to a cemetery of Pictish square cairns, a series of early Christian crosses and, finally, the nucleated townships which were cleared in the 19th century to be replaced with the regimented layout of crofts walls to be seen ... today*³.

Despite not being the largest of the Small Isles, Eigg is the most fertile and historically supported the highest population, with over 500 residents recorded at the turn of the 19th century. Its central role in the Small Isles' history earned it the nickname "parent island," and it housed the region's surgeon, schoolmaster, and its only manse.

In more recent times, Eigg has had a varied history of ownership, chronicled in numerous books⁴. It was under the control of the MacDonalds of Clanranald for centuries before being sold in the early 19th century to a series of wealthy landowners. Eigg gained prominence in the late 1990s as one of the first communities to fund and achieve a community buyout, becoming owned by its residents in 1997.

The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (**IEHT**) owns and manages the island on behalf of its residents. The Trust comprises three members: the Isle of Eigg Residents Association (**IERA**), The Highland Council, and the Scottish Wildlife Trust (**SWT**). Representatives from each serve as Directors of the Trust, with Eigg residents forming the majority of the Board. All residents are automatically members of the IERA, which meets monthly to guide IEHT decisions. Although IEHT owns the land, much of it is tenanted, including three farms and 22 crofts.

Eigg's current population is approximately 115 but increases significantly in spring and summer with thousands of visitors. Most of the island's population lives in Cleadale in the north, while the main amenities and piers are located in Galmisdale in the south. A single-track road connects the two ends of the island.

The island is serviced by ferries, with four crossings per week in winter and six in summer, requiring a 1.5-hour journey to Mallaig on the mainland. The nearest town, Fort William, is a one-hour car ride or a 1.5-hour train journey from Mallaig, meaning Eigg residents need at least one overnight in order to visit many amenities.

Eigg has a shop, a café, and the Small Isles Medical Practice, which includes a dispensing pharmacy. A doctor visits weekly from Skye, and emergency transfers are conducted by sea or air. The island supports several small businesses, including a brewery partially financed through community shares, a craft shop, bike hire, outdoor activities and a record label.

Eigg is renowned for its geology and wildlife, which have drawn visitors since the 18th century. Its dramatic silhouette results from the same ancient volcanic activity that created its fertile soils and distinctive basaltic landscapes. Features like the natural amphitheater in Cleadale, the plateau cliffs, and the iconic peak of An Sgurr are products of this volcanic past.

³ John Hunter, *The Small Isles*, Historic Environment Scotland, 2016

⁴ For example Camille Dressler, *Eigg: The Story of an Island*, 2014

The island's diverse habitats include coastal land, farmland, willow and hazel scrub, native and productive woodland, raised bog, and moorland. Eigg is home to over 200 bird species, 300 bryophytes, and 500 plant species. Its surrounding waters support whales, dolphins, orcas, and other marine life. Unlike much of Scotland, Eigg has no deer but does have a substantial rabbit population due to limited predators, alongside domestic livestock.

Eigg's natural heritage is recognised with several designations:

- **National Scenic Area**
- **Marine Protected Area** (Sea of the Hebrides)
- **Special Area of Conservation** (Inner Hebrides and the Minches for harbour porpoises)
- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**

Eigg's rich biodiversity and designations underscore its unique natural environment (see Appendix 7 for more details).



Crofting

The oft-repeated description of crofting as “a small piece of land surrounded by red tape” reflects frustrations with its bureaucracy; and whilst the current system brings its challenges, it also protects crofters’ hard-won rights.

Crofting, as a form of land tenure, is unique to the ‘crofting counties’ of Scotland⁵. Prior to crofting legislation many tenants had very few legal rights and could be easily evicted when, for example, landlords looked to increase the revenue they could generate from their land. After years of agitation, hardship, and a Royal Commission, greater protections were given to crofting tenants by the *1886 Crofters (Scotland) Act*. These hard-won protections allowed crofters to feel secure on their land, and allowed them to invest in improvements.

Key to crofting are the security of tenure and protection from excessive rent increase, the right to assign the tenancy to a family member and reimbursement for improvements done to the croft.

Crofting legislation also imposes obligations on the crofters, and the landlords. Amongst these the landlord is obliged to ensure crofts are not left vacant, and crofters are obliged to both live on, or near, the croft and to ensure that the croft is not ‘misused or neglected’.

Subsequent legislation has meant that crofters may have the right to assign their croft to non-family members, to ‘de-croft’ parts of their croft and to buy the land from the landlord. Some newly created crofts, particularly those on community owned land, restrict some of these rights.

Croft Housing

Croft housing has also evolved over time. In many cases, the house is on croft land. However, a ‘croft’ house can be on land that has been ‘de-crofted’, i.e. taken out of crofting tenure. This house, and the land it is on, can then be sold, or used as collateral for a mortgage. A crofting tenant often has the right to buy their croft house and garden. This means that in practice many original croft houses are no longer on croft land, and one croft may have several houses on land that was formerly part of the croft. If a croft has no house on it, there may be a presumption in favour of granting planning permission for a house croft⁶.

⁵ There are numerous books on crofting. James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, is an excellent place to start. The final report from the Scottish Government’s 2008 Crofting Inquiry by Professor Mark Shucksmith (https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-communities/crofting-consultation-2017/supporting_documents/Shucksmith%20Report.pdf) provides a detailed overview of crofting, and puts many contemporary issues in their historical context. The Crofting Commission website (<https://www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk/what-is-crofting>) and the Scottish Crofting Federation (<https://www.crofting.org/about-scf/frequently-asked-questions/>) both provide extensive information on crofting and its history.

⁶ See Policy 17 of The Scottish Governments National Planning Framework 4, available from: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2023/02/national-planning-framework-4/documents/national-planning-framework-4-revised-draft/national-planning-framework-4-revised-draft/govscot%3Adocument/national-planning-framework-4.pdf>

Sub-letting and assigning

All, or part, of a croft can be temporarily sub-let to another person. The crofter must make an application to the crofting commission in order to sub-let the croft. The landlord, or members of the crofting community, can comment on an application to sub-let. The sub-let is usually for a short period of time, but the Crofting Commission has wide discretion.

A crofting tenancy can be permanently assigned to another tenant, this is called an assignation. Again, a crofter must make an application to the crofting commission, who needs to approve the transfer. When a croft is offered for sale, it is usually the tenancy that is being 'sold' and will only go ahead if approved by the Crofting Commission. In practice, over 99% of assignations are approved⁷.

Crofting on Eigg

Crofting has a long history on Eigg. Crofts were typically of insufficient size or fertility to sustain a family, ensuring the crofter was also available to meet the landlords' needs for labour. Crofts were created on Eigg in 1810 to ensure the landlord had sufficient labour for the harvesting and processing kelp, which was highly profitable for the landlord.

Originally crofts were created in Cleadale, Glamisdale and Grulin, they were small parcels of land with a share in a 'common grazings' where livestock could be grazed. As happened in many crofting communities across Scotland, the crofts at Grulin were cleared in the 1850s. The 1886 Act gave the crofters greater legal protection, so when in the 1880's the Galmisdale crofters were moved they were able to insist that they were given crofts in a new township, Cuagach, adjacent to Cleadale in the north of the island, and a new common grazings.

There are currently 22 crofts on Eigg, split into two townships Cuagach and Cleadale. The total area of land currently under crofting tenure is approximately 300ha, around 1/10 of the island. 6 crofts are owned and tenanted, the remaining 16 are owned by IEHT and tenanted. None of the crofts are vacant. In total there are 19 tenants some of whom tenant or own multiple crofts. Five crofters are currently absent.

Formal registration of crofts started in 2014. Crofters are not obliged to register their croft with the Crofting Commission, unless they undertake a 'notifiable event', but can voluntarily register their croft⁸. Eight of the crofts are currently registered, and the details are available on the Register of Scotland's Crofting Register⁹.

The crofting townships in Eigg have a patchwork of tenant and owned crofts, alongside residents who do not have a croft. In the 1980's the Lochaber Housing Association built a number of houses and a day care centre (which is now used as volunteer accommodation) on what had previously been croft land. One previous croft house is now managed by Chomunn Eachdraidh Eige (Eigg Historical Society), providing an example of

⁷ See The Scottish Government's *Crofting law reform proposals 2024: consultation* available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/crofting-consultation-2024-proposals-crofting-law-reform/pages/7/>

⁸ For information on when a croft needs to be registered see registered; <https://kb.ros.gov.uk/other-registration-types/crofting/who-should-register-and-when>

⁹ Available from : <https://www.ros.gov.uk/our-registers/crofting-register>

the historic occupancy of the crofts. There are several information boards in the township illustrating the history of crofting on Eigg.

Since the 1880's, when all the crofters were moved to Cleadale and Cuagach, there have been several re-organisations, that have increased the area of the common grazings and amalgamated some crofts. The most recent reorganisation was done in 2004. This resulted in the creation of 4 new crofts and a new common grazings. At this point IEHT decided that it was appropriate to limited some of the rights that the new crofters would have. This included limiting the right to buy the croft and that the community, via IEHT and the Grazings Committee, should play a role in the assignation of any crofts. This was done via a memorandum of understanding with the incoming tenants, rather than clauses in the lease. The incoming tenant was also required to submit a management plan for the crofts.

In practice the rules around assignations have not been enforced, and has led to concerns being raised about the creation of any additional crofts on Eigg (See Case Study - Croft creation at Kilfinan Community Forest Company for how these conditions can be more rigorously enforced).

Community

Crofting plays a vital role in sustaining small rural communities across Scotland. According to The Value of Crofting¹⁰ report by the Crofting Commission, crofting supports numerous jobs and ensures that *'80% of the wealth generated by crofting stays within the crofting counties.'* This highlights crofting's economic importance, both in creating employment and keeping wealth circulating within areas that often face limited job opportunities.

Amongst the crofters there is a strong sense of individuality – each crofter had a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve – but also an understanding that crofting is, at its best, a communal activity and everyone was clear on the need to work together to ensure both their croft, and the township, was successful. There was a feeling that at present there were fewer opportunities for communal activities.

However, this was coupled with an understanding that, even in the absence of organised communal activities, crofters remained ready and willing to lend a helping hand, share tools, or provide supplies as needed.

Livestock

Keeping livestock has always been central to crofting on Eigg. Historically, crofters were only allowed to keep cattle and horses. While this restriction no longer applies, there remains a tradition of raising cattle rather than sheep on the crofts.

At present a minority of crofters keep livestock on their crofts. Livestock need to be taken to Mull to be slaughtered, creating additional costs, transport problems and potentially causing animals distress. One crofter said they wouldn't send animals to slaughter due to the distress the transport to Mull would cause. Four crofters currently keep cattle, and two keep sheep - one mainly for wool. Cattle are currently raised for meat. These crofters earn some income from their livestock, but it remains economically marginal.

¹⁰ BiGGAR Economics, *The Value of Crofting* available at https://www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk/userfiles/file/research_publications/the-value-of-crofting-a-report-by-biggarr-economics-for-the-crofting-commission.pdf

Horticulture

Crofts on Eigg have a long history of growing food and fodder. Today, many crofters grow small amounts of food, with some growing enough to be self-sufficient in fresh produce. However, none currently earn more than a negligible income from selling their produce.

Diverse Businesses

Several small-scale businesses operate successfully from the crofts on Eigg. Some add value to local produce, selling bluebell seeds, willow, and sheep's wool. Lageorna is a thriving restaurant and bed-and-breakfast run from a croft. Other crofts offer self-catering accommodation or camping facilities. Crofts provide a base for various other businesses such as Selkie Explorers - a sailing business that is run from a croft.

Like most crofts across Scotland, those on Eigg typically meet only part of the crofters' needs, whether for food or income. Most crofters rely on supplementary income from employment, self-employment, or other sources.

Approximate layout of the crofts on Eigg



Common Grazings on Eigg

There are two common grazings on Eigg: one for the Cuagach crofts and one for the Cleadale crofts. The Cleadale common grazings is split into two sections - the original grazings and new grazings, which were created after the reorganisation in 2004.

The Cuagach common grazings are approximately 64 hectares. The four crofts in Cuagach have shares in the common grazings. The Cuagach common grazings are not currently used for grazing, but they do have a telecoms mast on them. The telecoms company pay rent for the mast, which is split between IEHT and the crofters with shares in Cuagach common grazings. They were previously fenced, but much of the fencing is in a poor state of repair. The common grazings are bisected by the road between Cleadale and Glamisbay. There are no apportionments of the common grazings registered with the crofting commission.

The Cleadale common grazing are approximately 79 hectares. The 18 crofts in Cleadale all have shares in the common grazings. The common grazings are used for the grazing of cattle and sheep. They are fenced, but the fencing needs repairing or replacing in various sections. Sheep from the farms can easily get onto the common grazings. There are two vehicle access points onto the common grazings. There are communal cattle handling facilities that were installed by the grazing committee. Access to the popular beach, the Singing Sands, is across the Cleadale common grazings, either via the road at croft 9, or an access track next to Howlin House; neither access is clearly sign posted. There are two scheduled monuments on the common grazings.

There is one grazing committee that is responsible for managing both townships' common grazings. In the past a decision was taken to split the common grazings committee, but this was never recognised by the Crofting Commission. The grazings committee has been inactive for a number of years and a new grazings committee need to be appointed. It has previously been active and, for example, applied for grants and maintained the fencing and stock handling equipment. Eigg provides an opportunity to explore how a community landlord and the crofters can work together to productively use the common grazings.

Woodlands and trees

Historical photos from the late 19th century show very few trees in Cleadale and Cuagach, aside from those on the farms at Laig and Howlin and the hazel woodlands (now a Site of Special Scientific Interest¹¹) at the cliff's base. This was a result of land management decisions made by crofters and landlords over the previous generations.

In recent decades, some crofters have been planting trees as an integral part of their land management. For instance, one croft has demonstrated that closely grown copses of native trees can eradicate bracken while significantly enhancing biodiversity—most notably, the increase in bird populations is quite striking. There is considerable natural regeneration in some areas where grazing pressures have been reduced – although in some areas, even where grazing pressure has been reduced, there is limited natural regeneration which could be due to very limited seed banks, or the pressure of rabbits and other animals.

¹¹For more details see: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/601>

Opportunities and Challenges for Eigg's crofters

The vision for crofting on Eigg is one that shows crofting is a viable business, that attracts young people to stay, return, or move to Eigg. This vision includes a mix of businesses, with sustainable food production at its core. Tourism and other businesses have an important contribution to make. It is a vision where all crofts are being used, where each croft retains its independence, but where there are more opportunities for working the community. And it is one where the whole township manages the land sustainably to ensure it remains productive and supports biodiversity.

