



Scottish Rural Parliament

Pàrlamaid Dhùthchail na h-Alba

Keynote Speakers

Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, Fergus Ewing MSP

Fergus Stewart Ewing was born in Glasgow in 1957, educated at Loretto School, and later Glasgow University. There, he graduated with an LLB. After qualifying as a solicitor, he ran his own legal practice and small business for 17 years.

Fergus Ewing was a member of the Federation of Small Business and the SCDI. He also developed policy of the Scottish National Party - on business legal and taxation matters - as well as serving on its National Executive Committee and as a Vice Convenor.

Elected to the Scottish Parliament in 1999 for the constituency of Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber, he has been re-elected on each of the four subsequent elections, moving from a majority of a nerve-wracking four hundred and forty-one to a more substantial total of nearly ten thousand for the seat of Inverness and Nairn.

During the first three sessions of the Scottish Parliament he sat on various committees, and was a front bencher on Finance and then Transport. In 2007 in the minority SNP administration he served as Minister for Community Safety. In 2011 he was appointed Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism. In November 2014 the portfolio became Business Energy & Tourism. He was appointed Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy & Connectivity in May 2016.



Martin Dorchester, Managing Director of Caledonian MacBrayne



Prior to Martin Dorchester taking up this role, he ran his own consultancy business with clients ranging from large private sector businesses, to smaller third sector organisations.

He was also Managing Director for Dixons B2B business which he managed through a major refinancing. Martin is a supporter of social and community business and chairs Firstport Ltd, a start-up funding organisation for social enterprises.

Staffan Nilsson, former chair of European Economic & Social Committee.



Staffan Nilsson, born in 1946, is the Chairman of All Sweden shall live (www.helasverige.se) and President of European Rural Community Alliance, ERCA. He was president European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) from 2010 to 2013, and a former board of directors of Swedish Farmers Federation, LRF. He has been a farmer since 1976 with milk production in Sweden.

Alex King, Depute Provost of Angus

The Depute Provost of Angus is Alex King who was appointed in May 2012. Councillor King was first elected to Angus District in 1984 and represented the Harbour Ward in Arbroath until 2007. Since 2007 he has represented the Arbroath West and Letham Ward.

As a qualified management accountant, Councillor King has served as both the Administration Finance Convener (on all three councils) since 1984 and as the Opposition Finance spokesman between 2007 and 2012. He is a member of a number of outside bodies including Arbroath Seafest Committee and Arbroath Golf Links Management Committee.



Professor Mark Shucksmith OBE, Newcastle University



Mark Shucksmith is Director of the Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal and Professor of Planning at Newcastle University.

By background Mark is a rural sociologist, and his research interests span poverty and social exclusion in rural areas, rural development, agricultural policy, and affordable rural housing.

He is a Trustee of ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and of the Carnegie UK Trust, and was a Commissioner at England's Commission for Rural Communities/ Countryside Agency from 2005-13. He was appointed in 2007-08 by the Scottish Government to Chair the Committee of Inquiry into Crofting, whose recommendations led to the Crofting Reform Act 2010. Mark was Vice-President of the International Rural Sociological Association from 2004-08 and was Programme Chair for the European Society of Rural Sociology Congress in Aberdeen in 2015.