

27 October 2015



Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
EH99 1SP

Dear Rob

## **EVIDENCE SESSION ON CROWN ESTATES – 28 OCTOBER 2015**

Ahead of the planned Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee session with representatives from the Crown Estates on 28 October, I wanted to summarise the position of NFU Scotland on behalf of our members who are tenants of the four rural Crown Estates in Scotland.

NFU Scotland members who are tenants of the Crown Estate rural estates generally consider the organisation to be good landlords, however in recent months have been seeking clarity on what the management options for Crown Estate agricultural land will be following the devolution of these assets to the Scottish Government as part of the Scotland Bill. Whilst NFU Scotland is not opposed in principle to the devolution of the Crown Estate to the Scottish Parliament, the caveat would be the retention of the status quo with regard to the management of Crown Estate rural land.

Particular concerns have been raised about the possibility of local authorities being handed responsibility for Crown Estate management of farm land. Similarly, NFU Scotland considers that the suggestion to hand some of the management responsibility of Crown Estate rural land to Forestry Commission Scotland could lead to conflict between food production and tree-planting targets.

NFU Scotland Crown Estate tenanted members would also like to receive clarity on the anticipated impact (if any) the devolution of asset management could have on capital investment decisions on Crown Estate farm land. Fixed asset investment is critical for the sustainable development of the agricultural industry and there are concerns about the devolution of management leading to short-termism and possibly fragmentation in this process.

Having read through the papers, our members from the Glenlivet and Fochabers Estates wished us to emphasise on their behalf that their concerns and considerations on the implications for rural tenants post-devolution are in line with the summation provided by the Applegirth and Whitehill Estates in Annex C, in particular points 8 and 9.

The tenants in Morayshire have organised an open meeting to take place on 7<sup>th</sup> December, to which tenants from the south Scotland estates and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment have been invited to attend. It is the wish of our members that there is a consultative and joined-up approach to the discussion about future management of Crown Estates rural land, between tenants, government, wider public bodies and industry groups including NFU Scotland and STFA. This meeting is intended to bring all these stakeholders together to improve the perceived direction of travel that is reflected in points 11 and 12 in Annex C.

If I can provide any further information ahead of the session on Wednesday, please do let me know.

All best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Slipper', with a stylized, flowing script.

Clare Slipper

**Parliamentary Officer, NFU Scotland**