Many innovative ideas have been proposed to develop crofting on Eigg. To create a crofting plan designed by and for the crofters, I asked them about their vision for their own crofts and the wider community. As part of the process of developing this report, I spoke to 17 out of the 19 tenants. I also gathered input from external stakeholders. This section highlights ideas from discussions with crofters, both individually and in groups. It also includes input from Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (**IEHT**) and Isle of Eigg Residents Association (**IERA**), as well as insights from other stakeholders and examples from other communities.

Common Themes

Several common threads emerged:

Food Production: Crofting has always been primarily about food production. As we look for more sustainable ways to grow food and adapt to the effects of climate change, small-scale local food production will be essential. Crofting is uniquely positioned to play a vital role in this future.

Land Management: Crofters feel a strong responsibility to care for the land. They want to balance the needs of both the crofter and the land, ensuring it remains productive. Crofters have a deep connection to the land, whether they can trace their roots back through generations or have more recent ties. Land management includes both the sustainable grazing of animals and the planting of trees. The successful development of crofting on Eigg will balance these two priorities to meet the needs of the crofting community as a whole.

Fairer Funding: Like all businesses, there is a wide range of support available for crofters, but the systems are complex and often crofting can lose out. Without clear fair funding available, crofting will be unable to continue to deliver the wide range of benefits it currently provides.

Better Infrastructure: Crofting cannot achieve its full potential without the infrastructure needed to support croft-based businesses and communities. Housing, transport and access to markets are all key infrastructure that needs to be in place for crofting to thrive.

Working Together: Each crofter has a clear vision for their own croft, and they also recognise that crofting is a communal activity. Working well with the IEHT, as landlord, and the wider Eigg community is important for the success of crofting.

Planning for the Future: A vision for crofting must also look to the future. When crofting is seen as a viable way to earn a living, young people are more likely to stay on, or return to, Eigg creating a sustainable community. Planning around succession, developing businesses, sharing skills as well as tourism and volunteering will all play their part.

Climate Change: Risks and Opportunities

Climate change presents both risks and opportunities for crofting. Some crofters are concerned that efforts to reduce CO2 or changes in land use could impact their current practices. There are worries about the costs of adapting to climate change and how unpredictable weather could affect crops, livestock, and infrastructure.

However, crofting also offers a way to help mitigate climate change. Crofting already produces high-quality, sustainable local food with a low environmental impact. As Scotland moves toward a more sustainable food system, crofters will have new opportunities to play a key part in this. Changes in funding could require carbon audits, which rather than being seen as a burden, could be used to show the low environmental impact of crofting. There are also opportunities for investment and grants that support climate change mitigation and environmental benefits, such as increased biodiversity.



Food production

'The current food system was developed within the "food as commodity" narrative, seeking to feed the world by any means possible. The result is a food system based on extractive and exploitative practices that are responsible for at least a third of greenhouse gas emissions, and that fail to eradicate hunger and food insecurity'.¹²

Crofting has always been primarily about food production. As we look for more sustainable ways to grow food and adapt to the effects of climate change, small-scale local food production will be essential¹³. Crofting is uniquely positioned to play a vital role in this future. Crofters across Scotland use diverse business models to produce a wide range of produce. However, as this report highlights, they also face significant barriers. Alongside other crofting communities, Eigg can demonstrate the vital role small-scale agriculture plays in creating a sustainable food system. While crofting alone cannot resolve Scotland's food production challenges, it can contribute meaningfully as part of broader systemic changes.

Eigg aspires to become more self-sufficient in food production and to establish an efficient, sustainable circular economy. To achieve this, the island could undertake a study to determine the annual food production required to meet its needs.

The Fruit and Veg Alliance has calculated the volume of fresh produce the UK needs to consume and identified the shortfall between production and consumption. A similar approach could be applied to Eigg by calculating the island's fresh food consumption requirements. This would provide a meaningful target for local fresh food production, helping to guide efforts toward being more self-sufficient.

Increasing livestock or food production will have an impact on local biodiversity. Careful consideration must be given, not only to observe the limits put in place by regulation, but also to ensure any impacts are minimised. For example, using permaculture design principles¹⁴, regenerative farming¹⁵ ideas and organic standards, systems can be designed that work with, rather than against nature.

Livestock

Some crofters see livestock as a vital part of crofting, others see a role for livestock in their crofts integrated with other land use, whilst others do not see livestock as part of their croft plan.

Traditionally, livestock, along with horticulture, was the main focus of crofting. There is concern, from crofters on Eigg, and the wider crofting community, that unless things change we may be seeing the unintentional end of livestock crofting due to a number of different policy and funding decisions that have been made over the past couple of decades.

¹² Dr. Chelsea Marshall, *Green Amendments and the Right to Food* available at <https://www.fromthegroundupne.org/archive/green-amendments-and-the-right-to-food>

¹³ Many groups across Scotland are looking at ways this can work, see, for example, this film by Dumfries and Galloway Sustainable Food Partnership: <https://www.propagate.org.uk/rooted>

¹⁴ For information on the permaculture design principle see, for example, <https://www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/what-is-permaculture-part-2-principles/>

¹⁵ For more information see, for example, <https://www.nourishscotland.org/agroecology-resources/> and this podcast from Highland Good Food Partnership <https://www.podbean.com/ep/pb-q4xhw-175182d>

At present livestock production is often not financially viable, for example those keeping cattle barely breaking even, and two crofters are considering giving up cattle. This creates difficulty for the future of livestock on Eigg, with new crofters unlikely to take on livestock unless they can see a way for it to be done sustainably.

Small scale livestock production can play a key role in the production of sustainable, high quality animal products, that has high levels of animal welfare. To continue, livestock production needs to be financially viable, as well as environmentally sustainable.

This requires sufficient investment, in individual crofts and in infrastructure, and a level playing field, so small scale producers can compete with large scale producers and small shops and distribution networks can compete with supermarkets.

Most livestock, including poultry, now require registration¹⁶. The Farm Advisory Service provide a number of general advice sheets on registration of livestock¹⁷ and can provide crofters with specific advice via their advice service¹⁸.

Cattle

The current agricultural funding schemes are focused on providing support for keeping livestock, particularly sheep and cattle, so there are opportunities for crofters to access some financial support for keeping livestock. However, even with this support, cattle are not seen as financially viable at present. Many successfully small-scale livestock producers in Scotland are able to sell their produce directly to consumers – unfortunately, due to the costs and distance to the nearest abattoir, this currently seems unviable on Eigg. Eigg raised organic beef could fetch a premium price, if it could be sold directly to consumers. Having a way to supply customers directly would be a big step towards making cattle, and other livestock, viable on Eigg.

There is also concern that some of the crofters that are keeping livestock are getting older, and this means that the system is not resilient – an accident or illness could mean that there isn't anyone available to look after the livestock. There are the skills, knowledge and infrastructure on Eigg to keep cattle. So it would be possible for individual crofters to either start keeping cattle, or increase the number of cattle they hold, although looking at ways of working together may provide more sustainable and resilient options.

As well as meat, there is interest in exploring the possibility of a small dairy herd. A larger scale dairy such as the Wee Isles Dairy on Gigha may not be viable, but the Highland Good Food Partnership have a podcast¹⁹ exploring setting up micro dairies, showcasing The Sheiling Project that could provide a template for Eigg. This would require an investment, of both time and money, but a small dairy herd could be managed in such a way to ensure peak production coincides with the greater demand that there is during the summer, and excess milk could be made into cheese and other products to supplement the income.

¹⁶ For more information, see:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/livestock-identification-and-traceability-guidance/pages/register-as-keeper-of-livestock/>

¹⁷ For example *New Entrants Guide - Getting registered to keep livestock and claim for support* available from <https://www.fas.scot/downloads/getting-registered-to-keep-livestock-and-claim-for-support/> and *Starting Up An Agricultural Business – registering – recording – rules* available from <https://www.fas.scot/downloads/starting-agricultural-business-2/>

¹⁸ For more information, see <https://www.fas.scot/advice-line/>

¹⁹ Available from : <https://www.podbean.com/ep/pb-ncfrp-ef6776>

Case Study : Livestock and Horticulture at Knockfarrel Produce

Knockfarrel Produce is run from a 45 acre croft about 5 miles from Dingwall. They started in 2010 and now supply 220 customers with fresh, organic meat, fruit and veg for 44 weeks of the year. 90% of the produce is grown on the croft, the remaining 10% is brought in. Wholesalers act as a backup if needed.

Boxes are delivered to customers every two weeks. Customers are supplied with a standard veg box and can buy in additional produce, including meat. Demand is sufficient that they can replace customers if they leave – giving them some degree of certainty. Customers pay by direct debit, and they use an online payment system to manage the orders (<https://www.ooooby.com/>).

They grow on a six-year rotation on the outside beds, growing green manures on beds for three years before returning them to productive cropping. They have two planting systems - 5000m² which is hand planted, and 3ha which are covered in biodegradable weed suppressing mulch and planted by machine. They grow soft fruits and have a 25 acre productive woodland, including a 300 tree apple orchard. Most crops are grown outside, although they do have 600m² of indoor growing space. They use Keder Greenhouses, strong insulated poly tunnels, after losing four standard poly tunnels in storms.

Much of the produce is stored in the ground, such as brassicas and root crops, and harvested when needed. By protecting crops, and carefully selecting varieties, they can ensure a long cropping season, reducing the need to store produce. They do store some produce, notably potatoes, as they are easier to lift when the ground is dry, which are stored in temperature controlled storage that they rent.

Livestock are also incorporated into the system. They have outdoor reared pigs which are useful in the crop rotation – they will eat left over vegetables and clear deep roots. They have an on-site butchery unit that they use to process approximately 60 pigs per year.

They have experimented with over 600 different plant varieties over the last 15 years and currently grow 180 varieties of 81 different crops. They spent the first five years improving the soil to get it fully productive, using soil amendments, green manures, crop rotation and composting to build up the fertility of the soil. The site is now certified organic. Shelter is an important part of the overall plan, and they have planted over 2km of hedging to provide shelter for the crops.

They have a commercial kitchen on site - which is used for making jams, cordials, apple juice, and cider and during the summer produces a lot of pesto and tomato sauce. These are included as extras to veg box customers. The kitchen is also rented out to other local producers.

Total capital investment is around £120,000 including CCAGS grants and loans. The business supports the equivalent of 5.3 full-time posts. The business is profitable, and they estimate that turnover per Ha has increased from £380 when the crofts were focused on sheep to £16,400 per Ha - although there are now much higher investment and running costs.

Poultry

At present, no crofters keep poultry for more than personal use. Poultry keeping could be a good first step for the production of meat on Eigg for Eigg. The Landworkers Alliance have produced a *Setting up a Small-scale Pastured Poultry Enterprise* video²⁰. Poultry can be slaughtered on the croft and sold, provided the crofter is correctly registered and licensed. The preparation of the birds can be done by hand, but small-scale poultry equipment is also available. One croft had previously supplied a large number of eggs. Egg production, either communally or individually, could play a role in Eigg's becoming more self-sufficient. Eggs sold direct to the public (e.g. via an honest box) may not require registration or licensing. If eggs are sold via a shop, for example, there needs to be a registered egg packing facility – however, getting this licensed should be relatively straight forward. Highland Council Environmental Health Services can provide more information.

Other livestock

Although cattle have been the focus of large livestock on Eigg, sheep and pigs and other animals such as goats have also been kept in the past, so there is knowledge and experience of working with a range of livestock. These face the same issues and opportunities as cattle - high costs, difficulty transporting to slaughter and low prices but also potential access to funding and grants.

There is also interest in keeping bees. Beekeepers are not required to register, although a voluntary registration system exists across the UK²¹. The Scottish Beekeepers Association (SBA) covers the whole of Scotland, and regional Beekeepers Associations can provide advice and training. Recently there has been an increased interest in 'Natural Beekeeping'²², using a less interventional approach than conventional beekeeping. The Scottish Native Honey Bee Society²³ is keen to promote native Scottish honey bees, believing they are better suited to the damp, cold Scottish conditions. Eigg's distance from other bee colonies could provide an opportunity to create a native bee reserve, as has been created on the isle of Colonsay.

Working together

There are many opportunities to work together when raising livestock. This could take the approach, that is largely followed at the moment, of individual crofters having their own livestock but looking for ways to work together. However, there are opportunities for a more formal approach.

The first step in working together is the re-establishment of a grazing committee to manage the common grazings.

Managing livestock has traditionally been a communal activity and, due to the small size of crofts, a communal approach to keeping livestock is perhaps the most viable approach. There was interest in exploring a common herd for the crofters.

²⁰ Available from : <https://staging.landworkersalliance.org.uk/pastured-poultry-feed-scotland/>

²¹ The Scottish Government provide some advice, focussed on bee health, available from <https://www.gov.scot/publications/honey-bee-health-guidance/> For the UK wide voluntary registration programme see <https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/>

²² See for example <https://www.naturalbeekeepingtrust.org/>

²³ See <https://www.snhbs.scot/home-2/about-snhbs/>

One option would be the creation of a stock club²⁴. This could reduce costs and share risks. These are regularly used for sheep, but could also be used for cattle and in theory could include other communal livestock such as pigs. There are a number of options for the creation of the stock club, from unincorporated association, though to formal partnerships or co-operatives²⁵. Crofters interested in a stock club could look at the possible options.

There are also opportunities to work with the three framers on Eigg, sharing skills and knowledge, equipment, reducing transport and veterinary costs as well as potentially, over time, working in a more integrated way. Sandabhor Farm is moving from sheep to cattle, and are exploring regenerative agriculture, becoming certified organic, and using a grazing rotation system to reduce the amount of feed that is brought in. Their experiences could provide useful information for the crofters. There may also be ways for individual crofters, or crofters as a group, to explore working with the farm, for example grazing animals for part of the year on croft land.

Fencing

Concerns were raised about the control of livestock – there was an awareness of the range of damage that different livestock can cause to plants, trees and when grazed on unsuitable land. Having an understanding within the townships about stock control, and a forum for raising any issues, could ensure that any issues are addressed.

Livestock slaughter

Over the past few decades, there has been a reduction in the number of abattoir facilities in Scotland. For many small producers this has led to an increase in the travel times, and the expense, of getting animals slaughtered, and getting produce returned for sale. This is putting a very real pressure on small scale livestock production.

This is exacerbated for island communities, the cost and difficulty of co-ordinating transport can mean meat production is unviable – this seems at odds with both the Scottish Government's commitments within the Good Food Nation and, when we know that small scale food production is often the most sustainable way of producing food, sustainable food production.

At present the costs, and distress caused by the long distances stock have to travel, means that some crofters on Eigg either see livestock production as unviable, or are unwilling to send animals to slaughter due to animal welfare concerns. When animals do go to slaughter, due to the additional transport costs and logistics, meat does not return to the producers to be sold directly to consumers, which would allow crofters to get a premium price, but sold to buyers.

