

# **TIREE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

## **CROFTING, AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY**



**Produced by  
Tiree Rural Development Ltd**

**February 2005**

**Consultant: J Isaacson**

## Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Study .....</b>	<b>3</b>
A) Consultation.....	3 – 4
B) Research.....	5
C) Results from the Study.....	6
1. General Information.....	6 – 9
2. The Main Questions Answered.....	10 - 16
D) Summing up of the Study.....	17
<b>SWOT Analysis.....</b>	<b>18 – 19</b>
<b>Recommended Areas for Action &amp; SMART targets</b> 21	20 –
<b>Implementation of the Strategy.....</b>	<b>22 - 23</b>

## **Executive Summary**

This Document, by Tiree Rural Development Ltd. (TRDLtd) forms a vital part of a five year Tiree Community Development Plan produced by the Tiree Development Partnership.

Recommended targets drawn from information gathered through a period of consultation and research ('The Study'), forms a widely agreed and integrated Crofting, Agriculture and Environment Strategy' for the island which seeks to address the following challenge.

***How can we provide a viable and sustainable future for crofting and agriculture on the island through both local action and by influencing national decision making?***

In general those who took part in interviews and completed questionnaires were pleased to talk about their subject and were forthcoming with information, speaking openly about their views and concerns. The views of 52 of the 70 active agricultural businesses were represented in this study.

The study shows that in terms of land-based activity, Tiree's core strengths lie in the quality of the land, the quality of the livestock, the natural heritage, the thriving crofting 'way of life', the growing tourist industry and a generation of enthusiastic crofters and farmers between the age of 18 and 50 with a history of good husbandry and traditional crofting practice skills.

These strengths in themselves are key to the visiting population and the growing tourist industry.

The island offers a stewardship role for land management through the interdependence of traditional crofting practices and the environment.

This strategy highlights the island's future crofting, agricultural and environmental development needs and as such helps to outline a development orientated work programme as well as a future direction for the land-based community.

The implementation of this strategy has already begun through the work of TRD, individuals, businesses and organisations involved in land management and land-based activity on the island.

## **Background**

1. In spring 2004 Tiree Rural Development Ltd (TRD) were commissioned by the Tiree Development Partnership to produce the crofting element of the five year 'Tiree Community Development Plan' .
3. The remit was for TRD was to produce a crofting, agriculture and environment 'theme' paper and an implementation strategy for the 'theme' paper to be presented at the community conference in October 2004.
4. To make sure that the project ran smoothly TRD formed a focus group known as ROOT (Rural Overview and Opportunities Tiree) to oversee the work.
5. Jane Isaacson was contracted by TRDLtd as the consultant to carry out a comprehensive study of crofting agriculture and the environment on Tiree which would lead to the production of an integrated and balanced strategy.

### **Tiree Rural Development Ltd.**

Tiree Rural Development Ltd (TRD) is a community company limited by guarantee with charitable status incorporated in 2001 with the following main objectives.

- To share a heritage and 'way of life' specific to remote island communities while promoting a co-ordinated approach to the land and an informed appreciation of this particular environmental and cultural inheritance:
- To safeguard the traditional agricultural activities while keeping the industry in line with 21st century development:
- To improve community facilities through the provision of space for educational, social and leisure activities:
- To encourage employment creation and retention to complement the main activity (crofting) in an economically fragile community.

TRD has ten Directors who have been nominated by the community for their individual skills, knowledge and expertise.

The company's first major achievement was the delivery in August 2003 of the brand new Tiree Rural Centre - a multi purpose centre with mart, tearoom, interpretation centre, land-based information point, meeting , event and workshop venue, small business units to let, play area, land-based resource library and community cinema.

As well as providing a service to the community, the rural centre has become a 'home' for educational, social and leisure activities based around crofting and the environment addressing issues of social inclusion, confidence building, participation and learning.

## The Study

### **A) Consultation**

The consultation was carried out during the summer and early autumn of 2004. In total 43 one to one interviews, seven group meetings, 52 completed 'questionnaires' and many individual discussions were used to gather information from following: -

- a) 52 active crofters and farmers on Tiree;
- b) 8 Inactive and absentee crofters (resident and off the island)
- c) 13 Secondary school pupils;
- d) 92 Tiree residents through the housing needs analysis;
- e) 5 individuals with local businesses depending on land-based activity on Tiree;
- f) 3 individuals with local tourist businesses;
- g) Scottish Natural Heritage;
- h) The Crofters Commission;
- i) Argyll Estates;
- j) RSPB;
- k) Local Councillor;

This was carried out as follows: -

#### **1.Root group members specifically chosen for their knowledge and expertise.<sup>1</sup>**

Eight group members were nominated to represent different aspects of land-based activity on Tiree: - (TRD, NFU, Crofting Foundation, Tiree Agricultural Society, Crofters Commission, SNH, Agricultural & Environmental schemes, Young crofters, Hi Health, Corncrakes, Geese, Tourism etc.). This group monitored the consultation throughout the period.

#### **2.The agricultural community through a specially written questionnaire either completed through a one to one interview or independently.<sup>2</sup>**

It was recognised from the outset that those currently involved in agricultural business on Tiree have the best understanding of what is required for their industry in terms of progress and support and in addition, those who have lived and worked on the land for generations have a unique familiarity with their natural surroundings.<sup>3</sup>

Through discussion with this section of the community information would be gathered which would give a complete overview of the current situation concerning land-based activity on Tiree. It would also tell us how the individuals involved in such activities would like to see their industry progress over the next five years.

