Written submission from Jamie Fletcher

I would like to make the following points regarding the proposed reintroduction of sporting rates in Scotland for deer shoot. I rent Barnhill estate on the isle of Jura. The total area covers approximately 7,500 acres. The land consists entirely of rough grazing all of which is the lowest grazing category having minimal feed value for animals. There is also approximately 200 acres of natural woodland of which half is fenced for natural regeneration. There is no farmland on the estate.

1. Deer are able to survive on the land without resorting to artificial feed.

2. If sheep or cattle were produced on the land it would require substantial subsidies to be economically viable.

3. Scotland has a fixed allocation of agricultural subsidies from the EU and any subsidy for farming on the estate would diminish agricultural subsidies for the rest of the farming community.

4. Apart from small pockets of natural trees the ground is too poor for commercial forestry.

5. The demand for Scottish wild venison outstrips supply and has done for many years.

6. Wild venison production should be encouraged as it is the only red meat in Scotland produced without subsidies from the public purse.

7. On Barnhill we cull our deer in a sustainable manner so that we can produce a steady annual stream of venison.

8. Where possible we take paying clients to cull the deer. This adds value to the culling, a concept drummed into us by every business meeting I have ever attended. That should not be penalised but encouraged. Since many of our paying clients come from abroad this is beneficial to the balance of payments and not only to ourselves but the increased spend throughout Scotland such as car hire, retail purchases, restaurants, accommodation etc

9. Any organization like the Forestry Commission which does not add value by having paying clients to help with the cull should be penalised for not making proper use of their assets.

10. By all means tax profits which estates make but do not add a financial burden onto estates for trying to make the best use of their assets by imposing rates on unsubsidised meat production.

11. Most estates which have stalking are in remote locations and the income derived helps to increase employment in very fragile communities where it is difficult to make a living from the land.

12. As a final thought I produce more deer on an annual basis on 55 acres of medium quality grazing near Stirling than I do on 7,500 acres of rough land on
Jura. That statistic alone should indicate the minimal capability of poor quality grazing land to produce red meat.

I would be happy to take any MSP round our land on Jura to discuss alternative land use so that they might understand more of the problems associated with running remote estates. In my book venison production with the added value of having paying guests where possible for culling purposes is the best use of remote locations in Scotland.