²⁴ The Scottish Crofting Federation produced a report on Stock Clubs, *Taking Stock - study of crofters' stock clubs* available from <https://www.crofting.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/stockclubs.pdf>. The Farm Advisory Service also provide information on Stock Clubs, which is focussed on sheep, but equally applies to cattle see <https://www.fas.scot/discussion-groups/common-grazings/sheep-stock-clubs/>

²⁵ For more information see Campbell Stewart MacLennan & Co, *Sheep Stock Clubs Possible Business Structures* available from <https://www.fas.scot/downloads/possible-business-structures-for-sheep-stock-clubs/>

Much of the production on Eigg is organic, either by design or just due to the high costs of bringing non-organic feed onto the island. However, getting a premium for organic meat is difficult – there needs to be sufficient organic certified cattle at the slaughterhouse at any one time to attract buyers, and as this cannot be guaranteed, the crofters are unlikely to be able to get an organic premium, even if they have got organic certification.

Local slaughter facilities could make a huge difference to the viability of livestock production on Eigg. Investing in butchery and meat processing facilities as well as storage facilities, alongside with slaughter facilities, could provide additional added value²⁶. This would reduce both costs and stress to animals, and allow crofters to sell their meat directly to consumers, both on and off the island.

Some abattoirs used to offer a 'pack and send' scheme, where they slaughter, butcher, package, and send out meat from the abattoir directly to a crofters customers. This was a very attractive option for crofters on Eigg, as it allowed them to get a higher price for their meat, and generate sufficient income to make keeping livestock viable. Until local meat processing facilities are available to crofters on Eigg this would be a solution. The current lack of such a scheme in Scotland is a major barrier, and addressing this gap must be a priority.

Horticulture

The UK is heavily reliant on imported fruit and vegetables²⁷, which in the longer term is unsustainable, with many of the countries we import food from facing their own climate-related challenges and sustainability risks²⁸.

There are barriers to growing more fruit and vegetables, both on Eigg and across the UK. The Fruit and Veg Alliance, an umbrella group representing various organisations, published a report titled "Cultivating Success." The report outlines what is needed to support fruit and vegetable production in the UK. Many of its recommendations—such as training the next generation of growers, supporting small-scale organic farming, and making it easier for producers to sell their products—are highly relevant to crofting.

Crofting can play a key role in growing fresh produce. Donald Murdie notes in his introduction to *Horticulture : a Handbook for Crofters*²⁹, that just a few decades ago most crofters would have been growing fruit and vegetables - there is a long tradition of horticulture on crofts. Traditionally most fodder would also have been grown on the crofts, and with the increased costs of buying in fodder there is an opportunity to grow more fodder for livestock.

Many crofters already grow produce for their own use. The challenge now is moving beyond individual consumption to produce a surplus for sale. This brings additional

²⁶ For further discussion, see **Infrastructure** (Pg 38)

²⁷ The UK Fruit and Veg Alliance notes that 'the UK is reliant on imports for 85% of fruit and 43% of vegetables'. In its report *Cultivating Success*, available from <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/Cultivating-Success-Final-March-2023-2.pdf>, it says that the UK is currently at cross roads and that the UK 'could become world leading - delivering abundant fresh and healthy food, produced to the highest standards of sustainability'.

²⁸ UK Government, *United Kingdom Food Security Report 2024* available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024>

²⁹ Dr. Audrey Litterick et al, *Horticulture: a Handbook for Crofters* SCF, 2012 available from <https://www.crofting.org/enterprise/books/horticulture-handbook/>

challenges, such as getting the surplus to market and eventually growing specifically for target markets or outlets. Crofters on Eigg are interested in growing a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, including traditional crofting staples like potatoes and fodder crops. They are also exploring alternative crops such as flax and hemp for fibers, hops, sweet chestnuts, and both herbal teas and traditional tea.

Case Study - Horticulture production at West Coast Organics

West coast organics is run from a croft in Roag on the North West of Skye. They supply households on Skye with a weekly organic veg box from June to December.

All the produce they supply is grown by hand in their 0.6 Ha organically certified market garden. They have two poly tunnels, and have approximately 1500 m² outdoor beds and 300 m² inside beds. Protecting the crops is key. Most outdoor crops have some kind of cover at some point in the growing season. Protection is also provided by extensive hedge planting, that was planted when they started the business in 2015. This provides shelter as well as increasing bio-diversity. Hedges are approximately every ten meters and run East-West in order to provide sufficient shelter from the wind, but this does cause some issues with shade. This year is the first year they have had to trim the hedges, which has provided some wood chip. If they had had more space they would have planted wider shelter belts, which could have provided the opportunity to extract more wood, as short rotation coppice, as well as providing shelter and increased bio-diversity.

They supply approximately 70 local households with veg boxes, that are either collected from the site or from collection points on the island, and have a waiting list. All customer receive the same produce – there is not the option to customise the orders as this would create another level of complexity in the delivery and collection process. They do not target tourists or passing trade, as the permanent residents provide a sufficient market. They now know what they need to grow each year and they have a good degree of certainty. Due to demand if a customer drops out they can be replaced thanks to the waiting list. They do have sufficient flexibility to allow customers to put boxes on hold for short periods if, for example, they are on holiday. They do extensive planning, both of crops and planting. The planting plan maximises growing space, for example under-planting crops such as spring onions and fennel under the tomatoes.

It is possible for this to be profitable. They set their prices roughly based on the costs of organic fresh food sold by somewhere like Waitrose. Non-organic fresh food is so cheap it can be hard to compete but there is a market on Skye that is willing to pay a more realistic price that comes closer to covering the costs of production for fresh organic food. Profit margins could be increased if they were to look at growing more high value crops. They are considering buying in some low value crops, like potatoes, to invest time in higher value crops.

They pack and pick twice a week. At present all planting and harvesting is done by hand, they do have some volunteers and provide training opportunities. They have considered, for example, doing potatoes by machinery but this is not feasible unless they had the facilities to store the crop once it was harvested. They also keep goats and hens, but

these are for personal consumption, although the goats do provide manure that is useful for the market garden.

Skills and knowledge

In the past, Eigg had organic vegetable businesses, and many crofters possess valuable knowledge and skills. There is a strong willingness among them to share these skills with new growers. Across Scotland, other producers and communities are also often open to sharing their expertise. Funding is available for site visits to learn from their practices.

Networking organisations such as the Scottish Crofting Federation³⁰, the Land Workers' Alliance³¹, and the Highland Good Food Partnership³² offer opportunities to share ideas and skills. They also provide training. The Farm Advisory Service, for example, offers information on horticulture and growing in poly-tunnels³³.

Currently, Scotland does not have a small-scale horticulture course. To boost fruit and vegetable production, the Scottish Government should consider funding such a course, particularly one aimed at supporting small scale, sustainable production.

Site preparation

One challenge on Eigg, and the West Coast of Scotland as a whole, is the weather, particularly the wind. However, with some planning this can be mitigated. West Coast Organics (see case study) have had great success planting windbreaks and shelter belts, which would be a first step. One croft on Eigg has planted hedges to provide shelter for a growing area. Grants are potentially available for planting hedges.

Where soil has not been used for growing, or has had grazing pressure, there may be a need to improve the soil. Knockfarrel Croft (see case study) spent five years improving the soil to get it fully productive, using soil amendments, green manures, crop rotations, and composting to build up the fertility of the soil.

Working together

One option is for individual crofts to develop their own horticultural businesses. For example, West Coast Organics has successfully established a horticultural business on their croft, supplying organic vegetables to customers on Skye.

Alternatively, crofters could grow individually but work toward a collective goal with joint marketing. The Green Bowl (see case study) demonstrates how an online platform can be used to sell a wide variety of goods from different producers. Coordinating crop growing could ensure a steady supply and variety of produce.

A group of crofters might also consider communal growing. This approach allows for shared risks, the cultivation of larger areas, and more effective task-sharing. Such arrangements could be informal or more structured, such as forming a co-operative. SOAS³⁴ provides guidance on setting up co-operatives.

³⁰ See : <https://www.crofting.org/membership/>

³¹ See: <https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/join-the-lwa/>

³² See : <https://highlandgoodfood.scot/membership/>

³³ <https://www.fas.scot/rural-business/crofts-small-farms/polyunits-for-production/>

³⁴ See <https://saos.coop/> for more information.

Many aspects of horticulture are well-suited to communal work. Crofters could share skills, knowledge, seeds, tools, and equipment. Establishing systems for this—whether informal or formal—could help identify and address potential challenges.

Collectively managing facilities, such as processing, drying, storage, or poly-tunnels, is another option. These facilities could be built on an individual croft and shared or rented out, established on the common grazings, or constructed by the community for wider use. There are a number of things to consider, including securing funding, finding suitable land, and working out how to maintain and manage the facilities sustainably.

Communal growing and processing could involve the wider Eigg community. The Green Bowl collaborates with both crofters and non-crofters, all of whom contribute produce for the online store. Many non-crofting Eigg residents have expressed interest in greater access to land for growing. Providing them with secure, long-term access to growing areas would encourage investment of time and energy in creating productive spaces.

There is potentially the opportunity for working more closely with the farms on Eigg. For example, if a 'veg box' scheme aims to supply produce for a portion of the year, it might make sense to grow some crops, that are more easily grown at scale, at a farm scale.

A first step might be those on Eigg interested in growing more food to get together to discuss these ideas in more detail.

Funding

Funding is explored in more detail below. While crofters may access grants for capital projects, funding for horticultural is often harder to secure. Current schemes, such as the *Basic Payment Scheme* and the *Less Favoured Area Support Scheme*, tend to focus on livestock rather than horticulture.



Land management

Crofters feel a strong responsibility to care for the land. They want to balance the needs of both the crofter and the land, ensuring it remains productive. Crofters have a deep connection to the land, whether they can trace their roots back through generations or have more recent ties. Sustainable land management includes both the sustainable grazing of animals and the planting of trees. The successful development of crofting on Eigg will balance these two priorities to meet the needs of the crofting community as a whole.

Common grazings

Common grazings play a unique role in crofting. (More information about common grazings is found in Appendix 6). In order to be successfully managed there needs to be a grazing committee appointed. This was widely supported and the process of appointing a new committee has begun.

One of the committee's key tasks will be assessing the future grazing needs of the townships, as this will influence how the grazings are used. Questions to consider include: Do more crofters wish to graze livestock on the common grazings? Do those currently using the grazings plan to continue? Is there interest in communally managing stock?

Grazings and land management

Cattle and sheep are currently grazed on the Cleadale common grazings and due to gaps in the current fencing, sheep from the neighbouring farms are also on the common grazings. There is currently sufficient grazings for the current grazing pressures but there could be opportunities to improve grazings in some areas of both common grazings. There are also opportunities to create pond and wetlands on areas not suitable for grazings.

Fencing and equipment

Making the common grazings stock-proof may be something that the grazing committee want to look at. At present neither of the common grazings are fully stock-proof. Repairs to fencing may not be covered by a grant, unless the existing fencing is in a dilapidated state and is no longer fit for purpose. Agricultural grants may be available for hedges or shelter belts, if their purpose is stock control or protecting stock.

Land survey

Undertaking some kind of formal, or informal, land survey would help identify the areas that are most suitable for grazings, and if there are areas that are less suitable to grazings, such as boggy areas, or areas that are too steep to be safely grazed. It could also provide information about bio-diversity – which will be required for further agricultural funding grants. A survey could also assess the current state of fencing and any stock handling equipment.

Tree planting

Two or more crofters could apply to undertake a tree planting scheme on part of the common grazings, although a plan involving all shareholders may be the most effective

way of considering tree planting on the common grazings. Tree planting could include planting shelter belts, planting productive woodlands for coppice or timber, growing fruit trees, extending the current SSSI, planting to get carbon credits or planting for bio-diversity. The Scottish Crofting Federation published a *Highland and Island Woodland Handbook*, which provides detailed information on woodland creation and management³⁵. The Woodland Trust can provide advice and information on what, if any, schemes might be most appropriate for the land.

Access

Currently there are two main access points to the Cleadale common grazings, as well a path over croft land on to the common grazings. Access to the Singing Sands (a popular tourist destination), two scheduled monuments and an area of SSSI is across the common grazings. Concerns were raised that the current access is unsuitable both for visitors and stock.

Creating better access, for crofters, for stock movements, and for visitors as well as for access for any other proposed schemes all need to be considered. Access could also include creating new signage, including some historic information about the sites and features on the common grazings. Access on to the Cuagach common grazings is currently over grown, but the road provides some access. If there is going to be grazing on the Cuagach common grazings, access will need to be improved.

Processing facilities

In the discussions about both livestock and horticulture the potential need for food processing facilities was discussed, whether for the processing of meat, drying and storage of produce, or creating added value products like jams, wines or chutneys. Common grazings land could be used to build such facilities.

Growing facilities

Creating more communal growing space was discussed, either outdoor space to grow crops, fodder and animal bedding communally, or covered growing space such as poly tunnels.

Housing, tourist accommodation, and camping

Whilst it might not be a priority, the lack of housing on Eigg and the potential to generate income from the common grazings, means that the creation of one or more house plots on the common grazings could be considered. Accommodation could also be provided for tourists or volunteers; ranging from an area for wild camping, through to camping facilities or a bunk house to chalets or other holiday accommodation. This could also potentially provide income for the common grazings and the shareholders.

Electricity generation

Many common grazings have some form of renewable energy generation, which as well as generating income for the common grazings, also provides sustainable electricity. A quick

³⁵ Bernard Planterose, *Highland and Island Woodland Handbook*, SCF, 2019 available from : <https://www.crofting.org/enterprise/books/highlands-islands-woodlands-handbook/>

initial survey suggests that the common grazings would not be suitable for wind turbines, although it may be possible to explore some solar generation.

Woodlands and trees

Many crofters are interested in growing trees on croft land - either on individual crofts or looking at the opportunities for tree planting on the common grazings.

'Agroforestry is a new term to some people, but it is a very old practice. People have of course been using trees in agriculture for thousands of years and the history of the UK is full of agroforestry....But it is also 'new' because recent years have seen an upsurge in people looking for ways to create more sustainable and nature-friendly farming systems by integrating trees into field crops or pasture systems...interest in agroforestry in the last two years has soared.....This resurgence has been coupled with the ability to learn from examples and farms across Europe and the world, vastly increasing the pool of evidence we can draw on.'

Yields from trees

Growing trees for timber is a possibility. The Trust already manages commercial woodland on Eigg, however it is not clear if growing trees for timber could be viable on the crofting land available.