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<sup>1</sup> ROOT

<sup>2</sup> See page 5

<sup>3</sup> ROOT

**'The Questionnaire'** (Tiree Crofting Development Strategy – Consultation Document) (attached) was prepared as a tool to carry out a study which would ensure that the views and concerns of the present agricultural community on Tiree would influence strategic planning for future progress within their industry. Three main questions were used as the foundation to design 'the questionnaire':-

**1. What are the main issues currently facing crofting and the environment on Tiree and what is needed in the way of support to address these issues?**

**2. What are the ambitions of Tiree's land-based community and what support is required to achieve these ambitions?**

**3. What opportunities are currently available to those involved in land-based activities on Tiree in terms of practical and financial support?**

In addition a fourth question was added to the consultation document in response to a request from the agricultural community for the possibility of achieving health accreditation for the islands cattle producers:-

**4. Can we obtain a 'Highlands and Islands Cattle Quality Guarantee' for the whole island and maintain a superior health status for Tiree's cattle?**

'The questionnaire', divided into two parts, relates to the present day situation with regard to agricultural activity on Tiree:

**Part I for established croft or farm businesses.**

**Part II for new croft entrants.**

Four supplementary pages encourage discussion on the specific issues of: -

**Agri-environmental Businesses and Schemes,  
Diversification,  
Young Entrants and  
Township and Community Development.**

### **3. The wider community**

In addition to those directly involved a second group of Tiree residents were selected to widen the consultation: – those who may have been involved in the past or whose businesses depend on agricultural activity.

A group of secondary school pupils interested in the land were invited to a meeting to discuss their thoughts on the future of crofting as an occupation and a way of life.

Some questions specific to crofting were asked through a housing needs assessment carried out in parallel to the crofting study. This assessment was available to every household on Tiree<sup>4</sup>

### **4. Agencies and organisations involved in land-based activity on Tiree.**

There was continued discussion with the agencies and organisations involved throughout the consultation period through meetings, telephone conversations and e-mail in particular the Crofters Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage.

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<sup>4</sup> Tiree Housing Needs Assessment (Summer 2004)

## **B) Research**

### **1.Related reports and studies carried out by organisations involved in land- based activity on Tiree.**

Extensive information was drawn together from related reports and studies. These included the following: -

- a) Tiree Rural Development Plan: Phase 1 – Rural Centre: Business Plan 2002)
- b) Tiree Rural Development Ltd. Options Appraisal for Marketing Livestock (2001)
- c) Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Tiree Socio Economic Study (February 2004)
- d) Tiree Development Partnership. Housing Needs Assessment. (summer 2004)

### **2.Relevant Information published by individuals, agencies and organisations.**

Information was gathered from relevant publications and websites as follows: -

[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

[www.croftingfoundation.co.uk](http://www.croftingfoundation.co.uk),

Crofters Commission information leaflets

SEERAD information leaflets (Agricultural Business Development Scheme

Crofting Communities Development Scheme leaflet

Croft Entrance Scheme leaflet

Rural Stewardship Scheme – Frequently asked Questions publication

Agronomy Institute, Orkney College – Trial Cropping information leaflets

Crofting Years by Francis Thompson

Crofting by Douglas Willis

[www.nationalbeefassociation.co.uk](http://www.nationalbeefassociation.co.uk),

[www.sac.ac.uk](http://www.sac.ac.uk)

[www.fwag.org.uk](http://www.fwag.org.uk)

### **3.Historical records in An Iodhlainn.<sup>5</sup>**

Newspaper reports and Ministry of Agriculture records provided historical information from the Island's archive of historical information.

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<sup>5</sup> See page 7 Background

## C) Results from the Study

### 1. General information and data

#### Background

Tiree was historically a mixed farming island with cattle, sheep, pigs, horses and poultry, high yields of grain crops, hay and potatoes. There have been trends throughout the last 150 years or so influenced by external factors such as war, world economy, government policy and international market forces. For example in 1882 Tiree produced 27 thousand dozen eggs and 200 pigs, in the 1920's Tiree had around 500 horses bred for work on the island and for export as far a field as Canada. In 1927 1785 acres of cereals were grown on the island, in the early 1960s contract plots of bulbs were grown for the Hebridean Bulb Growers Ltd for the Dutch market, in 1967 there were some 3000 hens and 350 ducks.<sup>6</sup> So we can see that agriculturally Tiree is an extremely versatile and productive island.

Nevertheless as the table below shows, cattle and sheep numbers have remained significant throughout this period although according to records the type of production and the breeds used has varied with market place trends and changes in practice and development opportunities.

	1897	1927	1967	1997	2001 (fmd)	2003
<b>Cattle</b>	2621	2944	2989	3597	3009	3241
<b>Sheep</b>	5057	4142	6627	7321	6429	6228
<b>Lambs</b>	4645	3164	5709	7914	7062	6788

For the last four decades cattle and sheep production on Tiree has been supported by direct livestock subsidies since the introduction in the early '60s of the Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance and in the early '80s of additional payments from Europe through the Suckler Cow Premium Scheme and the Sheep Annual Premium Scheme.<sup>7</sup>

A rise in the number of lambs produced relative to the number of sheep can be seen over the period. It is assumed that this is due to progressive feeding and husbandry methods.

Tiree is a fertile island with grazing high in calcium which is ideal for growing young calves and lambs but not for fattening.<sup>8</sup>

These factors have meant that Tiree has naturally evolved to be principally the store animal producing location that it is today.<sup>9</sup>

Tiree's specific natural heritage has been shaped by the agricultural methods and land management practices used over time. The result is a rich and varied natural heritage consisting of plants, animals and their habitats.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> An Iodhlainn (Ministry of Agriculture records)

<sup>7</sup> Tiree Socio Economic Assessment (February 2004) (SAC)

<sup>8</sup> Advice from ROOT

<sup>9</sup> “ “ “

<sup>10</sup> Advice from SNH

**Present Situation**

The information gathered shows that Tiree (8,822 hectares) has a thriving crofting way of life with an enthusiastic younger generation of up and coming crofters: -

