



Scottish Rural Parliament

Newsletter — April 2014

The Rural Parliament is happening!

Its official, the first Scottish Rural Parliament will be taking place later this year in Oban, Argyll & Bute.

The three day event, from 6th – 8th November, will bring together 400 decision-makers, organisations and people from rural communities across Scotland.

They will produce a shared manifesto for rural Scotland whilst celebrating the strengths and achievements of rural communities.

Chair of Scottish Rural Action, John Hutchison said: "The Scottish Rural Parliament will be a community-led process of development culminating in an event every two years. Our aim is to give rural communities the opportunity to present a collective voice to Government. Encouraging discussion and debate over the next few months, leading up to November, will be an important part of that".

A series of activities over the next few months will seek to engage rural communities in the Rural Parliament prior to the November event.

Coordinator Emma Cooper explained: "The process of involvement, discussion and debate within and between rural communities prior to the event is as vital, if not more so, than the event itself. By engaging people in this manner and giving them a real voice in Scottish politics, it is hoped that this first Rural Parliament will kick-start a rural movement such as exists in other parts of Europe."



Scottish Rural Action have identified the community-run Atlantis Leisure Centre as the primary venue and are working with Argyll & Bute Council to secure Corran Halls as a secondary venue. Oban and the surrounding area will have an opportunity to showcase it's finest products, projects and talent as part of the event.



First Advisory Forum meeting held in March

The first meeting of the Advisory Forum, held on 18th March at Birnam Arts & Conference Centre, was hailed as an 'historic' occasion by facilitator Willy Roe. Advice was sought from participants about how best to engage rural communities in identifying the key themes for the inaugural Scottish Rural Parliament.

The meeting brought together 31 national membership and network organisations, who are all major stakeholders in the SRP, to support Scottish Rural Action towards the inaugural Rural Parliament.

Suggestions for the engagement strategy included online debates, regional events and a Rural Innovator award. Members identified the need for the Rural Parliament to ensure the purpose of the Rural Parliament can be quickly and easily explained to people.

Participants expressed interest in attending further Advisory Forum meetings and many were comfortable expressing their support for Scottish Rural Action in taking forwards the Scottish Rural



Parliament.

Scottish Rural Action will be in regular contact with Advisory Forum members throughout the full two-year lifecycle of the Scottish Rural Parliament.

The Advisory Forum is one of the ways in which organisations can be involved in the Rural Parliament. To find out other ways you or your organisation can be involved, register your interest using the 'Get Involved' link on the website.

Coordinator appointed

Scottish Rural Action has appointed a coordinator to oversee the inaugural Scottish Rural Parliament.

Emma Cooper, an experienced organisation manager and community worker will be based on the Isle of Bute where she has lived since 2011.

Ms Cooper was previously working for Bute Forest Ltd which manages community-owned land on the Isle of Bute and for which she was short-listed for the Glenfiddich Spirit of Scotland Environment Award earlier this year.

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Oban Liaison Group formed

A group of organisations in Oban, where the first Scottish Rural Parliament is taking place, have come together to provide advice and support for the organisers.

The group includes representatives of Argyll & Bute Council, Argyll Voluntary Action, Atlantis Leisure Centre, Bid4Oban and Oban Community Council and will be widening its membership as appropriate over the coming months.

The group will be assisting SRA in identifying suitable venues, visits, entertainment and produce.

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