Fruit and nut trees could contribute to increased food production. Eigg already has a communal orchard that produces apples, and within the group, there is valuable knowledge about what grows well on the island. Similar community or small-scale orchards are now established in other parts of Scotland's west coast

Willows or other short-rotation coppices could provide material for biomass or wood fuel. Given Eigg's limited electricity supply, wood burning is likely to remain a key part of the island's energy mix. Short-rotation coppicing offers a sustainable, low-impact way to produce wood fuel. Willow is also grown on Eigg for basket weaving, and there is potential to expand its cultivation on croft land.

Some crofters have expressed interest in learning how to propagate fruit trees, which could become an additional income stream. The Trust's tree business, which successfully sells native trees grown from local seeds, could offer opportunities for crofters to supply trees.

Growing trees is also seen as a way to manage land. Trees can provide essential hedging and shelter belts³⁶ and can be grown on land that would not otherwise be productive, for example wet or boggy areas³⁷. Most of the croft land is exposed, which means some small trees may struggle to establish, especially on parts of the common grazings. This could be mitigated by careful planning, or planting 'nursery' species to protect trees such as shrubs like broom and gorse or fast-growing trees like alder to protect more slow growing species.

Tree planting can increase bio-diversity. One croft has shown that closely grown copses of native trees can eradicate bracken as well as increased bio-diversity – the increase in birds is particularly striking. A survey could be undertaken to see if the rare, protected hazel

³⁶ See, for example, West Coast Organics case study.

³⁷ Tree planting on peat bogs is not encouraged, but there is very little, if any, deep peat on the croft land on Eigg.

woodland at the foot of the cliffs, an area unsuitable for grazing, can be managed, or the area increased³⁸.

Trees are large plants which carry out photosynthesis - the carbon dioxide extracted from the air can be stored as carbon in the soil and the wood. Planting trees can play a key role in reducing the amount of carbon in the atmosphere – which is vital if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Advice and support

The Woodland Trust's Woodland Croft Project³⁹ offers a free advisory service for crofters interested in planting native trees and managing woodlands. They can provide guidance to individual crofters as well as to grazing committees, helping plan planting schemes on common grazings.

Their advice includes identifying suitable planting areas and tree species, understanding constraints, balancing different land uses (including grazing), and navigating grant applications and other funding opportunities. They also help with understanding relevant regulations. An initial discussion with the Woodland Officer for Eigg was productive, and a visit to the island could be arranged to explore potential schemes. Individual crofters can contact the project for advice at any stage.

The Scottish Crofting Federation have published two books on small scale woodlands⁴⁰. The Landworkers' Alliance also offers resources on small-scale forestry projects⁴¹. Their report, *The Promise of Agroforestry*⁴², includes case studies that demonstrate how trees can be integrated with farming and food production systems.

³⁸ This area is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and would require consultation with Nature.Scot, see Appendix 7 for more information.

³⁹ For more information, see :

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/scotland/croft-woodlands/>

⁴⁰ Bernard Planterose, *Highland and Island Woodland Handbook*, SCF, 2019 and Roland Stiven, *Managing Small Woodlands in the Highlands and Islands*, SCF, both available from :

<https://www.crofting.org/product-category/books/>

⁴¹ For more information see : <https://staging.landworkersalliance.org.uk/woodland-and-forestry/>

⁴² Available from :

https://staging.landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Promise_of_agroforestry_web_pageview.pdf



Fairer Funding

All of the crofters indicated the need for investment in order to develop their croft, whether to produce more food, develop their business or ensure they had adequate housing. Due to the very low profit margins crofters often are not able to accrue sufficient capital to invest. There is also a lack of available investment. Crofting needs support – many plans cannot happen without investment – but it is not always clear where that investment can come from.

There needs to be an awareness amongst funders that financial support for crofting is not solely about creating new businesses or growing and expanding existing businesses. Crofting needs to be seen through a different lens from the model of continual growth.

For example, if we look at the economy of Eigg, and the crofters in particular, through the lens of Community Wealth Building, we can see why some additional types of support may be needed for small rural businesses. As Scottish Rural Action notes:

“Community wealth building activity serves two functions:

Strengthening community resilience – *providing essential services and addressing market failure in areas such as food supply, energy production, transport, care, housing etc.*

Market and product innovation - *reaching out to new markets and testing new products for local, national and international application.*

Enterprises in rural and island areas, including community enterprises and the self-employed, have, through necessity, developed agility to balance both functions. Social enterprises, which draw on diverse investment sources and involve volunteers, are particularly agile. Maintaining this balance is more likely to be a business focus than major profit or workforce expansion. Through this lens, a definition of ‘wealth’ is required which puts emphasis on longer term social and environmental outcomes including sustainability, resilience and wellbeing, rather than on economic growth.⁴³”

Crofting plays a key role in the sustaining rural communities, growing low impact, sustainable food production and sensitive land management.

Agricultural funding

There are a wide range of agricultural grants potentially available from the Scottish Government. These are administered by the Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID).

Some crofters are able to successfully navigate the complex agricultural funding that is available, however many projects fall through the gaps in funding, or people are put off from applying by the complexity of the system, the lack of clarity around the application process, the need to fund work in advance, or having been previously refused support. There is a perception that the system is so complex that it can only be navigated using the paid services of an advisor, this can be an additional cost, which again puts people off from applying.

⁴³ Taken from *Community Wealth Building In Rural & Island Scotland* a report from Scottish Rural Action available from : <https://www.sra.scot/sites/default/files/document-library/2022-03/2022-01-18-Community-Wealth-Building-Rural-and-Island-Insights.pdf>

It is vital for the economic sustainability of crofting that crofters remain eligible for these grants, and they reflect the real costs crofters face, and recognise the wide-ranging benefits crofting provides. Large scale producers are eligible for ongoing agricultural support – recognising the key role agriculture plays - but small-scale producers face the same administrative bureaucracy for far smaller payments. The administrative burden, both for the crofter and for RPID, often seems disproportionate to the level of support that is provided. In order for crofters to be able to compete with large producers, that often do not provide the same social and environmental benefits as crofters, it is important that, as these schemes are reviewed, the voices of crofters and small producers are heard, and the challenges they face are addressed.

Funding for capital expenditure on, for example, fencing or other improvements is available, but cost have to be paid in advance, and the grants are only paid when work is completed. This can create huge cash flow problems for crofters. In the past grants could be paid up front, or directly to suppliers. The Scottish Government should look at changing the rules, so crofters do not need to pay the costs upfront.

See the Appendix 3 for details of some of the agricultural funding schemes that are available. The Farm Advisor service can provide advice on what funding may be available for any particular crofter via their advice line⁴⁴

Business funding

As well as agricultural payments, croft based businesses may be entitled to business funding. See Appendix 4 for details of some of the grants crofting businesses, either individually or collectively, may be able to access.

The way funding is currently structured, means that in some cases crofting businesses may not be able to access the support they need. Business funding is often limited to either setting up new businesses, or helping businesses grow. As noted above some croft businesses may need different types of support, including ongoing support, to remain viable and deliver their wider social benefits.

Another potential barrier is a requirement that business funding does not overlap with other funding, such as agricultural funding. Of course, it is important to ensure that business are not funded twice for the same thing, however, for example, a crofter wishing to expand into horticulture may fall through the gaps, unable to receive agricultural grants that are aimed at livestock production and unable to get start up grants because the business is already established, and also unable to get other business grants because of a potential overlap with agricultural funding. Whilst this is a hypothetical example, it remains a real risk that crofters will fall through these gaps.

More detailed research should be done to identify gaps in funding, and to understand how the current rules impact crofters. Highlands and Islands Enterprise, The Scottish Government and other funders should look at how they can better support the crofting businesses that play such a key role in both food production and supporting local communities.

⁴⁴ For more information, contact the FAS advice line on 0300 323 0161 or email advice@fas.scot.

Charities

Charitable funding is unlikely to be available to individual crofters, but could potentially provide funding for some projects, that are either done via IEHT or another charitable, or social enterprise.

Funding.Scot⁴⁵ is an online database, hosted by SCVO, that provides info on over 1500 grant giving bodies. National Lottery Awards for All Scotland⁴⁶ or Community Action Fund⁴⁷ could potentially fund projects related to training, knowledge sharing, volunteering or community food growing. Paths For All⁴⁸ offer funding for the creating, or development of paths, including the design phase of a project.

Woodland Funding

It is possible to do small scale tree planting for very little cost. Costs can be kept to a minimum by, for example, growing trees from seed. Aside from trees, one of the main costs is protecting the young tree, and in some cases undertaking groundworks such as drainage and mounding. There are no deer on Eigg – protection from which can be costly – but trees may still need protection from other animals such as rabbits and voles. The preparatory work for tree planting, tree planting itself and ongoing maintenance could all be tasks that are suitable for volunteers.

Many of the yields from tree planting take time to accrue, and whilst there may be relatively quick benefits for bio-diversity even willow and short rotation coppice take several years to establish, as do fruit tree, and productive timber can take many decades. This means crofters are unlikely to be able to invest significant amounts in tree planting.

There are a number of funding streams available for the creation and management of woodlands. There are a large number Scottish Forestry funding schemes⁴⁹, applications are made via RPID. Most woodland creation schemes include a basic payment, and an ongoing maintenance payment plus potential additional payments for things like protecting trees and fencing. Except for some specific exemptions, grants are paid at a set rate rather than actual costs – which means the grant may not cover the full cost of, for example, woodland creation. Woodland creation schemes may be compatible with other agricultural schemes which could attract agricultural grants, such as Agri-Environment Climate Scheme⁵⁰, or hedging for stock control.

Carbon capture and environmental funding

There are now a number of 'offsetting' schemes that can provide additional funding for tree planting – and these can potentially cover the gap between grant funding and the

⁴⁵ <https://funding.scot/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-scotland>

⁴⁷ <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/community-action>

⁴⁸ <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/community-paths/ian-findlay-path-fund>

⁴⁹ This leaflet provides an overview of woodland creation scheme grants :

<https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/108-the-forestry-grant-scheme-a-guide-to-grant-options-for-woodland-creation/viewdocument/108>

⁵⁰ For more information see :

<https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/all-schemes/agri-environment-climate-scheme/>

actual costs and make financially unviable schemes viable. These schemes are usually paid in addition to any grants that are available for tree planting.

However, these schemes often create ongoing obligations that can run for decades, and schemes require ongoing maintenance and auditing. In the case of crofts these obligations will pass on to future tenants, although it is not yet entirely clear how this will work in practice, and schemes that are planted on common grazings will require co-ordination between the crofters and the owner. At present there is no independent advice available to crofters and farmers to allow informed decisions to be made about which, if any, schemes are most suitable.

Carbon capture schemes are where a landowner, or crofter, is paid to plant trees in the expectation that they will absorb a certain amount of carbon over a given period, often decades, this allows companies that produce carbon to *offset* the carbon they release. (See Appendix 5 for discussion on the carbon capture schemes and details of some organisations that can fund ‘carbon capture’ projects.)

Grants and charities

There are also a number of charities and grant-giving bodies that can help with the cost of tree planting. Funding.Scot⁵¹ is an online database, hosted by SCVO, that provides information on over 1500 grant giving bodies – some of whom may be able to support tree planting. There are also many schemes that are not included in the database that could be particularly suited to supporting tree planting including:

Future Woodlands Scotland⁵² which is a charity that supports action to protect and restore Scotland’s forest. They were initially funded by BP and are currently looking for additional funding. They have a *ghost woodland* programme⁵³, which funds work to restore ancient woodlands. Primarily this looks at excluding deer – not an issue on Eigg – but they could potentially look at support to protect or increase the area of native hazel that currently forms the Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The Highlands & Islands Environment Foundation⁵⁴ provide grants for a wide range of environmental projects across the Highlands and Islands. They have specific schemes looking at forests and woodlands as well as marine and coastal projects. Their website notes that “projects with opportunities for replicability, to amplify their impact, will be prioritised.” A township-wide woodland creation project could fit these criteria.

Crofters income

During the research phase crofters and residents were not asked about details of their personal finances. However, almost all the crofters have income, beyond the income from their crofts.

Work

Many crofters are employed in one, or more, part-time jobs, and many are also self-employed. Employment on Eigg is outwith the scope of this report, but, like many

⁵¹ <https://funding.scot/>

⁵² <https://futurewoodlands.org.uk/>

⁵³ For more information, see: <https://futurewoodlands.org.uk/ghost-woodlands/>

⁵⁴ <https://hie.scot/>

island communities, there is limited paid employment, and developing crofting businesses can be beneficial for the island as a whole. The opportunities now available for people to work from home has increased the employment opportunities on Eigg.

Social Security

We know that many social security payments are under claimed, such as pension credits and universal credit. In 2017 IEHT undertook a survey of residents. This found that only 2% of residents received any kind of disability or carers benefits, this is considerably lower than rates of claiming across Scotland, and suggests that there may be many people on Eigg, including some crofters, who may be entitled to some additional support.

Changes to the benefits' system have also made it less supportive of people who are self-employed, or have several part-time jobs or who have fluctuating wages⁵⁵. Universal Credit is much less supportive to self-employed or seasonal workers than the Tax Credits that were in place prior to introduction of Universal Credit. This may mean people are less likely to claim Universal Credit, or if they do not make a claim, they receive less support than they would have done under tax credits.

Even if claims are made, benefit levels are often paid far below the levels people need. This can be exacerbated in places like Eigg where costs may be higher. Many organisations are campaigning for an increase in benefit levels⁵⁶, so they better reflect the costs people face, and some are specifically looking at what can be done to address rural poverty⁵⁷.

Whilst these issues are not directly related to crofting, some crofters may be entitled to some additional social security payments. The 2017 survey suggested that most residents would not want to have a 'benefits check' with a welfare rights adviser. This could have been because at the time these would have usually been face-to-face. With telephone, or virtual meetings now available more residents may be interested in a benefits check to see what they are entitled to. A benefits check may be available from the Citizen Advice Bureau based in Fort William. More information is available at lochabercab.org.uk/get-advice or 0800 028 1456.

⁵⁵ See for example Citizens' Advice, *Universal Credit and Modern Employment: Non-traditional work available from* <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/welfare%20publications/Universal%20Credit%20and%20non-traditional%20employment.pdf>

⁵⁶ For example, the Trussel Trust's *Guarantee our Essentials* campaign <https://www.trussell.org.uk/support-us/guarantee-our-essentials>

⁵⁷ See, for example, <https://www.povertyalliance.org/taking-action-on-rural-poverty/>



Better Infrastructure

Transport and access

Transport remains a significant challenge, both on the island, to the mainland, and beyond. The transport issues facing island communities are well-documented, with concerns about reliability, affordability, and access to integrated public transport systems requiring attention. While specific recommendations for transport improvements fall outside the scope of this report, it is important to note that transport policies often prioritise links to urban hubs. These connections are vital, but so are links between rural and island communities. For example, reinstating direct ferry services between Eigg, Skye, and other islands like Mull would strengthen connections between these communities and provide opportunities for collaboration and development⁵⁸.