- There are 292 registered crofts.<sup>11</sup>
- 92 individuals hold crofting tenancies<sup>12</sup>.
- 70+ active agricultural businesses are supported by these holdings<sup>13</sup>.
- All of these businesses are involved in store beef and/or lamb production.<sup>14</sup>
- 8 of these are father/son partnerships.<sup>15</sup>
- These businesses support 59 extended families<sup>16</sup>.
- Of Tiree’s economically active population of 308, 107 earn part or all of their income from agriculture and activities relying on agriculture:<sup>17</sup> -
- Less than 10 of Tiree’s agricultural businesses rely totally on agriculture as a source of income.<sup>18</sup>
- 44 of the pupils in the school and 6 pre school age children are supported by these families (33% of the school role)<sup>19</sup>.
- 47 individuals beyond retirement age are still involved; Only four of these (two businesses) do not have family who work the croft for them, are partners in the business or help to work the croft,<sup>20</sup>
- More than half of those who take part use local contractors for services such as baling, fencing, lambing, ploughing and shearing and almost all have unpaid help from neighbours, friends and/or family from time to time.<sup>21</sup>

Age Group	Number
65+ years	47
50 – 65 years	28
30 – 50 years	70
18 – 30 years	9
Total	154

**This table shows the age profile of those actively involved in crofting business.<sup>22</sup>**

<sup>11</sup> Argyll Estates Register of Crofts

<sup>12</sup> Argyll Estates Register of Crofts

<sup>13</sup> ‘The Questionnaire’

<sup>14</sup> ‘The Questionnaire’

<sup>15</sup> “ “ “

<sup>16</sup> “ “ “

<sup>17</sup> Tiree Socio Economic Assessment (February 2004)

<sup>18</sup> See annex 1.

<sup>19</sup> ‘The Questionnaire’

<sup>20</sup> “ “ “

<sup>21</sup> “ “ “

<sup>22</sup> TRD Study (Summer 2004)

## Agency involvement

**The Scottish Executive** (Environmental) has an important role in the conservation Scotland's natural resources and their sustainable use. This includes dealing with nature conservation issues, biodiversity and the work of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum. It also concerns protected areas, including European sites, and all species issues.

Tiree has important areas designated under the EC Birds and Habitats Directives as part of the European network of protected areas – Natura 2000. There are also protected areas on Tiree designated under The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, which are sites of national importance for flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features.

**Scottish Natural Heritage** has a remit to look after Scotland's protected areas for the government ensure the conservation and enhancement of habitats, species and landscapes.

SNH's task on Tiree is to secure the unique and precious natural heritage - the wildlife, the habitats and the landscape which have evolved through the long partnership between people and nature. SNH priority on Tiree at present is to maintain cattle numbers and work with crofters on land management agreements.

SNH offers assistance in the form of grant support to enable various activities and projects to be undertaken and has an area officer who liaises with the crofting community on all environmental issues. SNH have contributed substantially to Tiree's land-based economy in recent years through financial assistance.

**The Scottish Executive** (agricultural) published the Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture in June 2001. The Strategy's vision is of a prosperous farming industry which should: -

- be focussed on producing food and other products that the consumer wants;
- play a major role in sustainable rural development and help to maintain the prosperity of Scottish rural communities;
- be a leading player in the protection and enhancement of Scotland's environment; and
- embrace change and new opportunities.

The Scottish Executive provides financial support to rural communities by means of a number of schemes administered through SEERAD offices or through government agencies such as the Crofters Commission. On the promotion of livestock products, one of SEERAD's key tasks is to ensure the traceability of beef.

**Crofters Commission** is the principal government tasked with regulating and developing thriving and sustainable crofting communities. Given the significant level of crofting on Tiree, the Crofters Commission is an active partner on Tiree Development Partnership, and employs an area based Development Manager who visits the island regularly to offer support.

The Crofters Commission is keen to assist and support both the crofting and wider communities to realise its' aspirations via a planned and co-ordinated approach such as this strategy, particularly on priorities addressing the availability of crofts for young entrants, and information and training needs of existing and new crofters. The Crofters Commission would also encourage diversification of use of croft land, including exploration of its' contribution to addressing local housing needs on the island.

**The Scottish Land Fund** administers assistance for communities to acquire, develop and manage local land.

**Argyll & The Islands Enterprise** Provide support, advice and financial assistance to help new and existing businesses expand and develop. AIE also have a local development officer who is able to bring support to the island on a regular basis.

#### Other Organisations

**Scottish Agricultural College (SAC)** provide agricultural business advice and record keeping service to Tiree. Their business advisor visits the island regularly and helps individual businesses with returns, form filling, grant applications etc. and advises on current schemes and financial opportunities for crofters and farmers.

**Argyll Estates** are the main land owners on Tiree. All crofts that are not owner occupied belong to Argyll Estates. The estates priority with regard to crofting is to support the crofters in any way they can with any land that comes back in hand (out with crofting tenure) to be let on simple annual grazing lets to benefit more people.

**RSPB** – interest is in the continuation of a healthy crofting system on Tiree as essential for maintaining its internationally important assemblages of breeding and wintering birds including the largest percentage of corncrakes in the UK.

## 2. The main questions answered.

*Question 1. What are the main issues currently facing crofting and the environment on Tiree and what is needed in the way of support to address these issues?*

### General information

Agriculturally, virtually all of the land in the crofting counties is classified as Severely Disadvantaged in terms of Less Favoured Area Directive and Tiree is no exception;<sup>23</sup>

Agricultural activity in the crofting counties continues to be a tenuous occupation. On Tiree particular issues such as freight and fuel costs, isolation and a declining population challenge the role of the industry in providing a vital economic base and maintaining a crofting 'way of life' where it has been lost in many other crofting counties.<sup>24</sup>

The new Single Farm Payment Scheme (SFPS) (introduced on 1 January 2005) is part of the package reforming the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). This scheme will replace the following existing production based support schemes which have been an integral part of Tiree's production economy in recent years:

- Beef Special Premium Scheme
- Extensification Payment Scheme
- Sheep Annual Premium Scheme (including the Less Favoured Area supplement)
- Suckler Cow Premium Scheme

Payment under the SFPS is conditional on meeting the cross-compliance conditions. Agricultural businesses must continue to comply with the Statutory Management Requirements in force for public health, animal and plant health, environmental protection and animal welfare. They must also maintain land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC).

