

PRESS RELEASE 26/09/07

STÒRAS UIBHIST SUBMISSION TO SHUCKSMITH INQUIRY

**STÒRAS UIBHIST SAYS SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT MINISTERS MUST
DELEGTE MORE POWERS TO COMMUNITY LANDLORDS**

Stòras Uibhist, community owner of a 93,000 acre crofting estate in the Outer Hebrides, today made a written submission to the Shucksmith Inquiry into Crofting.

Stòras Uibhist believe that Scottish Government Ministers must delegate greater authority and responsibility for managing and developing crofting estates to the increasing numbers of democratically constituted Community Landowners.

If crofting estates are to be developed for the benefit of the communities that now own them, the Community Landowner must be delegated authority over land use and land management, currently held remotely in Inverness and Edinburgh, to allow for community driven initiatives on economic diversification and social development.

In the interim period before such delegation of powers, the Crofters Commission must actively address the ongoing problems of absentee crofters, unofficial croft leasing and land speculation.

Background Information

On behalf of the 4000 strong community Stòras Uibhist manages an estate of over 850 crofts, covering the majority of the islands of Eriskay, Benbecula and South Uist, which make up almost a quarter of the Western Isles (Outer Hebrides) region of Scotland.

The estate was purchased by Stòras Uibhist, a Community Company with a board of directors democratically elected by residents of the estate, in December 2006.

Formerly owned by a private syndicate of individuals, who primarily used the estate for sporting and leisure purposes, the islands are now managed by Stòras Uibhist as a crofting estate, for the benefit of the community as a whole. The company has a number of major projects under development to improve the economic and social health of the estate area.

Further information can be obtained from Huw Francis, Chief Executive, Stòras Uibhist, 1 Bornish, Isle of South Uist HS8 5SA; Tel: 01878 700301.