The transport challenges on Eigg pose specific issues for crofting businesses:

Ferry delays and cancellations add significant costs and uncertainties to moving produce and livestock on and off the island, often threatening the viability of small businesses.

The limited passenger service means that even a brief meeting or job on Eigg, or on the mainland, can take up to three days. A regular passenger service enabling day trips to Eigg would make it easier for tradespeople to take on jobs on the island and allow residents to access mainland services without requiring overnight stays.

IEHT continues to engage with transport providers and Transport Scotland. It may be useful for IEHT to use some specific examples of the difficulties transport can create for crofters.

Path network

There may be opportunities to improve the path networks on the croft land to ensure both better access for visitors and residents, and to ensure that livestock and crops are not disturbed. The Isle of Gigha have successfully created a path network. Funding came from a variety of sources, and the aim was to reduce carbon, through the creating of pathways, but was closely tied into the islands' heritage. £1m was spent on creating 22km of path networks, including cycle paths and drainage, and signage. It has been very successful for residents and visitors, increasing access and reducing roads use. Clear signage ensures that visitors stick to the paths, and do not adversely impact farmers and other land-based businesses. A similar project could be considered, either Eigg-wide or focused on the crofting areas. Such project do not generate income, although funding could provide employment both for putting in and maintaining paths, but they do improve the infrastructure and access.

⁵⁸ For example crofters on Eigg have been invited to visit growing projects on Skye. A visit would take at least 3 days, with the additional costs this would entail. A regular service between Skye and Eigg would allow the strengthening of these link and allow these communities to work together.

Abattoirs

Access to abattoir facilities is a significant barrier to increasing livestock production on the crofts. The number of abattoirs in Scotland has declined sharply, from 90 in the 1970s⁵⁹ to just 24 registered abattoirs in 2020. Of these, only 20 process cattle, 18 process sheep, and 16 process pigs. A SOAS report⁶⁰ suggests that only ten of these facilities offer "private kill"⁶¹ services—the option most small producers need to sell their meat directly.

Case studies in this report reveal that small-scale livestock producers with profitable businesses typically have relatively easy access to private kill slaughter services. Unfortunately, this is not the case for Eigg, where logistical, financial, and animal welfare challenges make accessing existing services difficult. Without significant changes, the long-term viability of small-scale croft meat production on Eigg remains uncertain.

Over the past decade, there has been significant discussion around small-scale slaughter facilities, with multiple studies conducted at both Scottish and UK levels. These studies often conclude that micro-abattoirs face challenges in achieving profitability due to high costs and logistical issues, such as staffing, waste disposal, and regulatory compliance.

However, these studies are typically broad in scope, and some of their conclusions can be questioned by anecdotal evidence. For instance, a Newcastle University report on the consolidation of abattoirs suggested that larger facilities benefit from economies of scale, reducing slaughter fees. Yet, several small producers in Scotland report that abattoir costs in Scotland are higher than comparable services in England. Without comparative analysis, it remains unclear whether this reflects limited competition allowing higher charges, or genuinely higher operational costs in Scotland. These factors require deeper investigation when evaluating the feasibility of small abattoirs in Scotland.

Existing reports present potentially contradictory evidence. For example, a report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare noted that the Mull abattoir, which offers private kill services, operates at full capacity with a waiting list. In contrast, the SOAS report found that only half of the ten Scottish abattoirs surveyed were operating near capacity. This raises questions: Does this indicate overcapacity? Is there adequate capacity, but it is poorly aligned with demand? Or are other factors preventing abattoirs from reaching capacity? To assess the viability of small-scale livestock production on Eigg, it is crucial to draw out these nuances and better understand the implications for small-scale producers.

The most important starting point is to approach the issue from the perspective of crofters and small producers. Doing so could lead to very different conclusions. While the recent SOAS report rightly focuses on supporting existing abattoirs, it is unlikely that

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ed35f40f0b62305b836b2/FAWC_report_on_the_welfare_of_farmed_animals_at_slaughter_or_killing_part_one_red_meat_animals.pdf

⁶⁰

<https://saos.coop/assets/media/files/Scottish%20Producer%20Access%20to%20Abattoirs%20Final%20Report%20April%202024.pdf>

⁶¹

Private kill is the term given to the provision of slaughtering and butchering services to the farmers who supply the abattoir with its raw material, livestock, but who retain ownership of the carcase, meat and offals (but not the hide) which they retrieve from the abattoir and sell through their own and other, overwhelmingly local, retail outlets.

crofters on Eigg could sustainably use spare capacity elsewhere in Scotland. Nor does it address the logistical, financial, and animal welfare challenges crofters on Eigg currently face.

Instead of asking, "Is a micro-abattoir on Eigg financially feasible?" we should ask, "What changes are needed to make small-scale livestock slaughter for Eigg viable?" This broader question allows for exploring various options, including regulatory changes, funding support, alternative business models, and other opportunities. Slaughter facilities on Eigg should be seen as a potential anchor institution—providing employment, training, and support for other businesses—rather than operating in isolation. Other options, such as the 'pack and send' scheme outlined above, should also be explored to understand the barriers that currently exist. The first step is to conduct a detailed study into the options and opportunities for livestock slaughter on Eigg. The challenges Eigg faces are not unique, and while every community in Scotland will require tailored solutions, a study for Eigg could uncover approaches that benefit other crofting communities as well.

Access to market

For crofts to generate income, there must be opportunities to sell fresh produce, meat, and other products. However, getting produce to market can be a challenging step. It can be hard to visualise how a successful small-scale business could operate in practice. The case studies offer some ideas, and a site visit to other successful projects could help. Eigg's brand could be beneficial using it as a mark of quality, as could the Scottish Crofting Federation's 'Scottish Crofting Produce Mark'. Several options exist for selling produce:

Certain crops may suit pick-your-own businesses for residents and visitors, and there is potential for 'croft gate' sales. However, passing trade is limited— whilst most residents live in Cleadale, visitors arrive in Galmisdale, where most island infrastructure is located. Croft gate sales could generate some income, though fewer people are carrying cash these days creating another barrier. Crofters could explore contactless "honesty" payment systems, which are not commonly used for farm gate sales.

Direct sales could also be made online. One croft successfully sells bluebell seeds⁶², which are lightweight and have a long shelf life, making shipping easy. Another croft runs a successful willow business, selling products online through commissions.⁶³ Several online platforms support sales, such as eBay, Etsy, and more specialised sites like Scottish Island Gifts⁶⁴. These platforms suit products that are easy to store and transport.

Local produce is available through Eigg's shops, and growers could sell surplus produce via the Eigg shop. Demand for fresh produce varies: Eigg has 155 permanent residents, but over 10,000 visitors, mostly during the summer. Day-to-day demand can also fluctuate, influenced by ferry schedules and weather. Using the shop's sales records, crofters may be able to better understand demand patterns, helping them plan what and when to grow. The shop could also serve as a hub for a box scheme.

There are several box schemes suited to fresh produce. One option is a subscription-based 'box scheme,' where customers pay a set fee for regular deliveries of

⁶² See <https://www.eddieseiggcroft.com/index.asp?pageid=228322>

⁶³ See <https://all-about-willow.co.uk/>

⁶⁴ <https://www.scottishislandgifts.com/>

produce, typically running for the growing season (see West Coast Organics case study). A subscription offers crofters guaranteed income, but they must be able to ensure reliable supply. Many box schemes buy in additional produce to cover gaps, but this may not be feasible on Eigg. A small-scale box scheme offering a limited range of produce from a group of crofts could be a viable way to generate income for a few months of the year.

Case Study – Collective selling with The Green Bowl

The Green Bowl is a local food hub based in Elphin, Assynt, in the North West Highlands of Scotland. They sell a range of fresh fruit and vegetables, locally produced meat, honey, eggs and bread. The project is a collaboration between crofters and other residents - they sell food produced on the crofts and common grazings of the Elphin township as well as food grown by other, non-crofting, residents. The township has 19 crofts and it is a fairly active with 6 active crofters, mostly producing sheep for market plus some pigs and cows. Munro's Abattoir, in Dingwall, is a 1.5hr drive away. One of the crofters has also invested in butchery facilities which other crofters can use.

It was set up because a lot of people in the area, some crofters and some residents, were producing a wide range of food on small scale. The Green Bowl provides a way to sell produce, and is also a chance to tell the township's story and highlight what a township can produce.

Each producer makes their own decision about what to sell. The producer uploads a list of the products they have available that week. Buyers then order what they want during a set time period, and orders are either collected from the local Tearooms on a set day, or delivered to the buyer's home in Ullapool, once a week. Unlike some schemes – see, for example, West Coast Organics case study – there is no obligation on either producers or buyers. This allows for flexibility – but also less certainty. Producers are also free to sell produce in other ways, for example one crofter has a separate meat box scheme and others sell independently at the local craft market.

The Green Bowl uses online software provided by Open Food Network. The Green Bowl is a marketing and distribution system for the producers. It charges 10% on top the prices producers sell for – this covers delivery and website costs. In practice, the administration is done by volunteers. Growing isn't centrally organised, but producers do have an awareness of what each other are growing and there could be more co-ordination to grow a wider range of food. There is strong local demand for fresh vegetables, so even though they make little profit on vegetables, customers also buy higher value produce like meat, eggs and honey. The project has encouraged people to grow more, because they know they can sell it. It also brings people to the local Tearooms and shop when they pick up their orders.

Alternatively, customers could order from a range of products, which are then assembled into a box for delivery or pick-up (see the Green Bowl case study). An online portal could allow customers to choose from a variety of goods from different producers, which would then be delivered or collected. This model offers flexibility for both customers and crofters, allowing crofters to sell only what they have and customers to order only what they need. However, it also carries some risk: crofters may have excess stock, and customers may

not get everything they want. This model could suit Eigg well, supplying residents, short-term visitors, and even mainland customers through collection points, such as Mallaig. The scheme could also include other island producers, such as the Eigg Brewery.

As noted above, some abattoirs used to offer a 'pack and send' meat box scheme, where they slaughter, butcher, package, and send out meat from the abattoir directly to a crofters customers. This was a very attractive option for crofters on Eigg, as it allowed them to get a higher price for their meat, and generate sufficient income to make keeping livestock viable.

There is also potential to sell produce directly to other businesses. Some crofters already supply fresh produce to the Eigg Café, and there is scope to expand this collaboration. Crofters could work with the Café to better understand its demand for fresh produce and plan accordingly. Businesses in Mallaig or on the mainland might be interested in purchasing specific products from Eigg. However, limited transport links make supplying other nearby areas, such as southern Skye, less viable. That said, if a market for high-value products exists, arranging transport could become a feasible option.

Any of these options may suit different crofters. Whilst the first step is to increase production so there is a surplus to sell, it would be good to start evaluating different options to help identify the best fit for Eigg's needs. For example, there are many different online platforms available for selling produce, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Since these systems require some administration, it is important to consider who would handle this task and how it would be funded.

Housing

Investment in housing infrastructure on Eigg is needed, and IEHT is actively working to address housing needs across the island. Some crofters currently live in unsuitable accommodation, and as new tenants take on crofts, the demand for housing will likely increase. There are innovative projects elsewhere that could serve as inspiration for Eigg.

For example, in Argyll, David Blair has developed sustainable, low-cost housing using low-quality timber from his woodland at Dunbeag. These high-quality houses are built from timber milled on-site with a portable sawmill. The simple construction process allows much of the work to be carried out by non-specialists, using ungraded Sitka timber. Eigg has an abundance of ungraded timber that could be used for construction, giving it higher value while reducing reliance on expensive imported materials. Investing in a portable sawmill could quickly pay off by significantly lowering building costs.

Several "tiny housing" projects in Scotland have explored the feasibility of smaller-than-standard dwellings. While not suitable for everyone or for rental accommodation, such options could be practical for some crofters, offering cost-effective and efficient housing solutions. Crofters may qualify for grants to improve or build housing, but these grants come with challenges. The application process is often complex, success is not guaranteed, and recipients must provide upfront funding. Alternative approaches could address these issues. For instance, the Scottish Land Commission

recently published a report on the benefits and barriers to affordable tenanted croft housing⁶⁵. The report proposes an innovative model for croft housing.

⁶⁵ Available from :
https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/66a37bbe4edcd_Benefits%20of%20and%20barriers%20to%20affordable%20tenanted%20croft%20housing.pdf



Working together

Earlier in this report, I discussed ways for crofters to collaborate on livestock management and managing the common grazings. The first step is to establish a new grazings committee. There is also potential for those interested in horticulture to work together, including working with other island residents.

The grazings committee, as part of the formal system for managing common grazings, could also serve as a way for other collaborations, and have the advantage that they already have a formal structure.

The structures that are available to stock clubs could be adapted for other groups, such as horticultural grower collectives⁶⁶.

There are other opportunities to work together. Crofters already producing willow, dried herbs, and bluebell seeds could expand these businesses by working with other crofters. For crofters interested in joint ventures, whether building on existing businesses or launching new ones, it is essential to establish appropriate structures. Informal arrangements can work initially, but without a formal framework, addressing challenges can become difficult.

Crofters could consider forming a formal co-operative, with guidance available from the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society⁶⁷. Creating a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation⁶⁸ (SCIO) or another type of social enterprise⁶⁹ might be appropriate for a business that focuses on delivering social or environmental benefits.

We have also noted in the report that there are opportunities for crofters to work with other businesses on Eigg.

Working with the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust

The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (IEHT) has maintained a largely “hands-off” approach to croft management, which has worked well for both the trust and the crofters. This project marks the first step in exploring how IEHT can better support the crofters.

Some joint initiatives are already in place, such as the communication mast on the Cuagach Common Grazings, with income shared between the trust and crofters holding shares in the grazings. Future projects, such as improving access or developing other aspects of the common grazings, could provide further opportunities for collaboration.

Currently, knowledge of crofting within the IEHT is limited, with a few staff members and directors holding most of the institutional knowledge. This project is part of the process to ensure that knowledge of crofting is widely shared. IEHT should ensure this continues. Given crofting's significant role on Eigg, appointing a specific crofting representative to the IEHT board could be beneficial. This would improve communication between crofters and the board and ensure the board remains aware of issues affecting crofters. Appointing a crofter as a formal board member may require changes to the IEHT constitution.

⁶⁶ For more information see Campbell Stewart MacLennan & Co, *Sheep Stock Clubs Possible Business Structures* available from

<https://www.fas.scot/downloads/possible-business-structures-for-sheep-stock-clubs/>

⁶⁷ See <https://saos.coop/> for more information.

⁶⁸ For more information see: <https://www.oscr.org.uk/becoming-a-charity/becoming-a-scio/>

⁶⁹ For more information see: <https://socialenterprise.scot/>

Alternatively, a crofting representative could attend board meetings without being a formal board member.

