



Gaining Ground: Perspectives of crofters

Dr. David Heaney

Rossal Research and Consultancy

Background

- Crofting
- SCF
- Rossal Research and Consultancy
- Social Farming/Social Crofting, Care Farming, Green Farming
- Meaning of social
- Gaining Ground



Evidence

- This works elsewhere. Holland. Norway, Sweden, Finland, Ireland
- The farm setting has many benefits for clients*:
- But they are very difficult to measure
- “I just need to see the smile on a face to know this works”
- Looking for hard evidence is problematic
“can you make it cost neutral for us?”
- * placements, helpers, volunteers



Methods of research

- Case studies
- Interviews
- Asking crofters lots of questions



The crofts

- Care* is the main purpose of the enterprise, the croft is the setting
- Care an integral part of the croft
- Care a small part of the croft
- Care is a bi-product of the business

- * care, education, support



The crofters

- Diverse
- Mainly New entrants
- Non-crofting background
- But relevant experience
- Health
- Economics
- One common theme: these people all trying to do exactly what we need to do as a society and are all undervalued



“We began with this naive ideal that we would pay everyone the living wage but it soon became apparent that neither me, or anyone else was making anything like the living wage”

Case study 3

The Clients

- Paid for by the local/health authorities
- Paid for privately
- Volunteers (they need an experience and a reward. Picking cucumbers for an afternoon makes you feel great)
- Paid by the croft
- Contributing or not contributing
- A wide range of needs

Barriers

- Hard lessons
- Bureaucracy
- Getting contracts
- Care packages: Policy versus reality
- The business model
- Trial and error
- Making profit versus making a living
- Social enterprise



“I had the frontline staff, I had the high up strategic staff, all supportive, I missed one vital level which was the middle management who sign off on local budget decisions”

Case study 2

Benefits

- Crofter wellbeing: Working as a team combats isolation
- Client wellbeing: this works
- Community wellbeing: bringing agriculture closer to communities
- Societal wellbeing: agriculture at the centre of better ways of living





Recommendations

- Policy makers: need to make this easier
- Crofters/farmers: need to think what they want, and what fits into what they do. What level? What model?
- First step: volunteer days