### Views from the agricultural community

**Single Farm Payment** – All those who took part are uncertain of how the single farm payment will affect their business. The majority do not envisage changing their business in any way. A few suggested they may have to decrease their livestock numbers. One or two are concerned about the changes while others said that the economy of crofting depends on accepting changes – “like anything else things change and you get used to it”.

**Paper Work** – All those interviewed commented on the increasing European controls and complicated paper work, with some so demoralised by this that they feel it is almost not worth trying to run their business because they find it so difficult.

**Freight and Fuel Costs** – This appears to be a major issue with all who took part commenting that the cost of transport is making it increasingly difficult to make their businesses pay. No suggested solutions were forthcoming.

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<sup>23</sup> Tiree Socio Economic Study (February 2004)

<sup>24</sup> Tiree Rural Development Plan (TRDLtd) (2001)

**Livestock Improvement Scheme** - There was a general feeling that the loss of the Crofters Commission Bull Scheme is a concern for those who made use of it.

**Absentee Crofters (on and off Tiree)** -It is generally felt that crofts which are not being used should be given up for those wishing to use them. There appears to be more concern about people who live on Tiree with unused crofts than those not on the island.

**Young Crofters** – Most of those interviewed feel that young entrants should be encouraged but many feel there is not enough available ground. Several crofters commented that there should be a monitoring system for young crofters so that crofts are not wasted on youngsters whose 'hearts are not really in it'. There were many comments about the Croft Entrant Scheme not being adequate and suggestions that the financial incentive the scheme offers is not sufficient. There were also comments about the difficulty of older crofters not handing crofts on to younger family members with suggestions that this may be due partly to tradition but also because many of the older generation of crofters still require the income from their crofts. Others are concerned that younger crofters might not look after the crofts appropriately. Some suggestions were made regarding incentives for older crofters to retire with some kind of croft pension scheme. Housing for young crofters was also an issue which was highlighted.

It was suggested by a few that it is very difficult to find jobs on Tiree nowadays which are flexible enough to supplement a crofting business.

**Township/Community Issues** –Problems associated with damage by geese and other predators such as ravens, lack of drainage in some parts of the island and infestation by ragwort were highlighted. The general consensus was that these issues should be addressed at a township or community level.

### Agency Response

**SNH** advise that nearly all land on Tiree needs some grazing to sustain the natural heritage interest. In general the grazing balance is about right but there are some key areas which are either overgrazed or under grazed (under grazing is often because the ground is so poor that crofters are reluctant to use it or there are insufficient animals and labour to merit use of the land e.g. some common grazings and sliabh areas in particular)

Livestock numbers are probably at their peak in terms of what the island can support, this is due to an increase in imported inputs such as winter feed. A more sustainable system would involve more cropping, more efficient use of land and further increase in quality of stock. A reduction in the overall number may be necessary to achieve the balance. This would necessarily require a better return from the market or more state support to compensate for more labour (either by a higher proportion of active crofters or more personnel).

Finally, nearly all crofts are based on some sort of livestock enterprise. When the crofter, for whatever reason, can no longer keep livestock there are very few cases where alternative land based incomes are sought in lieu of stock reduction. Either stock is reduced or land is sub-let to another crofter thereby adding to the decline in active crofters. SNH would like to see other sustainable land uses adopted to subsidise traditional livestock management rather than displace it.

**Crofters Commission** advises that the CES uptake on Tiree has been very limited in relation to the wider Argyll area, which has had a relatively higher uptake than other areas in the Highlands and Islands over the past three years.

The Commission acknowledges that the CES incentive to outgoing tenants is often considered insufficient, and a review of the CES is planned in the near future. The Commission currently

supports subdivision of a croft to allow a young entrant to gain his/her own croft, which also facilitates assistance towards the young entrant building a house on the new croft. This would also allow for more senior/less active crofters to retain a croft for his/her continued use while attracting an outgoing premium for the croft land assigned to a young entrant.

There is a concern about the lack of available crofts for young entrants and the Commission would be keen to encourage inactive resident crofters and absentee crofters to consider re-letting or assigning whole crofts or a subdivision of a croft to an active new entrant.

## *Question 2: What are the ambitions of Tiree's land-based community and what support is required to achieve these ambitions?*

### Background Information Collected

The combination of Calcium rich shell sand based grazing land and the availability of direct subsidies has made Tiree first and foremost a livestock producing island.<sup>25</sup>

The production of quality store calves and lambs on a small scale is fundamental in preserving the existing crofting 'way of life' on the island. Average herd and flock sizes on Tiree are still small averaging 20 cows and 60 sheep. The quality of stock is high and attracts buyers from all over the UK.<sup>26</sup>

There is a long standing tradition for good husbandry and an island wide pride in the stock produced. The agricultural industry is second only to the service industry in terms of income to the island.<sup>27</sup>

The provision of a new EU approved livestock marketing facility in 2003 has underpinned the livestock production business on the island.<sup>28</sup>

Traditionally crofting families have supplemented their income through part time employment mainly in the service sector with some branching out into contracting services. There is a limited amount of diversified business development beginning to emerge on crofts with the help of agency support such as the development of holiday accommodation, tourist activities and services and horticulture.

### Agricultural Community Response

**Livestock Production** - Virtually all crofters and farmers who took part believe that the greatest strength in Tiree's agricultural industry is the quality of the land, the quality of the livestock produced and the excellent animal husbandry. 70% commented on the value added to the industry by the new mart.

At least half think it is important that those involved in livestock production continue to increase the value and reputation of the Tiree stock. Several suggested that Tiree produce should be branded and marketed and most agreed that health status and quality assurance are important.

