

**ANNEX**

SEPA supports the view expressed in the Scottish Executive's document 'A Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture: Next Steps' published in March 2006, where it was acknowledged; 'that farms and crofts in more fragile areas may not be economically viable on the basis of food production alone'. 'Nevertheless these units can deliver valuable social and environmental outcomes'. 'Society as customers and taxpayers should be prepared to purchase these public goods'.

**Questions to be posed.****1. Do you agree that new areas should be designated for Crofting?**

*SEPA has no strong position on this issue. While SEPA recognise the value of crofting we are not convinced that extending the areas where crofting tenure can apply will have a significant environmental impact. There is undoubtedly a demand for crofts within the crofting counties, however the abandonment of land and the acceleration in the decline of traditional agricultural activity in north and west Scotland suggests that the demand is not solely for land to work and is at least as much due to the need to acquire a potential house site. While these same demands exist in other areas of rural Scotland it is debatable whether extending crofting tenure is the most effective way of addressing this issues.*

**2. Do you agree the new areas should align with those of Highland and Islands Enterprise?**

If not, Why?

*SEPA has no strong position on this issue but recognise that there would be administrative advantages in aligning any new areas with those of Highlands and Islands Enterprise. However there are other areas in Scotland which would probably feel that they have equal claims to being considered for an extension to the area in which crofting tenure would apply.*

**3. Is there another area which has a stronger claim?**

If so, Why?

*SEPA has no strong view on this issue.*

**4. Do you agree that Crofting Community Right to Buy should not be extended to the new areas?**

*SEPA has no strong view on this issue.*

**5. Any other comments?**

*The Committee of Enquiry on Crofting has been asked to identify a vision for the future of crofting in contributing to sustaining and enhancing population; improving economic vitality; safeguarding landscape and biodiversity; and sustaining cultural diversity. There may have been value in awaiting the Committee's report before considering whether or not crofting tenure should be expanded beyond the traditional crofting counties.*

6. What is your background? (please tick)

Crofter

Small landholder

Agricultural tenant

Landowner

Other