

Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Cùisean Dùthchail agus na h-Àrainneachd  
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment  
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Rob Gibson MSP  
Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment  
Committee (Convenor)  
M4.06  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
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23 September 2013

Dear Rob

Further to my letter of April 2012 inviting members of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee to attend the Scottish Rural Parliament stakeholder event on 29 May 2012, I am delighted to report that the event was very well attended and positively received.

Following the May 2012 event, subsequent workshops and stakeholder discussion, I was pleased to announce Scottish Government support towards the establishment of a Rural Parliament at the Scottish Cabinet meeting in Campbeltown. As a result, the independent Rural Parliament Management Group are now finalising detailed proposals to take this forward.

The Management Group recognises that establishing grass roots support is an essential part of this process and is proposing to engage with rural communities and work towards an inaugural event in autumn 2014, which will affirm grass-roots support and a mandate for future Rural Parliaments. The Management Group is in the process of establishing an Advisory Group which will represent a broad range of rural interests and act as a reservoir of expertise and advice.

The Management Group are currently applying for company status under the Companies Act with the name Scottish Rural Action, in order to apply for grant funding from Scottish Government.

The Committee's proposal has the following major components

- The 'Event'. The inaugural Rural Parliament, which will be treated as a pilot, and will most likely take place in the autumn of 2014.
- Community engagement and mobilisation. The plans developed for implementing the Rural Parliament, based on the recommendations of the many stakeholders involved in discussions, place strong emphasis on the initial community engagement and

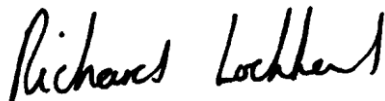
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mobilisation process. This will be essential for promoting the benefits of a Rural Parliament and for enabling the full support and involvement of the local actors in the Rural Parliament process. The Management Group envisage this process being driven by the main community-based networks on the ground, across Scotland.

- Governance and administration. The activity required to achieve this will not happen spontaneously. That effort will have to be co-ordinated, managed and led by experienced experts. The membership of the Management Group will take the strategic lead on this initiative, led by an independent chair and guided by the Advisory Group.

I will keep the Committee updated on the progress of this initiative as it develops over the coming year.



**RICHARD LOCHHEAD**