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<sup>25</sup> Tiree Rural Development Ltd. Business Plan (2001)

<sup>26</sup> “ “ “

<sup>27</sup> “ “ “

<sup>28</sup> Evidence from Study response.

There was a general feeling that although it is hard to make a living on Tiree, young people must be encouraged to stay in crofting in order to keep the industry alive.

**Organics** – Three individuals expressed an interest in organic production but had reservations about the ‘hassle’ involved.

**Diversification** – some clear aspirations and ambitions (with reservations about how to go about the development) came forward in discussions about agricultural diversification projects with suggestions of pigs, eggs, camp sites, caravan parks, byre conversions, small plant hire, catering and crèche facilities.

**Township & Community Development** - All those who took part are in favour of township and community co-operation although many have reservations about working together within townships. Many feel there are real issues which could be addressed at a community level. Virtually all are confident that TRD are the organisation who should be taking land-based community development forward on their behalf.

**Land-based Training** – There is an interest, particularly by the younger generation in securing more training opportunities on Tiree such as specialist short courses in fencing and shearing and in particular certificate courses which are likely to become compulsory such as spraying, safe use of ATV’s and first aid.

**Young Farmers Club** – The school age youngsters expressed an interest in starting a Young Farmers Club.

### *Question 3: What opportunities are currently available to those involved in land-based activities on Tiree in terms of practical and financial support?*

#### Background Information Collected

Crofting plays a vital role in maintaining populations in remote rural areas of the Highlands and Islands and provides a secure base for the development of small businesses. Many mistake crofting for small-scale farming. This is clearly far too narrow a view and understates the immense influence crofting has on the everyday lives of people in crofting areas.<sup>29</sup>

Tiree attracts international interest with regard to specific natural habitats and species; much of the island comes under designated sites of environmental importance

Agri-environment schemes have operated in Scotland since 1987. They are designed to encourage farmers and crofters to manage their land for the benefit of Scotland's wildlife and habitats. Participation in the schemes is for a minimum of 5 years. As well as providing benefits for biodiversity, the schemes also help support local communities in Scotland's rural areas.

Scottish Natural Heritage lead Natural Care Programme is designed to help more land managers to benefit from having an SSSI on their land. It includes individual Management Agreements and Management Schemes, which have been introduced gradually across Scotland's SSSIs and Natura sites

The Land Management Contract Menu Scheme is being introduced for the first time in 2005, alongside the new Single Farm Payment Scheme. It marks the first step towards introducing Land Management Contract schemes in Scotland. The menu has been designed to provide a

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<sup>29</sup> [www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/rural/crofting](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/rural/crofting)

range of measures suited to the diversity of agricultural activity and land types throughout Scotland. Farmers and crofters can choose which activities they wish to carry out from the menu, depending on what suits their plans for future business development and the eligibility requirements of individual measures.

The Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS), which is part of the Scottish Rural Development Plan, provides assistance to encourage farmers, crofters and common grazings committees to adopt practices to maintain and enhance particular habitats and landscape features.

As part of the implementation of the Single Farm Payment, an option is available to implement a beef national envelope. This will be effective from 1 January 2005. The key objectives are to support both the supply of quality Scotch beef and the environment.

The Scottish Executive is working towards promoting and developing a sustainable and viable organic farming and food sector which will ensure that, as far as possible, demand for organic products is met by Scottish producers while making a strong contribution to the environmental management of Scotland's agricultural land and resources.

The Agricultural Business Development Scheme is an innovative scheme for farmers/crofters and immediate family members introduced under the Rural Development Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999. The Scheme is jointly funded by SEERAD and the EU. The scheme can provide assistance towards investments in agricultural holdings, the development of new, or expansion of existing agricultural diversification projects or non-agricultural diversification enterprises, based either on or off-farm/croft to increase the income generating capacity of the farming family.

The Croft Entrance Scheme (CES) through the network of Local Enterprise Companies (LECS) offers financial support, advice and guidance for new entrants and compensates outgoing crofters for releasing crofts.

CCAGS by aiding and developing agricultural production on crofts and similar holdings aims to sustain the economic basis and way of life of crofting communities and so help retain population in crofting areas. CCAGS is designed to provide assistance to crofters towards the cost of capital works on holdings and common grazings in order to encourage the investment necessary to help compensate for the natural disadvantages of those areas for agricultural activity.

Crofting Communities Development Scheme (CCDS) provides funding on an incentive basis for successful projects carried out at township or community level.

### Community Response

**Information and advice** - There is strong opinion that information and advice with regard to all opportunities in the industry is difficult to access and therefore a lack of knowledge is growing on the island as opportunities increase and become more complex and demanding. Around a third of those interviewed suggested that there should be someone on the island with a good knowledge of all current issues and opportunities who can advise the agricultural community.

**CCAGS** – businesses are concerned that proposed changes to this scheme are likely to have a detrimental affect on Tiree's agricultural businesses with some of the grants being reduced from 70% to 50% and in particular grants for re-seeding and cropping being removed.

**Environmental Conservation Schemes** - Around half of crofters and farmers advised that their business is financially strengthened by environmental conservation schemes although many

were vague about how the schemes work, who runs which scheme and what is included in their individual schemes. Some commented that ESA schemes are detrimental to their business because of late cutting rules for silage suggesting that the financial benefits are cancelled out by the loss of crops through damage from weather and geese. Some have actually opted out because of this. There were a lot of comments that the goose scheme is inadequate.

**Diversification** - The majority of crofters on Tiree do not run any kind of diversification business from their crofts and feel they are not well advised with regard to opportunities for support in this area. Many expressed a need for local access to information and advice. There were several comments about difficulties and expenses of exporting any product. There were however a lot of suggestions for a farmers market to be held on the island

**Tourism** the short season is felt to hinder the industry in terms of income for anyone wanting to be involved in tourism. Two or three people felt that they had been actively discouraged from tourist based business by being asked to remove caravans sited on their crofts for use for letting. It was commented by several people that it is very important that the land is kept in a state which benefits tourism

### Agency Response

**SNH Business advice** – is required leading to a more efficient business and new business opportunities using the same croft resources. More sharing of resources schemes and know how could make things work better. There is more funding around for community projects rather than individual projects.

