

RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Friday 29 June 2001
(Morning)

Session 1

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE **18th Meeting 2001, Session 1**

CONVENER

*Alex Fergusson (South of Scotland) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP)

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP)

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD)

*Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Richard Davies

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Tracey Haw e

ASSISTANT CLERK

Jake Thomas

Neil Stew art

LOCATION

Committee Room 4

Scottish Parliament

Rural Development Committee

Friday 29 June 2001

(Morning)

[THE DEPUTY CONVENER *opened the meeting at 09:00*]

Interests

The Deputy Convener (Fergus Ewing): Good morning, everyone. Thank you for attending this meeting, which, of necessity, has had to be convened at short notice. The first item of business is the declaration of interests of the new member.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): My declaration of interests regarding this committee would have to include my ownership of a hill farm in Argyll, the details of which are in the register of members' interests. How detailed do I have to be in making my declaration?

The Deputy Convener: Perhaps this copy of your entry in the register of members' interest will be of assistance. On the first occasion on which new members address the committee, it is necessary for them to declare interests that are relevant to the remit of the committee, irrespective of the business before the committee at that meeting.

Mr McGrigor: Well, I own heritable property—Ardchonnell Farm, Argyll—which consists of house, farmhouse, letting holiday cottage and livestock. The value of the estate is estimated at £500,000 to £600,000. I also own a one-sixth share of a salmon rod fishing syndicate on the River Awe, whose value is estimated at £30,000 to £40,000.

I am a member of the Scottish Crofters Union, the Scottish Landowners Federation and the National Farmers Union of Scotland. I am a member of the council of the Atlantic Salmon Trust and chairman of the Loch Awe Improvement Association. I am also a trustee of the Argyll fisheries trust. In addition, I am a member of the Game Conservancy Trust, the Countryside Alliance, the Scottish Association for Country Sports, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and the Royal Company of Archers. I am also a shareholder in the Glenalmond Tweed Company, a small business that makes and sells things made out of Harris tweed.

The Deputy Convener: Is that everything?

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): I think that it is an extremely boring repertoire.

Mr McGrigor: I also have a flat in London worth between £150,000 and £200,000. All my interests are recorded in the register of members' interests.

The Deputy Convener: Thank you, Jamie, and welcome to the committee. Your declaration means that we are certainly not going to beat the record for holding the shortest-ever committee meeting. We look forward to working with you in the committee over the months to come.

Convener

The Deputy Convener: Before we choose a new convener, it is appropriate to record the thanks of all members of the committee for the convenership of Alex Johnstone, who has moved on to other tasks.

Mrs Ewing: To pastures new, this being the Rural Development Committee.

The Deputy Convener: I stand corrected.

Could I have nominations for a new convener?

Mrs Ewing: I nominate Alex Fergusson.

Mr McGrigor: I second that.

The Deputy Convener: I take it that there are no other nominations.

Alex Fergusson (South of Scotland) (Con): I think that we have little choice in the matter. I certainly accept the nomination.

The Deputy Convener: It is my happy task to declare that Alex Fergusson is the new convener of the committee. I am sure that he will do an excellent job and I look forward to working with him as deputy convener. Let me be the first to congratulate you, Alex, on being elected unanimously as convener of the committee.

The Convener (Alex Fergusson): Thank you, deputy convener, for the part that you have played and for holding this meeting at such short notice. I spoke last night to other members of the committee who were unable to be here, and they all said that they were happy with the procedures that have been carried out. I echo your sentiments about the convenership of my predecessor, Alex Johnstone. I shall try to ensure that I maintain the high standards of neutrality that he upheld as convener. I look forward to working with the committee, which I think is a good one, over the coming months. We have a busy time ahead and I hope that members all enjoy a good and well-earned recess in the meantime.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I thank the official reporters and clerks for attending this morning's meeting at short notice.

Meeting closed at 09:05.

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