

18 November 2013

Dear Community Council,

Scottish Rural Parliament

I am writing to you as the Chair of a new organisation that has been charged by the Scottish Government to organise the Inaugural Scottish Rural Parliament towards the end of 2014.

Although new to Scotland, much of Europe has been working with rural parliaments for the past twenty years and, overleaf, I outline the main characteristics of the Rural Parliament and its two-year cycle.

We do not intend to define 'rural'; instead, we would like folk to opt in if they believe they are rural. Similarly, people are not elected to the rural parliament, they opt in. Some countries have adopted formulae to ensure a good age and gender mix and this is something that we will need to consider. Many will be nominated by community groups or community councils and others may self-nominate. What is essential is that this entire process and the business of the Rural Parliament is led by the community and we envisage that in an attendance of 400, some 300+ will be from the community with the balance from public bodies, NGOs, federations, etc. Our job is to produce the Inaugural Rural Parliament and thereafter it will establish its own governance, themes, etc.

Of equal importance to the Rural Parliament will be the rural movement. To a large extent we have this already through community companies, community councils, interest groups, etc. The process of the Rural Parliament encourages the rural movement to work with the public bodies and the like, between biennial meetings, to develop ideas and solutions for consideration at the following Rural Parliament, with a view to recommending policies and delivering a manifesto to Ministers.

The output of the Rural Parliament will be two-fold; consideration of policies and presenting these to Government and setting the themes to be developed over the intervening two years until it re-convenes.

We are currently recruiting for a Co-ordinator and I expect work to move ahead apace in the New Year. A large part of our job will be to bring in the rural community to ensure that the correct themes and issues are identified for the Inaugural Rural Parliament. For this reason I write to invite you to register an interest with us and we will be in touch over the coming months. The rural community needs to sign up to this.

Please register your interest by emailing info@scottishruralparliament.org.uk

Find out more about Rural Parliaments in Europe here:

<http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk/en/node/5428>

Yours faithfully,

John C Hutchison

Chair

Scottish Rural Action (*Scottish Rural Parliament Management Group*)

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