**Agri environment schemes** - Potential to tailor make schemes to address the issues on Tiree – but this depends on groups of crofters having the vision to make them work.

SNH are particularly interest in the following issues and would like to work with crofters on them.

- Achieving sustainable grazing regimes on machair via RSS/ESA schemes tailored to individual sites. (SNH Natural Care Scheme)
- Achieving sustainable grazing and drainage regimes on sliabh via all of above key objectives are cattle grazing in autumn, grazing breaks in spring. Early summer use of sluice gates. Careful drain management to retain wet ground in spring but prevent excessive flooding in winter.
- Managing fields for conncrake. Maintaining early and late cover. Maintaining quality of habitat via cropping, late autumn grazing, silage/hay making via ESA/RSS schemes and SNH Natural Care Shceme.
- Managing goose populations. Ensuring winter protected geese are undisturbed helping to manage summer greylag populations to minimize their impact on cropping.
- Allowing Tiree coastline to continue as a natural barrier to the forces of weather and sea via promoting wise use of sand and aggregate resource, preventing excessive vehicle pedestrian damage and allowing retreat and advancement where intervention would only create new problems. Grants and advice are available to help with 'management' e.g. fencing, visitor interpretation, paths.

**Tourism** - Plenty more capacity to capitalize on the tourism sector in such a way that it supports agriculture rather than displace it or cause a hindrance e.g. via more B & B or self catering use of redundant buildings access management interpretation, craft specialists, meat sales.

**Crofters Commission** – recognize and acknowledge concerns of those on Tiree with regard to the changes that SEERAD are making to CCAGS and have supported this in there consultation response to the executive on the proposed changes.

### *Question 4: Can we obtain a 'Highland and Islands Cattle Quality Guarantee' for the whole island and maintain a superior health status for Tiree's cattle?*

#### Background Information

**HI Health Ltd.** Based in Inverness, proposes to make livestock farming more profitable in the Highlands and Islands by continually improving the health and welfare of cattle herds in the area and using this superior health status as the foundation for new marketing initiatives. HI Health Ltd. have set up a HI-Health Initiative which has two levels: -

**Level 1** is designed to meet the potential Quality Assurance demands of the market place and includes cattle health and welfare.

**Level 2** is designed to eradicate cattle diseases which; cause significant losses to producers; may result in international trade barriers; may become more prominent because of potential links to disease in humans;

**Disease Accreditation:** - the initiative currently targets four prominent cattle diseases - **BVD** (bovine viral diarrhoea); **Johne's disease**; **Leptospirosis**; **IBR** (infectious bovine rhinotracheitis).

Central to the philosophy of the initiative is the decision to **"shut out" the target diseases**. The aim of the HI Health scheme is to **create high health status herds and prevent 'trade' in disease.** <sup>30</sup>

To satisfy the rules for accreditation and prevent subsequent infection herds must adopt herd health security measures that minimise the risk of purchasing infected stock or acquiring herd infection accidentally from neighbours and any other potential source of infection.

Some work has now been carried out by TRDLtd to look into the feasibility of running a 'Tiree Cattle Health Scheme'. Advice from the local vet suggests that the diseases which the scheme should address are BVD and Johne's Disease. Uist and Barra Cattle Health Initiative advise that the first important task is to get full support from the cattle producers on the island.

#### Community Response

All but one of those consulted agree it is important for Tiree to have a Cattle Health Initiative and that TRD should progress this. A few have completed initial testing. One is already BVD accredited and Johne's disease monitored free. About one third said they will only join if 100% of producers agree to take part. Some are concerned about the individual cost of the scheme. 72% of the islands cattle producers have now indicated that they would like to take part.

#### Agency Response

**SNH** Suggest going one step further and including the healthy environment in which the cattle are reared (increasing gaining a premium in the market place e.g. salt marsh lamb at M & S)

**Crofters Commission** Endorses the scheme and suggests development of an island wide meat marketing venture building on the quality of cattle produced.

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<sup>30</sup> HI Health Ltd. website

## **D) Summing up of Study**

The high quality livestock on Tiree is the basis of the agricultural businesses on the island at the present time.

The national climate for the sale of livestock however, is becoming increasingly vigilant in terms of animal welfare and health status. By offering livestock with superior health accreditation, premium prices are more likely to be secured. In addition disease in cattle can be extremely costly for individual businesses. The launch of a Tiree Cattle Health Initiative by a group of producers to address prominent cattle diseases Bovine Viral Diarrhoea and Johne's Disease, has been met with strong support from other producers on the island with 76.5% having signed up to date;

Continuous opportunities are required for education and progress with regard to good husbandry, bio-security and stockmanship with particular attention to the younger generation of up and coming crofters and farmers.

There is evidence of a lack of confidence and inspiration necessary for moving outside of very traditional practices. Awareness raising events are recommended such an annual open day bringing ideas, opportunities, business advisors etc to the island to inspire confidence and the organisation of trips to relevant projects, businesses and places of interest for groups from the island.

Particular reference has been made throughout the consultation to the high costs of freight and fuel and the damaging affect this has on small land-based businesses relying heavily on haulage. Other groups on the island are also concerned with this issue and a concerted effort must be made to work in partnership to address these concerns.

Various issues have arisen which are a practical hindrance for crofting. Examples highlighted have been the increasing resident goose numbers, the spread of Ragwort throughout the island, drainage problems and increasing predator numbers particularly ravens. It is important that the islands land-users work together to resolve such issues once they have been identified.