As noted earlier, the Isle of Eigg Residents Association (**IERA**) plays a central role in decision-making on Eigg, and all crofters are members of IERA. In any joint ventures, it is important to acknowledge and address potential tensions arising from this to ensure any conflicts of interest are addressed.

Creation of crofts

There is significant demand for access to crofts. Informal conversations during this project and the Eigg 27 survey conducted by UHI for IEHT revealed interest in crofting on Eigg. Beyond the island, demand for crofts is even greater. Creating new crofts would increase access, support local demand, and attract new residents to Eigg. Since there is no appetite to create crofts within the current townships, IEHT should explore other locations.

One possibility is developing woodland crofts on IEHT-owned woodland. Woodland crofts are increasingly popular and can generate similar income for landowners as managing the woodland directly. The Woodland Croft Partnership offers guidance on establishing woodland crofts, and IEHT could also investigate other options for croft creation on the island.

The IEHT has the option to create new crofts, a proposal that current crofters broadly support, provided it does not negatively impact existing crofts. There is no interest in establishing new crofts on the current common grazings. Some crofters suggested splitting existing crofts to increase access, while others felt their crofts were already too small to be viable.

New crofts and common grazings established in 2004 allowed new entrants to begin crofting, and these crofts are now among the most active. It was intended that tenants would be unable to reassign their crofts, this was outlined in a memorandum of understanding rather than the formal leases. However, this condition has not been enforced, and it is unclear whether IEHT, as landlord, has the power to do so under the current arrangements. Crofters may de-croft land for housing, which can separate the croft from its associated house, as financial institutions often require this for mortgage purposes.

Other community landowners have created crofts using leases with restrictions on assignation or sale, which are easier to enforce (See case study - Croft creation at Kilfinan Community Forest Company). One community is developing a crofting lease template for use by other landlords⁷⁰, and some community landowners are exploring rural housing burdens to keep croft houses attached to croft land.⁷¹ These measures could mitigate the risks IEHT might face when creating new crofts.

IEHT could consider options for tenants who wish to end their leases, ensuring the leases revert to IEHT as the landlord rather than being reassigned. This approach would allow

⁷⁰ For more information, contact the Woodland Croft Partnership <https://woodlandcrofts.org/>

⁷¹ See for example Community Land Scotland, *Benefits of and barriers to affordable tenanted croft housing* available from:

https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/66a37bbe4edcd_Benefits%20of%20and%20barriers%20to%20affordable%20tenanted%20croft%20housing.pdf

IEHT to issue new leases with updated terms, including the more restrictive conditions originally intended for the new crofts created in 2004.

If crofts revert to the landlord when a tenant leaves, the landlord may need to reimburse outgoing tenants for improvements and recover those costs from incoming tenants. This process would require careful planning to ensure fairness for all parties.

For allocating new or vacant crofts, IEHT should establish a clear and transparent process. Some community landlords are considering using random ballots to allocate crofts, ensuring fairness while avoiding complex scoring systems. Applicants must meet basic criteria, such as having a viable business plan or ties to the area, and eligible candidates are then selected randomly.

Case Study - Croft creation at Kilfinan Community Forest Company

The Kilfinan Community Forest Company (KCFC) was established in 2010 to buy woodland and create woodland crofts, affordable housing plots, and small business opportunities in Tighnabruich, Argyll. To prevent land from being removed from community ownership, KCFC worked with the Crofting Commission and the Isle of Mull Trust to develop crofting leases that ensure crofters cannot de-croft land, remove the right to buy the croft, and limit reassignment of the croft to close family members.

In 2016, KCFC created three crofts, and due to high demand, seven more were added in 2023. These new crofts are now in the process of being let. There have been some concerns raised about the transparency of the allocation processes.

The croft land was previously a commercial plantation, harvested before the leases were signed. Crofters are required to replant their crofts to meet the Long Term Forestry Plan. KCFC, as the landlord, have noted that incoming crofters need to be realistic about the replanting commitment they are taking on.

Crofters have plans for productive forestry as well as horticulture, small-scale livestock farming, orchards, medicinal herbs, mushrooms, and flower growing. The forest is home to several businesses, many run by crofters. These include a herbal business, bike hire, a florist, a tree nursery, and outdoor education services.

Alongside the crofts, the forest has also created self-build housing plots, workshops, business units, allotments, forest school sites, and recreational opportunities. Despite some challenges around governance and funding, KCFC has played a key role in revitalising the community. The creation of crofts has helped people stay in the area as well as attracting new families, strengthening the local community.



Kilfinan Community Forest, Tighnabruaich, Argyll

Planning for the Future

This whole report is part of the process of planning for the future of crofting on Eigg, and helping create that vision. The process of doing this report has created space for crofters to think about the future of their crofts, and collectively plan for the future. There are some specific areas where more detailed planning would be beneficial, to help create a positive vision for the future of crofting on Eigg.

Succession planning

No demographic data was collected during this project, but crofters on Eigg are generally older. Only one tenant currently has school-age children, and several crofters are retired or nearing retirement. Some expressed concerns that an accident or illness could make it impossible for them to manage their croft. At the same time, younger people—both on Eigg and elsewhere—have shown interest in becoming crofters. Crofters who participated in this project recognised the importance of involving more young people to ensure the future of crofting on Eigg.

These issues are not unique to Eigg, and there is support available for succession planning. Crofting succession can be complex, especially because in some cases housing is on croft land, so it needs some careful consideration. The Farm Advisory Service specialist advice grant can cover succession planning,⁷² and the Crofting Commission have produced a Succession Information Pack⁷³.

However, some crofters feel that there is now⁷⁴ a gap in the provision of detailed advice on areas such as sub-letting, assignments and de-crofting. This leaves crofters having to try and navigate a complex system either without support, or facing legal costs. This can lead to a degree of paralysis, as crofters are, understandably, unwilling to take decisions that could have long-term consequences, without having independent advice. The Crofting Commission, along with the Scottish Government, and advice services, need to ensure that detailed, independent, accurate advice is available to allow crofters to make decisions about their future.

The IEHT can play a role in supporting tenants to plan for succession. Whilst some crofters may have potential tenants interested in taking over their tenancy, others may not. IEHT could look at ways they can match those interested in crofting on Eigg with tenants looking at succession, and could consider maintaining a list of people interested in taking on a crofting tenancy on Eigg. Volunteering could also play a role in giving potential crofters some experience, and understanding, of what taking on a tenancy entails.

Business planning

Many crofters highlighted the need for support with business planning. This includes developing a business plan, creating a land management plan, or integrating different aspects of their business. The Farm Advisory Service offers grants for specialist advice, including farm planning, and Business Gateway provides support for business plan

⁷² For more info see: <https://www.fas.scot/specialist-advice/>

⁷³ The Succession Information Pack is available from <https://crofting.scotland.gov.uk/userfiles/file/development/Crofting-Commission-Succession-Pack.pdf>

⁷⁴ Some advice was, prior to Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, provided by The Crofters Commission—see <https://www.crofterscommission.org.uk/>

development. However, creating a holistic croft plan may fall between different funding support – although the Farm Advisory specialist advice service may be able to fund this. The case studies and ideas in this report can help crofters in developing their plans. The Permaculture design tools used in this project could serve as a framework for crafting a croft-wide plan⁷⁵. For more information on Permaculture Design courses available in Scotland, contact the Permaculture Association Scotland⁷⁶

Skills and training

The crofting community on Eigg holds a wealth of knowledge, particularly in areas such as cattle and sheep rearing, food production, and land management. However, there is a risk that this knowledge could be lost over time. At the same time, many crofters are eager to learn new skills.

An informal network of skill sharing already exists, with crofters supporting one another and sharing knowledge. This could be further developed into more formal skill-sharing sessions focused on specific topics. These sessions could also involve volunteers or visitors who are interested in learning crofting skills.

The Farm Advisory Service runs a mentoring scheme⁷⁷ that provides funding up to £1,200 to an established crofter to provide up to four mentoring sessions with a new entrant. Mentoring support is available to those who have set up or become head of a farming business within the last five years.

This scheme offers new crofters the chance to learn valuable skills while allowing experienced crofters to earn money by sharing their knowledge. For more information, contact the FAS advice line at 0300 323 0161 or email advice@fas.scot.

Crofters also identified specific skill gaps in livestock management, horticulture, and produce processing. There is not currently a fully accredited, funded, training course for people wishing to do small-scale horticulture. This is a gap that needs filling, particularly as small-scale horticulture will have to play a key role in creating a sustainable food system in Scotland.

Organisations such as the Landworkers' Alliance⁷⁸, the Scottish Crofting Federation⁷⁹ and the Farm Advisory Service⁸⁰ offer training and information on various aspects of small-scale food production and land management. The Farm Advisory Service has a dedicated advice line that can provide advice to crofters. They can also provide funding for specialist advice⁸¹.

FAS describe Specialist advice as taking *"a deep dive into a particular topic. It gives businesses the tools to make significant change in their management of certain areas by addressing a weakness or improving profitability, output, or sustainability."*

⁷⁵ See *Design anything with the GOBRADIME permaculture design process* available from <https://www.heatherjoflores.com/gobradime-permaculture-design-process/>

⁷⁶ For more info see: <https://www.permaculture.org.uk/scotland>

⁷⁷ <https://www.fas.scot/mentoring-new-farmers-crofters/>

⁷⁸ For more info see: <https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/education-and-training/>

⁷⁹ For more info see: <https://www.crofting.org/training/>

⁸⁰ For more info see: <https://www.fas.scot/>

⁸¹ For more info see: <https://www.fas.scot/specialist-advice/>

Tourism Planning

Tourism already plays an important role in Cleadale. Several crofts provide tourist accommodation including wild camping facilities, a bothy, a range of self-catering accommodation and a guest house. Chomunn Eachdraidh Eige (Eigg Historical Society) manages a property in Cleadale which houses a crofting life museum, and has erected a number of signs in the township looking at crofting history. There are several Sites of Special Scientific Interest and protected monuments in and around Cleadale. These, along with landscapes, beaches and wildlife, mean that Cleadale in particularity is an attractive place for visitors – both for those staying on the island and people there for the day. Having access to land does allow the crofters opportunities to develop either accommodation or other tourist-focused businesses, and there is potential to further develop tourism in Cleadale. This must be done in an economically, as well as environmentally, sustainable way. Care needs to be taken not to overwhelm the infrastructure, and there is an awareness that too many visitors could significantly alter Cleadale, and Eigg's character. For most crofters tourism is seen as supplementary income for a croft, but not the only, or main, business on the croft.

Tourist Accommodation

There is a need for more short-term accommodation on Eigg, both for tourists and temporary workers or contractors. In recent years, the availability of accommodation has decreased, with specific gaps in the types of accommodation offered. For example, there is anecdotal evidence of limited catered accommodation and options suitable for families. Crofters can play a significant role in addressing this shortfall.

An Eigg-wide study could help identify short-term accommodation needs, forecast future demand, and explore sustainable ways to meet these needs. This study could also provide valuable support for funding applications, if funding was needed to develop additional accommodation.

Funding was identified as a barrier for crofters seeking to create short-term accommodation. Some business funding options could support such developments, but support for a crofter may fall between gaps in current funding. Development of more visitor accommodation is an opportunity to employ local people in building and use local materials to build – in line with Eigg's vision to develop a circular economy.

Crofters have highlighted challenges in getting contractors to complete the work and inspections required for short-term let licenses⁸² from Highland Council. This issue is widespread and is particularly challenging on Eigg due to the additional transport and accommodation costs of bringing tradespeople to the island.

In the longer term, Eigg could explore developing these skills locally, either by offering training or by encouraging skilled workers to relocate to the island. In the shorter-term, a way of coordinating upcoming projects could help tradespeople undertake multiple jobs during a single trip.

⁸² For more information on Short-term Let Licenses see : <https://www.mygov.scot/short-term-let-licences>

Other opportunities

Tourism offers an opportunity to share what Eigg and crofting are all about. Being able to tell this story is viewed as an important benefit of tourism.

Individual crofters could offer courses, training, or "crofting experiences," where visitors participate in crofting activities. These could be combined with volunteer opportunities, or activities such as "pick your own" events. The rise of 'voluntourism' could provide both volunteers and income, but would need to be carefully considered how best that could work. It was emphasised that visitors need to be well cared for and have a positive experience.

Eigg's name and profile are valuable assets for promoting tourism, and crofting can play a key role in this. For example, there could be marketing highlighting the importance of crofting to Eigg's identity and appeal.

Volunteer Planning

Volunteering has played an important role in the past, and can be a part of the future development of crofting on Eigg. Volunteers can not only help with work, they also have the opportunity to experience Eigg, and crofting, in a different way from other visitors.

Several crofters currently host both short-term and longer-term volunteers, and other crofters would be interested in hosting volunteers. The Scottish Wildlife Trust hosts a volunteer programme during the summer. In the past there has been a volunteer scheme administered by the Trust scheme that allowed volunteers to spend one day a week volunteering on the crofts. This required a paid coordinator and is no longer running due to a lack of funding. The Trust could consider exploring ways to revive this program, working with crofters. A key first step could be a feasibility study to identify sustainable funding options for a volunteer coordinator.

Volunteer support

It is important that volunteers are properly supported. For some crofters, the resources required to host and support volunteers can outweigh the benefits. The logistics of providing food, accommodation, and guidance can feel overwhelming, particularly for those new to hosting. Crofters who already host volunteers could offer advice and support to others interested in taking on volunteers.

Crofters could register with online platforms like www.woof.net, helpx.net or www.workaway.info, which connect hosts with volunteers. These sites allow hosts to choose their volunteers and offer some useful resources and information. An Eigg volunteer coordinator could provide support to crofters.

Volunteers need to be provided with both food and accommodation. While most crofters are happy to provide meals, there is a shortage of suitable housing. Currently, volunteers with the Scottish Wildlife Trust stay in a "volunteer house"—a former housing association property in Cleadale. It might be possible to explore the use of this building for crofting volunteers as well.

Learning and skill sharing

Many people volunteer to learn new skills, and during the research for this report I heard that most successful small-scale horticulture businesses in Scotland are run by people who initially volunteered or apprenticed on other horticultural projects. Eigg has the potential to play an important role in sharing traditional crofting skills and providing hands-on experience for those interested in starting a crofting business.

This extends to people already living on Eigg. Volunteering could offer residents a chance to develop skills, gain experience, and explore new opportunities within their community.

Working together

With the establishment of a new grazings committee there may be significant opportunities for volunteers to help with some of the work on the common grazings. This would reduce the burden on any one individual crofter to support the volunteer, but there would need to be adequate support in place if volunteers are working on communal projects. The grazings committee might want to consider how this can best be done.



