

Report on Scottish Rural Parliament for JCC meeting on 14th August 2014

The key themes for the Scottish Rural Parliament have been identified through a survey conducted with over 1,000 people from across rural Scotland and they will be examined by people from rural communities and decision-makers at the gathering in Oban

November 6 - 8

**Atlantis Leisure Centre,
Dalriach Road Oban, 01631 566800 PA34 5JE**

The themes are confirmed to be:

- Rural businesses and employment
- Land use, planning and land reform
- Transport infrastructure
- Protecting our natural assets and adapting to environmental changes
- Broadband and connectivity
- Support for communities to lead with confidence

Although not identified as a main theme, sufficient interest and concern arose through the consultation on the topic of 'Delivery of health and social care' that this will be adopted this as a future theme to follow from the first Rural Parliament in November.

I must admit that I am disappointed at the way this was done because we were initially told that the themes would be agreed at an advisory forum meeting to be arranged for some time in September. However a survey was carried out online and the information on this was circulated at the time. The next advisory forum has been arranged for Friday 5th September 2014 at the Salutation Hotel in Perth which I intend to attend. The already agreed themes will be discussed as well as the most important discussion at this stage, the event itself.

The organizers have been holding an occasional rural hour discussion on Twitter but the information on this has been fairly sketchy. I was informed about the one on 6th August by email on 5th August. I haven't been keeping a close eye on the website for details so I don't know when it was uploaded onto that. The latest one was on Transport. You can check out the past discussions on the following link:
<https://storify.com/normanmacaskill/scottish-parliament-ruralhour-2>

Although I fully intend going to the event in Oban I am becoming concerned at the way this is progressing. Although it is being publicized as a bottom up approach for rural communities to make their voice heard, the way the information is being gathered seems to be a bit one dimensional i.e. through social media and email. They seem to be relying on local people holding meetings to promote the rural parliament and glean information from such meetings. However there doesn't seem to be a lot of them happening anywhere, although I have heard one has been organized here through tsiMoray; 6.00pm to 9.00pm at the Inkwell on Thursday 4th September. There may be more happening than I am aware of but it is my perception. Hopefully, the rural parliament itself will be more comprehensive.

Gordon Methven
JCC Member for Elgin