Recent elevation of large parts of the island to European protected status means that all government agencies are responsible for maintaining Tiree's special environment. Financial benefits are available to crofters through specific conservation schemes which come within the EU Machair Biodiversity Action Plan, EU Birds Directive & EU Corncrake Biodiversity Action Plan as well as through ESA/RSS, machair and sliabh management agreements via EU rural development funding as well as domestic agency support e.g. SEERAD run ESA/RSS, Land management contracts SNH natural care schemes, HIE and lottery funding.

There appears to be some lack of understanding with regard to the role of SNH and SEERAD in terms of environmental interest as well as a lack of knowledge of the benefits there are to be had in return for entering land management agreements.

There is evidence that members of the community feel isolated on Tiree from information, inspiration and support with regard to diversification. In a lot of cases young people are completely unaware of what is available to them to help them progress. Many have suggested that they would like to have someone to approach face to face.

## SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

### 1. Livestock Production

	<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<b>1. Livestock Production</b>	<p>Good Quality Stock.</p> <p>Good Land for growing stock. Good Husbandry.</p> <p>Strong Crofting culture, knowledge and skill.</p> <p>New livestock market.</p>	<p>Isolation adds expense.</p> <p>Lack of land for expansion.</p> <p>Lack of space and housing for up and coming crofters.</p>	<p>Tiree Cattle Health Initiative.</p> <p>Branding.</p> <p>National policy to promote Animal health – availability of funding and support.</p>	<p>Fuel costs and freight charges.</p> <p>Removal of direct subsidies.</p> <p>Reliance on stock prices.</p>

### 2. Environmental Land Management

	<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<b>2. Environmental Land Management Agreements</b>	<p>Valuable unique habitats and species attract international interest and funding for conservation.</p> <p>Potential to attract maintain a higher proportion of agri-environment support for livestock production than other areas.</p>	<p>Constraints within schemes discourage Progressive thinking.</p> <p>High levels of paper work involved.</p> <p>Limited knowledge.</p> <p>Requirement for more specialised management therefore greater expertise labour input etc.</p>	<p>Availability of income to supplement traditional activities.</p> <p>Adds direct and indirect value to tourism.</p>	<p>Can interfere with traditional agricultural activities.</p> <p>Can affect condition and efficiency of agricultural land.</p>

### 3. Diversification

	<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<b>3. Diversification</b>	<p>Strong crofting community with crofts available as development sites.</p> <p>Generation of practically minded young crofters.</p> <p>Plenty of examples of successful diversification on other islands and throughout the crofting counties.</p>	<p>Lack of information. Lack of confidence and experience.</p> <p>Lack of finance for setting up to match public funding. Short tourist season.</p> <p>Isolation adds expense to anything that could be exported.</p> <p>Small population limits sale of local produce or service.</p>	<p>Growing tourist market and season. Number of basic trades and services not available on the island.</p> <p>High level of public funding and support available.</p>	<p>Expensive set up costs.</p> <p>Experimental.</p> <p>Reliance on maintenance of population and/or visitor population.</p>

#### 4. Young Croft Entrants

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<b>4. Young Croft Entrants</b>	<p>Good number of young crofters wanting to stay on Tiree.</p> <p>Availability of income through diversification or external work to supplement crofting activity.</p>	<p>Lack of land for expansion.</p> <p>Lack of houses.</p> <p>Too few assignments to younger generation of crofters.</p> <p>Tiree at maximum output of livestock.</p> <p>Lack of training opportunities on Tiree.</p>	<p>Incentives for older generation to assign tenancies.</p> <p>Diversification.</p> <p>Subdivisions on poorer ground to create crofts as sites for Development.</p> <p>Availability of public funding and support for diversification projects and training.</p> <p>Support from Crofters Commission and Argyll Estates.</p>	<p>Young crofters having crofts which they don't manage well.</p> <p>Pressure put on older crofters to give up before they're ready.</p> <p>Dependence on diversification or external income.</p>

#### 5. Community and Township Development

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<b>5. Community &amp; Township Development</b>	<p>Availability of community owned company set up with the express purpose of promoting sustainable rural development on Tiree and delivering rural based projects to benefit the community.</p> <p>Confidence gained from recent achievement of new Rural Centre and Mart.</p> <p>Recognition within the community of the need for working together to benefit all</p> <p>Enthusiasm for and interest in community land-based development.</p>	<p>Time consuming and expensive to co-ordinate multiparty development.</p> <p>Cash flow - relies on public funding often drawn down after work is complete.</p> <p>Relies on availability and commitment of volunteers to lead projects.</p>	<p>Availability of public funding and agency support for expertise, training and practical assistance.</p> <p>Abundance of community land-based development throughout the crofting counties for inspiration, learning and support.</p> <p>Existence of Tiree Rural Development Ltd to deliver projects and the new rural centre as a focal point for community development.</p> <p>Existence of formal grazing committees to obtain funding deliver township projects</p>	<p>Danger of lack of time and people to maintain and run projects once initial project work is complete.</p> <p>Risk of projects not being viable once complete.</p> <p>Responsibility for large sums of public and community money.</p> <p>Complications of working together in a small community.</p>