Next steps

This section contains some suggestions for the next steps that crofters and IEHT can take to help grow and strengthen crofting on Eigg. Whilst they have been discussed with both crofters and the IEHT as part of the process of drafting the report, these recommendations are based on my analysis. These specific recommendations focus on the subjects of this report - IEHT and the crofters. However, many of the issues crofters are facing require action from those outwith Eigg, and responsibility for many of these decisions ultimately lies with the Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers.

Throughout this report there are a number of potential calls for support, or to make policy changes. For example, food production needs better support, whether that is fairer funding for small-scale horticulture, or a solution to allow small-scale livestock producers to effectively get their meat to market. I have refrained from making any specific policy calls, but I hope this report will help provide more evidence that the crofting community, IEHT and others need to push for the policy changes that are needed to better support crofting.

I am aware that there are many pressures on the resources of both the crofters and IEHT, and they will have to decide which, if any, of these recommendations they wish to prioritise.

For those recommendations that they do wish to act on, it may be beneficial to set some clear, measurable goals. Crofters may wish to set their own goals, based on the plans for their crofts. The grazings committee and IEHT may also want to set some specific goals. There are a number of framework that can be used to set goals.

SMART goals have been used by many organisations. The SMART in SMART goals stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. There have been many variations on this basic template. For example, some people add in Ecological (to ensure the goals are not damaging to the environment, your health or relationships) and Rewarding (what is your reward for achieving a goal?).

Another method is setting FAST goals - Frequently discussed; Ambitious in scope; measured by Specific metrics and milestones; and Transparent for everyone to see.

Effective goal setting can be key to achieve an intended outcome, and it is worth investing time and resource into developing goals for a project. Specific goals are outwith the scope of this report, but I hope it provides some ideas for this next stage of the process.

Recommendations for the Crofters

- Appoint a grazings committee, update regulations and organise regular meetings.
- Develop a plan for the common grazings.
- Work with Woodland Trust to develop a woodland plan for the crofters that want to plant more trees.
- Plan for succession of their crofts.
- Where needed, look at business and land management planning for the croft.
- Crofters who are either absent or have an unworked croft, create a plan to comply with crofting regulations.
- Where needed, look at ways in which volunteers can be used on the croft.

- Consider other ways of working together.

Recommendations jointly for the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust and Eigg crofters

- Have a crofter representative on the IEHT board.
- Undertake a strategic review of holiday accommodation on Eigg.
- Consider jointly developing a volunteering plan for Eigg.
- Explore how crofters can support the IEHT tree nursery and firewood businesses.
- Look at ways to share Eigg's crofting story and successes.
- Consider commissioning a study looking into small-scale livestock slaughter and access to market for livestock producers on Eigg.
- Organise a meeting for those on Eigg interested in developing small-scale horticultural businesses.

Recommendations for the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust

- Explore the opportunities on Eigg for creating new crofts.
- Look at ways to provide land for residents to grow food.
- Have a process for decision-making regarding IEHT's role as a crofting landlord and consider:
 - Creating a process for letting any vacant crofts, allocating any new crofts and managing a waiting list for those interested in crofting on Eigg;
 - How to work with the grazings committee, if there are developments on the common grazings; and
 - How to ensure there is institutional knowledge of crofting within IEHT.

Appendix

| | |
|--|----|
| Appendix 1 - Stakeholders contacted as part of this project | 59 |
| Appendix 2 - What we did, how we did it, and why | 60 |
| Appendix 3 - Agricultural Funding | 61 |
| Appendix 4 - Business Funding | 62 |
| Appendix 5 - Carbon Offsetting | 63 |
| Appendix 6 - Common Grazings | 65 |
| Grazings Committee | 66 |
| Apportionments and Resumptions | 66 |
| Appendix 7 - Regulation and Limits | 67 |
| Crofters rights and responsibilities | 67 |
| Livestock | 68 |
| Food processing | 68 |
| Nature.Scot | 68 |
| Sites of Special Scientific Interest | 69 |
| National Scenic Areas | 69 |
| Scheduled monuments | 69 |
| Selected Bibliography and Further Reading | 71 |

Appendix 1 - Stakeholders contacted as part of this project

I am extremely grateful to all the individuals and organisations who shared their thoughts, ideas and expertise during this project - without them, it would not have been possible.

Business Gateway
Community Land Scotland
Crofting Commission
Elchies Estate
Farm Advisory Service
Forest Carbon
Future Woodlands Scotland
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Highland Council - Empty Homes Officer
Highland Good Food Partnership
Highlands & Islands Environment Foundation
Historic Environment Scotland
Isle of Skye Mussel Company
Kilfinan Community Forest
Knockfarrel Produce
Land Workers Alliance
Nature Friendly Farming Network
Nature.Scot
Scottish Agricultural College
Scottish Rural Alliance
Scotland's Rural College
Scottish Crofting Federation
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Forestry
Scottish Government
Scottish Land Commission
Scottish Rural Action
Scottish Wildlife Trust
The Green Bowl
The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust
University of Highlands and Islands
West Coast Organics
Wee Isle Dairy Ltd
Woodland Croft Partnership

Appendix 2 - What we did, how we did it, and why

This project set out to explore how the IEHT could better support crofting. Although managed by IEHT, this project placed the crofters of Eigg at its centre. An initial meeting with the crofters in February 2024 established the project's parameters, and crofters were actively involved in recruiting the contractor. Throughout the process, crofters' views were prioritised. The project was supported by Highland Council's Community Regeneration Fund, with additional support from IEHT.

At every stage, I ensured that crofters shaped both the process and the outcomes while connecting the project to broader discussions about crofting. I used a permaculture design framework⁸³ to shape the project's overall structure and its individual elements. Permaculture ethics⁸⁴ and principles guided the project's development.

The first step was arranging one-on-one meetings with all the crofters. This helped build individual relationships and ensured that the diverse range of crofters' views were heard. Seventeen out of nineteen crofters participated in these meetings. The two who did not engage are absentee crofters, one of whom is an owner-occupier. These meetings provided a broad understanding of the issues. Next, I spoke with a wide range of stakeholders, including those involved in crofting, land management, agriculture, community ownership, and policy. The project generated significant interest, reflecting both Eigg's unique position and the lack of research in creating development plans for crofting townships. I am grateful to the individuals and organisations who made time to contribute.

The next phase involved group meetings with the crofters. These meetings allowed them to share ideas with one another and gave me an opportunity to reflect back what I had learned. A series of follow-up meetings with the crofters and the trust explored key themes, the report's structure, and its recommendations. A final meeting, open to all community members, provided an opportunity to present a draft version of the report and gather additional feedback before publication.

While the key output of this project is this report, the process itself has been equally valuable. It created a space for crofters to reflect on the current state of crofting on Eigg and share their visions for the future. Bringing crofters together to exchange ideas was a rewarding experience. There is rarely time to gather and discuss shared goals; this project created space for those conversations. One clear outcome was the recognition that establishing a grazings committee was essential for future crofting development on Eigg. The process of appointing a new grazings committee ran parallel to the final stages of this project.

Future research could assess the impact of this project and explore how other communities might undertake similar initiatives to strengthen their crofting townships. This would require funding. Organisations such as the Scottish Government, the Crofting Commission, SRUC, UHI, the Scottish Crofting Federation, Community Land Scotland, and the Scottish Land Commission should consider how best to support such efforts.

⁸³ See <https://www.heatherjoflores.com/gobradime-permaculture-design-process/>

⁸⁴ See <https://www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/what-is-permaculture-part-1-ethics/>

Appendix 3 - Agricultural Funding

Agricultural funding is complex, with dozens of different schemes available. This is a list of some of the schemes that might be available to crofters.

The **Basic Payment Scheme** provides payments that are meant to act as a 'safety net' for crofters. You must be actively crofting at least three hectares of land, which can include an area of the common grazings if this is being used for grazing. 'Active' use covers livestock and growing fodder. Additional amounts can be paid for new entrants and young crofters. Anyone who is eligible who applies should receive a payment. New or young crofters who are not eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme may be able to get grants via the National Reserve fund. This scheme is due to continue beyond 2025, but applicants will have to meet the Whole Farm Plan requirements.

Less Favoured Area Support Scheme provides 'essential income support to farming businesses in remote and constrained rural areas'. Again you must be actively crofting at least three hectares of land, and 'active' use covers livestock and growing fodder. Anyone who is eligible who applies should receive a payment. This scheme is due to continue until 2026. The Scottish Government are 'working with stakeholders on how best to deliver this type of support under the new framework' from 2027 onwards.

Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme provides one off payments for crofters to make improvements to their crofts and help to sustain their businesses. Grants provide up to 80% of the cost (up to 90% for groups of crofters i.e. grazings committees). The maximum grant is £25,000 (or up to £125,000 for groups of crofters). Grants are discretionary, so not everyone who applies will receive a grant. Once the grant has been approved, it is only paid once the work has been completed and paid for – this means the crofter has to pay for the work up front before they receive the grant. Funding can cover the crofter's own labour, if they are able to undertake the work themselves. This scheme is due to continue until 2026. The Scottish Government are currently looking at how to continue to deliver this support from 2027 onwards.

Croft House Grant scheme provides grants for crofters to improve their standard of housing. The grant may be used for, among other things, major repairs, internal improvements, rebuilding work and energy efficiency improvements. Grants are discretionary, so not everyone who applies will receive a grant. As with the Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme, once the grant has been approved, it is only paid once the work has been completed and paid for – this means the crofter has to pay for the work up front before they receive the grant. The funding can also cover the crofter's own labour, if they are able to undertake the work themselves. This scheme is also due to continue until 2026, and the Scottish Government are looking at how to continue to deliver this support from 2027 onwards.

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme⁸⁵ provides support for schemes that promotes land management practices which protect and enhance Scotland's natural heritage, improve water quality, manage flood risk and mitigate and adapt to climate change. It also helps to

⁸⁵ For more info on such schemes see

<https://www.fas.scot/article/outcome-based-agri-environment-and-climate-schemes/>

improve public access and preserve historic sites. These grants are also discretionary, not everyone who applies will receive a grant, and the Scottish Government are looking at how to continue to deliver this support from 2027 onwards.

The Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme (SSBSS) and **Scottish Upland Sheep Support Scheme (SUSSS)** are schemes to support beef and sheep productions. Anyone who is eligible who applies should receive a payment, payment depends on the number of applicants in any given year - the total fund being split between all eligible applicants. The SSBSS is due to continue beyond 2027, with some additional conditions from 2025. The Scottish Government are currently looking at how to continue to deliver SUSSS from 2027 onwards.

RPID also provide funding for advice, provided via the Farm Advisory Service, as well as for various tree planting schemes. The Farm Advisor service can provide advice on what funding may be available for any particular crofter via their advice line⁸⁶. The Common Grazings committee can also apply for funding for some work on the common grazings.

Appendix 4 - Business Funding

Below are some of the grants the crofting businesses, either individually or working together may be able to access.

The main provider of business support is Business Gateway. They do not provide grants directly but do manage a number of grants on behalf of funders. They offer an advisory service that can also include specialist services such as business planning. Highlands and Island Enterprise manage a number of projects, mainly to support businesses to grow.

The **Highland Council Start Up Grant**⁸⁷ is administered by Business Gateway. This a £1000 grant for people starting a new business, or who have recently started a new business, who are resident in the Highlands.

The **Highland Council Growing Businesses Growth fund**⁸⁸ is also administered by Business Gateway. It provides grants of up to £10000 to provide up to 50% of the costs of growing or diversifying an existing business. It is currently closed to new applicants but you can submit an expression of interest for funding in 2025.

The **Food and Drink TechHUB**⁸⁹ provides support to help local food and drink producers and supply chain businesses to grow. It is administered by Highlands and Island Enterprise. The TechHUB can provide advice and support, and potentially funding. This is for small businesses, so an individual crofter, or a group of crofters who are a small business, could be eligible for support.

The **Highlands and Island Enterprise's innovation service**⁹⁰ provides support for established businesses 'actively seeking growth through implementing new ideas'.

⁸⁶ For more information, contact the FAS advice line on 0300 323 0161 or email advice@fas.scot.

⁸⁷ For more information see:

<https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/service/funding/business-start-up-grant-for-individuals-in-the-highland-council-area>

⁸⁸ For more information see:

<https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/service/funding/the-highland-council-growing-business-growth-fund>

⁸⁹ For more information see: <https://www.hie.co.uk/support/browse-all-support-services/nih/techhub/>

⁹⁰ For more information see:

<https://www.hie.co.uk/support/browse-all-support-services/innovation/hies-innovation-service/>

The **Highlands and Island Enterprise's Supporting Communities programme**⁹¹ can provide support for communities to 'enhance inclusive growth - growth that benefits everyone - and sustainability'. This could provide support for businesses developed by the crofting community of Eigg, or in conjunction with the IEHT.

The **Young Business Capital Grant**⁹² can provide new businesses with up to £75,000. It is administered by Highlands and Island Enterprise.

British Business Bank - Start Up Loans⁹³ provide personal loans of up to £25,000 to individuals looking to start or grow a business in the UK. They are administered by the British Business Bank and are for businesses that are unable to access other forms of loans.

There are also schemes focused on more specialist areas, for example:

The **Cycling Tourism Facilities Fund**⁹⁴ can provide up to £25,000 to cover up to 50% of the cost of a project to provide cycling facilities that can 'attract cycling visitors who are looking to enjoy the scenic landscapes and unique offerings of the region while using sustainable active travel'.

The **Historic Environment Grants Programme**⁹⁵ is administered by Historic Environment Scotland and can fund a number of activities including outreach interpretation of historic sites, and maintenance and management plans.

The **Community Assets Knowledge Exchange fund**⁹⁶ provides grants of up to £2,000 to help community organisations in the Highlands and Islands take part in training and learning experiences related to owning land or buildings. This could cover the cost of visiting other projects.

Firstport's **Start It fund**⁹⁷ provides grants of up to £5,000 to help cover the costs of setting up a social enterprise. Their **Build It fund**⁹⁸ can cover staff costs for a new social enterprise and the **Catalyst Fund**⁹⁹ provides flexible loans to established social enterprises that are unable to get funding from other sources.

The Scottish Government website <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/> provides details of other support services available to business in Scotland.

