

Patrick Krause, also on the panel answered the questions:

"Why have upland farming at all?"

The uplands, which have most of the UK's Mountain, Moorland, Heath (MMH) are very significant in the national ecosystem. About **43%** of Scotland is MMH. Most croft land is found in the uplands and contributes to the survival of around 33,000 family members, around 30% of Highland households and up to 60% of island households.

MMH areas have around 40% of the UK's soil carbon, provide 70% of our drinking water and are essential for biodiversity and conservation, providing a refuge for many species that used to occur in the UK. Such a valuable High Nature Value resource is kept in good condition by careful land management including grazing.

"What are we trying to achieve?"

Survival. Crofting has sustained vibrant communities in some of the remotest areas on the edge of Europe for generations. Survival is a great driver for care of the land, for example setting soumings in order to not over-graze. The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UKNEA) said "Blanket bogs and oceanic mountain habitats (croftland) provide a home to some of the UK's rarest species ... a **unique** mixture of temperate alpine and arctic species." Maintenance of this "requires low intensity management related to traditional farming".

"Is what we are doing on the right path? If not, what is stopping us?"

Money, money and money.

1. **Government policy;** driven by economic growth so land is seen as a resource to be exploited, for example by mega-scale wind-farm projects, commercial mono-crop forestry or mechanised peat extraction.
2. **Common Agriculture Policy (CAP);** Manipulation by subsidy, for example headage payments leading to over-grazing. Conversely the Single farm Payment then led to under-grazing, land abandonment and inertia. The UKNEA says "Agri-environment schemes (P2 in the CAP) are critical to maintain and enhance biodiversity and the ecosystem". P2 in Scotland has the lowest budget in Europe.
3. **NFUS;** manipulation of subsidy under the NFUS lobby, for example perverse use of the Less Favoured Area Support Scheme.

"How do we get there?"

We need a shift in 'mind-set'. The next generation need access to land, to homes, to jobs. And they need support in appropriate, 'place-based' education and training. SCF provide crofting skills training and mentoring but mainstream agricultural education needs to move away from the industrial model; we need the 'College of Enlightened Agriculture', where agroecology is practiced.