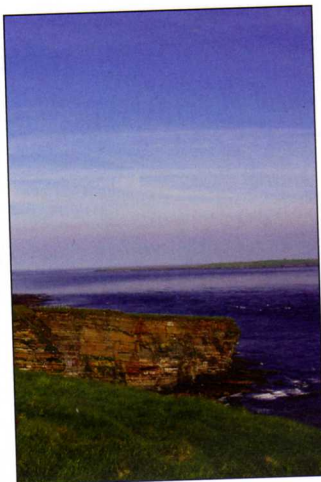


Environment

SNP 'need Plan B and C' for Crown Estate Commission

Lynne Whitelaw
Environment Correspondent

The Scottish Government should have a "Plan B and Plan C" in place in the event of failure to persuade Westminster to devolve the functions of the Crown Estate Commission (CEC), a leading writer and researcher on land and democracy has said. Following the SNP's landslide election victory in May, First Minister Alex Salmond has called for devolution of the CEC's functions to be included in the Scotland Bill. The move would mean the Scottish Parliament and Government would be responsible for leasing out Scotland's seabed and foreshore, and Salmond argues this would make Scotland better placed to benefit from investment in renewables. Andy Wightman, author of *Who Owns Scotland* and *The Poor had no Lawyers*, said that since the arguments surrounding devolution of the CEC's



functions had moved to "the field of high politics" following the SNP's election victory in May, the SNP's game plan was difficult to determine. He told *Holyrood*: "If [the SNP] demand the whole lot and they don't get it and they don't have a Plan B that would be kind of disappointing. He added: "I don't know whether it's going to happen because I don't have any insight as to what the SNP's game plan is on this. If they've got a good

game plan then it's got a good chance of success, if they don't have a Plan B or Plan C then it all may end in tears." Wightman also argued that progress could be being made right away by calling on the CEC to re-establish the Scottish operating division, which it merged into its five other operating divisions in 2002/03. "That's an administrative thing the Crown Estate commissioners could hardly refuse [to reveal] and that would tell us instantly what exactly the Scottish accounts [show] because for the last six years there haven't been any Scottish accounts, frankly," he said. He added: "They're not even keeping them in a separate division so we don't know what the income and expenditure are. That's a simple administrative reform that were it to be implemented would immediately begin to inform the debate because we would see where the money was coming from."

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IN BRIEF

Department of Social Development averaging 14 days.

WESTMINSTER Invitation to pro-life group criticised

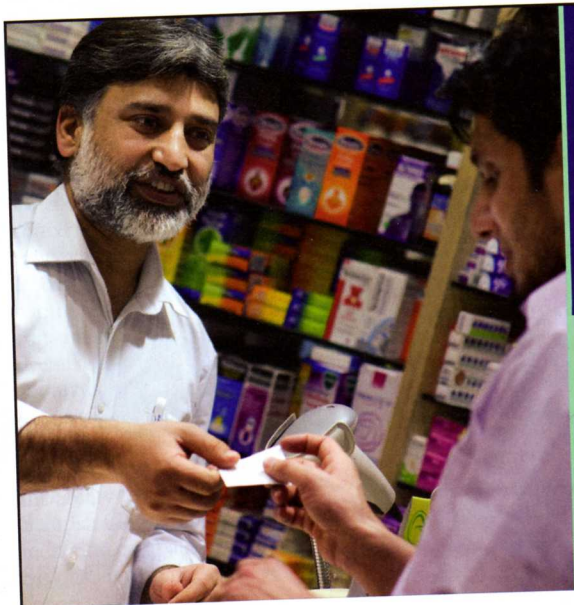
The Government has been criticised for inviting Life, an anti-abortion and pro-abstinence organisation, on to its advisory panel for sexual health. Life will replace the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, which has been providing pregnancy counselling for 40 years, on the Independent Advisory Group on Sexual Health and HIV.

Obama praises UK partnership

US President Barack Obama has used a state visit to the UK to declare the two nation's relationship is 'stronger than ever'. In a joint press conference with Prime Minister David Cameron, Obama said the two nations would stand shoulder-to-shoulder in Afghanistan and in increasing the pressure on Libya's Muammar Gaddafi.

Huhne questioned

Liberal Democrat Energy Secretary Chris Huhne has been interviewed by police regarding an allegation that he asked somebody to take his penalty points for a speeding offence in 2003. Huhne, who denies the allegations, has come under fire in recent weeks for his criticism of coalition partners, the Conservatives.




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