## Recommended Areas for Action and SMART Targets drawn from results of 'the study'

<b>Areas for Action</b>	<b>Targets</b> (Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timeous)
<p><b>1. <u>Livestock Production.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the cattle numbers on the island;</li> <li>• Continue to increase the value of livestock through improvement in quality and health status;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To maintain cattle numbers at between 2,500 and 3,000 for the next five years;</li> <li>• Encouragement of 100% of cattle producers to sign up to the proposed Tiree Cattle Health Initiative by the end of 2006</li> <li>• Completion of three year cattle health programme starting in spring 2006;</li> <li>• Achievement of Hi Health accreditation for BVD Free and Johne's disease monitored cattle for the whole island by the end of 2009;</li> <li>• Encouragement of continued interest by supporting young crofters and the annual Agricultural Show;</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. <u>Environmental Land Management</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the agencies to make information accessible to all who might benefit;</li> <li>• Maintain and improve the relationship between the crofting community and organisations responsible for the conservation of the islands natural heritage;</li> <li>• Raise awareness of opportunities for land management agreements to compensate for loss of direct subsidies;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation of an annual crofting awareness seminar on Tiree;</li> <li>• Organisation of an annual event to celebrate the environment on Tiree;</li> <li>• Building on and maintaining land management agreements in partnership with SNH &amp; SEERAD meeting European objectives for Tiree and Biodiversity Action Plan;</li> <li>• Creation of a mechanism for easy access to information for the crofting community;</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. <u>Diversification</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of opportunities for diversification and provide support;</li> <li>• Increase training opportunities;</li> <li>• Organise inspirational shared experiences;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation of an annual crofting awareness seminar;</li> <li>• Organisation of an annual event to celebrate the environment on Tiree;</li> <li>• Organisation of two land-based courses each year for the next five years;</li> <li>• Organisation of 1 trip and one visitor to Tiree relating to diversification projects each year for the next five years;</li> </ul>

<p><b><u>4. Young Croft Entrants</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of opportunities for training, diversification, housing, business development, agricultural development and provide support;</li> <li>• Increase training opportunities;</li> <li>• Organise inspirational shared experiences;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation of an annual crofting awareness seminar on Tiree;</li> <li>• Organisation of an annual event to celebrate the environment on Tiree;</li> <li>• Organisation of two agricultural courses each year for the next five years;</li> <li>• Organisation of 1 trip and one visitor to Tiree relating to diversification projects each year for the next five years;</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>5. Community and Township Development</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of opportunities for township and community projects and provide support;</li> <li>• Tackle freight and fuel costs;</li> <li>• Work together to tackle local environmental issues that are threatening agricultural business or the natural heritage such as geese, ravens, ragwort, agri-plastics disposal and drainage;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation of an annual crofting awareness seminar;</li> <li>• Organisation of an annual event to celebrate the environment on Tiree;</li> <li>• Seek support from organisations such as the Scottish Crofters Foundation and TRDLtd to lobby for reduced transport costs in partnership with other organisations on the island;</li> <li>• Continued support the SNH lead Goose Management Scheme;</li> <li>• Establish a co-ordinated approach to seeking funding through appropriate organisations such as TRDLtd and TEAR to tackle issues and create projects to benefit land-based activity on Tiree;</li> </ul>

## Implementation of the Tiree Crofting, Agricultural and Environmental Strategy

The recommended areas for action will be implemented through this strategy which is an integral part of a five year Tiree Community Development Plan.

The following list of projects (established, ongoing, initiated and identified) begin to address the question of how through the development plan we can provide a viable and sustainable future for crofting and agriculture on the island through both local action and by influencing national decision making.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Benefit Group</b>	<b>Project duration</b>	<b>Lead Group</b>	<b>Stage of project</b>
<b>GENERAL</b>				
<b>Land based Training through Tiree Rural Centre</b>	Those involved in land-based activity business.	Three years	Tiree Rural Development Ltd	Funding Secure. Start date 15.03.05
<b>Special interest reference library</b>	Whole Island Community	Opening soon	TRDLtd.	Complete
<b>Annual Celebration of the land event</b>	Whole Island Community	New annual one day event.	TRDLtd	Funding Secured. Implementation in hand.
<b>Young Farmers Club</b>	Young population with interest in land-based activity	Ongoing	Not yet known	Suggested
<b>Local Adviser for Land Based activity</b>	Those involved in land-based activity businesses.			Suggested
<b>Public Consultation Meeting re. potential co-operative purchasing scheme with visiting speakers</b>	Agricultural Businesses			Suggested
<b>LIVESTOCK</b>				
<b>Tiree Cattle Health Initiative</b>	Cattle producers on Tiree	Three+ years	Tiree Rural Development Ltd	Funding secured for planning stage from AIE & Crofters Commission
<b>Branding</b>	Livestock producers on Tiree			Suggested
<b>Tiree Agricultural Show</b>	Whole Island Community	Annual one day event	Tiree Agricultural Society	Established and Self sustaining
<b>Stock Judging competition</b>	Young Livestock producers			Suggested
<b>Special interest trips</b>	Livestock producers on Tiree	Annual trip for three years	TRDLtd	Funding secured. Implementation in hand.
<b>Mobile Sheep Scanner</b>	Sheep producers on Tiree	Ongoing	Possible Township	Funding secured for planning stage from AIE

			project	& CC.
<b>LAND MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Rural Stewardship Scheme</b>	Ag. Businesses/ environmentalists/	Ongoing	SEERAD	Transfer from ESA to RSS taking place
<b>Goose Management Scheme</b>	Ag. business/ environmentalists	Annual	SNH	Ongoing (hoping to bid for a longer term scheme)
<b>Machair Management</b>	Ag. Businesses/ environmentalists		SNH	Suggested
<b>Corncrake Scheme</b>	Ag. business/ environmentalists	Ongoing	SNH	Secure
<b>Drainage Management Initiative</b>	Ag. Businesses/ environmentalists/		SNH	Suggested
<b>Whole Island ragwort control programme</b>	Ag. Businesses/ environmentalists/	Anticipated 3 years	RSPB/TRDLtd	Funding secured for planning stage from AIE & Crofters Commission
<b>Visitor Access Management</b>	Ag. Businesses /visitors			Suggested
<b>Bale wrap recycling project</b>	Ag. Businesses/ environmentalists/ Whole island community/visitors	Initially three years with hope of extension	Tiree Environmental Action and Recycling group	Funding secured for set up costs. Start date 01.03.05
<b>DIVERSIFICATION</b>				
<b>Farmers Market</b>	Producers/visitors/ Whole Island Community	Fortnightly	TRDLtd	Funding Secured
<b>Annual Crofting Seminar</b>	Crofting Community/ Young Entrants	Annual one or two day event	Tiree Rural Development Ltd / Crofters Commission/ SNH	Planning stage