⁹¹ For more information see:

<https://www.hie.co.uk/support/browse-all-support-services/support-for-community-organisations>

⁹² For more information see: <https://www.hie.co.uk/ybcapitalinvestment>

⁹³ For more information see: <https://www.startuploans.co.uk/>

⁹⁴ For more information see:

<https://www.hie.co.uk/support/browse-all-support-services/cycling-tourism-facilities-fund/>

⁹⁵ For more information see:

https://www.historicenvironment.scot/grants-and-funding/our-grants/historic-environment-grants-programme/#overview_tab

⁹⁶ For more information see:

<https://www.hie.co.uk/support/browse-all-support-services/support-for-community-organisations/community-assets-knowledge-exchange/>

⁹⁷ For more information see: <https://www.firstport.org.uk/funding/social-entrepreneurs-fund-start-it/>

⁹⁸ For more information see: <https://www.firstport.org.uk/funding/social-entrepreneurs-fund-build-it/>

⁹⁹ For more information see: <https://www.firstport.org.uk/social-investment/the-catalyst-fund/>

Appendix 5 - Carbon Offsetting

Carbon capture schemes are where a landowner, or crofter, is paid to plant trees in the expectation that they will absorb a certain amount of carbon over a given period, often decades, this allows companies that produce carbon to offset the carbon they release.

These schemes often create ongoing obligations that can run for decades, and schemes require ongoing maintenance and auditing. In the case of crofts these obligations will pass on to future tenants, although it is not yet entirely clear how this will work in practice, and schemes that are planted on common grazings will require coordination between the crofters and the owner. At present there is no independent advice available to crofters and farmers to allow informed decisions to be made about which, if any, schemes are most suitable.

The Carbon Code has been created to provide some reassurance to investors that the benefits promised by schemes are delivered. However, the way The Carbon Code has been created could create additional difficulties for schemes on crofts. Under the scheme each land owner or tenant has separate accreditation and audit costs, so a scheme that covered several crofts would have multiple audit and accreditation costs – whereas the same sized scheme on land owned or tenanted by one individual would only have to pay one set of costs. These additional costs mean that croft-based schemes may not be viable. The Woodland Trust, along with others, are exploring the implications of such schemes on common grazings and croft land.

More broadly there is criticism of the idea behind these 'offset' schemes. They work on the principle that companies can offset the environmental damage they cause in one place, such as carbon emissions, habitat destruction or loss of biodiversity, by having a positive environmental impact in another place. However, this offsetting can mean companies can avoid taking any meaningful action to reduce their environmental impact, allowing them to continue causing environmental damage, including increasing carbon emissions, at a time when we need to be reducing carbon emissions and reducing habitat and biodiversity loss. Offsetting does not help the communities impacted by destructive environmental practices. There are also concerns these schemes fail to provide any real additional environmental benefits (for example the trees would be planted anyway) whilst allowing companies to 'green-wash' their image – to appear less environmentally damaging than they actually are. Some schemes allow specific companies to be associated with specific schemes and there is a reputational risk to both Eigg and crofting of being associated with highly damaging companies or industries. More fundamentally, offsetting schemes have come under criticism from distracting from other ways of tackling climate change and biodiversity loss.

However, many organisations have generated income from these schemes and see them as valuable additional revenue to allow them to carry out work that would not otherwise be viable, and as a way of ensuring that polluting industries pay some of the costs of mitigating their environmental damage. It is up to the individual crofters, and IEHT, to decide which, if any, of these schemes are appropriate if there is a gap in other funding options. There are many different schemes available, below are details of three such schemes.

The Woodland Trust offer a Woodland Carbon scheme¹⁰⁰, they invest in sites that are 5Ha or more, and are aware that such a scheme would be challenging on a tenanted, rather than owner-occupied, croft so would probably only be viable for a scheme that is on the common grazings. They pay 70% of the fees after the trees have been planted a verified, 15% after 5 years and the final 5% after 15 years. They cover the costs of verification and authentication so, after planting, there are no management costs, but there is a requirement to maintain the trees. IEHT already has one Woodland Carbon scheme.

Forest Carbon are another scheme that offers carbon credits. They have a number of schemes. Under the Forest Carbon offset scheme, they would work to sell the carbon credits from the scheme, which are usually sold when the trees are planted and the scheme validated (technically the carbon credits are only generated after the 5 and 15 year validation, but they pay out on the potential carbon offsets). Costs of planting and validation would fall to the crofter, but there is potential for Forest Carbon to make some payment in advance, although this would probably reduce the amount paid. They are open to discussing funding for specific schemes. They also offer a tree sponsor scheme. They pay a fee of at least £3 per tree, keeping 25%. They then sell these trees on to a variety of organisations, from individuals looking to support tree growing to large corporations as part of their 'corporate and social responsibility' programmes. If they sell the trees for more than £3 a tree, 50% of the extra goes to the landowner (or crofter). The crofter would have no say on who sponsors the trees, and any sponsor may want to publicise the support they are giving.

Other providers, such as Wilder Carbon¹⁰¹ offer similar schemes.

Appendix 6 - Common Grazings

Common grazings are a unique feature of crofting. Many townships have shared grazing rights to land still owned by the landlord. Crofters with shares in common grazings have the right to graze animals there, along with a range of responsibilities and obligations.

The way the common grazings are managed could play an important role in the future of crofting on Eigg. The rules governing common grazings are complex. The Farm Advisory Service offers training on managing common grazings, and the Crofting Commission provides support and guidance¹⁰².

Crofters with the right to graze animals on common grazings are said to hold shares in the land. These shares determine how many animals each crofter can graze and may also include additional rights, such as collecting a specific amount of seaweed from the shore.

Crofters with shares often have obligations to contribute to maintenance costs and may be entitled to a share of any income generated by the common grazings.

If a croft is sub-let, the share in the common grazings can also be included. This allows the new tenant to graze animals on the land. The sub-let agreement should clearly state who

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/woodland-carbon-farmers-and-landowners/>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.wildercarbon.com/>

¹⁰² See <https://www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk/common-grazings> and <https://www.fas.scot/discussion-groups/common-grazings/>

is responsible for common grazings costs and who will receive any income during the sub-let period.

Grazings Committee

The common grazings are managed by a grazings committee, which is appointed by those crofters with shares in the common grazings. The rules governing the committee are set out in the Common Grazings regulations, which are agreed by the committee and approved by the Crofting Commission. The committee have responsibility for managing and maintaining the common grazings, and can propose certain improvements on the common grazings. Non-shareholders, and non-crofters can be appointed to the grazings committee. The grazings committee requires a Clerk, who can be paid, and can also appoint other officials such as a Chair, Secretary or Treasurer.

It is important to note that the grazings committee is not recognised as a legal body, for example a grazings committee cannot sign contracts or get bank loans. A grazings committee may create a legal body, such as a trust, co-operative or SCIO¹⁰³. The grazings committee can apply for some forms of funding, and many agricultural improvements may be eligible for agricultural funding.

Apportionments and Resumptions

Crofters may have a right to apportion part of the common grazings, this allows them use part of the common grazings for their own use, for example to erect a shed or for stock control. This will reduce the number of animals they have a right to graze on the rest of the common grazings.

A group of crofters with grazings shares can use the common grazings to plant trees. If a group of crofters decide to plant trees they will lose some, or all, of their grazings rights. Apportionments and tree planting again need crofting commission approval, and the views of the other shareholders and the landlord need be taken into account. A shareholder, or group of shareholders, may also propose that a part of the common grazings may be used for another purpose.

The landlord can also take areas out of the common grazings, however this needs the shareholders approval, crofting commission approval and the shareholders are entitled to half of any profit that the landlord gets. Typically, this might be to create and sell a house-plot, in such cases any profit is split between the landlord and the shareholders but can be used for other purposes, for example Cuagach common grazings hosts a telecommunication mast, the fees from this are split between IEHT as landlord and the crofters with shares in the Cuagach common grazings.

Despite, or perhaps because of, these complex and intertwined rights and responsibilities, it is possible to imagine a wide variety of ways in which the common grazings could be used to support crofting on Eigg, as well as support the community more widely.

¹⁰³ A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation see <https://www.oscr.org.uk/becoming-a-charity/becoming-a-scio/> for more information.

Appendix 7 - Regulation and Limits

There are a range of regulations and designations that may either limit some of the activities that crofters can undertake, or require additional registration or licenses. This section cannot provide full details of all the limits, and the implications, but provides a broad overview of some of the areas that are regulated, and where further advice may be needed.

Crofters rights and responsibilities

Crofters and landlords both have responsibilities, and a community landlord like IEHT has an additional obligation to the wider community. There are a range of community bodies that are crofting landlords, and over the years this role has evolved. Many of the issues facing Eigg are also being faced by other communities.

Crofters rights have been hard won, and it is important that these rights and guarantees are not undermined.

Crofters also have a set of obligations and duties, that are part of the crofting legislation. These include:

- A duty to be ordinarily resident on, or within 32km of, their croft
- A duty to cultivate and maintain their croft or put it to another purposeful use
- A duty not to misuse or neglect their croft

A crofter breaching these duties could, in theory, have their tenancy revoked by the Crofting Commission unless there is a good reason not to. In practice very few tenancies are revoked, but this does remain an option when a crofting community feels there is a breach of duty that is impacting on the community. A breach of duty may be reported by either a grazings committee, the landlord a member of the crofting community ("crofting community" means all the persons who (either or both) – (a) occupy crofts within a township which consists of two or more crofts registered with the Crofting Commission; or (b) hold shares in a common grazing associated with that township). There was no desire for any of the crofters on Eigg to take any action against any crofters for potential breaches. I spoke to all but two of the crofters, and all crofters, including those who are currently absent or are not working their crofts, have plans to ensure they meet their duties. The crofting community on Eigg may wish, in the future, to consider what, if any, action they may want to take if there are repeated breaches.

According to the legislation a crofter wishing to use their croft for "another purposeful use", rather than cultivate it, requires either permission from the landlord or, if this is refused, permission from the Crofting Commission. In practice this is rarely, if ever, enforced.

Since the 1970's crofters have a right to buy the landlord's interest in their crofts. As Mark Shuchsmith said in his influential 2007 report:

"The Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 1976 duly gave crofters the right to buy the landlord's interest in their crofts and a debate has raged ever since between those who argue that this is necessary to allow crofters to diversify their enterprises and those who see this as creating a free market in crofts which will lead to the demise of crofting."

These issues continue to be discussed. As a community landlord, IEHT has taken the view that as the crofts on Eigg are on community owned land this right should be restricted, and the crofts that were created in 2004 have a stipulation that these crofters can not buy out the landlords interest in the croft – this is common in newly created crofts on community owned land. IEHT has previously refused applications from tenants who have wished to purchase their croft.

Livestock

Most livestock, including poultry, now require registration. In most cases crofters are required to:

- Register as a keeper on every holding that you use
- Identify each of your animals
- Notify all movements of animals on and off your holding
- Keep your records up-to-date

The Farm Advisory Service provide a number of general advice sheets on registration of livestock and can provide crofters with specific advice via their advice service.

Livestock slaughter is highly regulated. Poultry can be slaughtered on the croft and sold, provided the crofter is correctly registered and licensed. Most other livestock has to be slaughtered at a registered slaughter house. More information is available from the Food Standards website¹⁰⁴.

In order to sell game, and on Eigg the only game is probably rabbits, a Venison Dealer's License (VDL) is required – this costs £178 from Highland Council and is valid for three years. This allows the supply of a small amount of wild game meat to a 'consumer or local retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer'¹⁰⁵.

Food processing

All premises that are processing food should be registered with the local authority Environmental Health team. Registration is free. There are some exemptions for small producers selling small amounts of 'primary produce', for example selling small amounts of ungraded eggs directly to consumers or small amounts of unprocessed fruit and vegetables.

The Environmental Health Team at Highland Council¹⁰⁶ can provide further information.

Nature.Scot

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Scenic Areas (NSA) are administered by Nature.Scot. Any development, which could include woodland creation or planning applications, with SSSIs or NSAs require Nature.Scot to be consulted, and some permitted development for agricultural buildings or access may also require a planning application.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/business-and-industry/industry-specific-advice/meat-poultry-game>

¹⁰⁵ See https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/FSS_Wild_Game_Guide_December_2021.pdf for more details.

¹⁰⁶ See https://www.highland.gov.uk/homepage/38/environmental_health

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Parts of Cleadale are covered by an SSSI¹⁰⁷ designation. This includes an area of fen ('This is one of the largest and richest areas of wetland on Eigg and is a habitat type uncommon in Lochaber.') and the Hazel woodland above Cleadale. It is subject to a management plan¹⁰⁸, which was last updated in 2009, and certain operations within the designated area specifically require consent¹⁰⁹.

National Scenic Areas

The NSA area¹¹⁰ includes a designation for the small isles, "an archipelago of individually distinctive islands". Eigg is noted for its "rich grazing pastures and meadows especially around Cleadale, deciduous woodlands, young conifer plantations", "many unimproved meadows, rich in wildflowers" and "the fascinating shapes and sounds of the Cleadale Coast - the Jurassic sandstones and the harder basalt and pitchstone have weathered to create unusual shapes." This does not necessarily limit the use of the land, but does mean that any developments should be done sympathetically.

Scheduled monuments

Eigg is home to over two-dozen scheduled monuments and historic buildings, two of which are located in Cleadale, both on the common grazings. The scheduled monuments span pre-history to the 19th century : .

Cuig Peighinnean, township and field system N of Howlin, Eigg (SM10977)

Cuig Peighinnean, Hut circle 340m SSE of Guala Mhor, Eigg (SM10998)

Scheduled monuments are regulated by HES and are protected from works occurring on them without Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC). Works are defined as anything which results in demolition, destruction or any damage to a scheduled monument, anything which removes, alters, or adds to any part of a scheduled monument, or activity that results in the flooding of or tipping on the monument. HES would also need to be consulted "*where there may be an impact on the setting of a monument*", this could include tree planting or any other development within the immediate vicinity of the sites.

Specifically, for Cleadale, this means that any renovation or work on the old fank would require an SMC, and a very initial discussion suggests that this would be unlikely to be granted, given the monuments significance, "*the farmstead, with its location amid the remains of an earlier township represents an excellent example of the transition from townships to farmsteads, perhaps the most important development in the social and economic life of the Highlands and Islands in the 18th and 19th century.*" However, the schedule notes that "*the wooden / corrugated iron shed on the north side of the upstanding building remains is excluded from this scheduling to allow for its maintenance, but the*

¹⁰⁷ For details see <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/601>

¹⁰⁸ Available from:

<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/site-special-scientific-interest/601/site-management-statement.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ See:

<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/site-special-scientific-interest/601/operations-requiring-consent.pdf>

¹¹⁰ See: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/national-scenic-area/9154/nsa-special-qualities.pdf>

ground beneath it is included.". This shed is currently in a poor state of repair and could provide an opportunity to develop this part of the site in a sympathetic manner. Upgrading or extending the current track would also require an SMC.

It is noted that both sites are currently considered in good repair. Grazing has not adversely affected the sites. Responsible management of scheduled monuments can be used to support AECS¹¹¹ applications.

¹¹¹ For more info on such schemes see <https://www.fas.scot/article/outcome-based-agri-environment-and-climate-schemes/>

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