

NEWS RELEASE
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19th December 2008

TENANTS' FURY AT LAND AGENTS CLAIMS

Scottish tenant farmers are reacting with mounting fury to statements and claims being made by one of Scotland's largest firms of land agents. Chris Addison Scott of CKD Galbraith claims to have achieved rent rises of over 40% in this round of rent reviews representing £70 - £90/ac prime land, up to £65 on medium quality land and £45 on poorer land. He is also claiming livestock rents of £15/ ewe and £90/cow. These figures are pie in the sky and in demanding these rents, he is ignoring the realities of farming and the fragile viability of most units.

Speaking after a morning of addressing irate tenant members concerns Chairman Angus McCall said; "Imposing these rents will wreck the tenanted sector, tenants are being forced into agreeing unrealistic rents and those who are prepared to protect themselves in the Scottish Land Court, which is the only place tenants are able to get justice, have been frightened off by the implied costs.. Although many tenants now carry insurance cover, they have no wish to "have their day in court" but are forced there in self-defence.

STFA believes that tenants should have no fear of the Land Court. In adjudicating over a rent review the Land Court must pay equal attention to the economic situation as to comparable evidence and are unlikely to impose rents which could jeopardise a farming business. Costs will rarely run into tens of thousands of pounds and the court is able to apportion costs where there is a vexatious litigant.

"There is a minority of land agents who seem to be conducting a concerted campaign to hike up rents to unacceptable levels. The sooner a case appears before the Land Court the better, so that benchmarks can be set and the bluster and hype taken of the equation. In fact, land agents appear reluctant to have rent review cases heard in the Land Court, not because of the potential costs, but once some of the more contentious issues are resolved there will be less room for bullying and bluster and commonsense and sanity might prevail..

"Contrast the situation in France where a young Scottish new entrant informed me today that rents are regionally set at a reasonable level, with none of the aggression and tension now evident in Scotland. The Scottish Government will soon have to consider greater rather than less regulation if these land agents continue to behave in such a confrontational manner."

STFA also condemns Galbraith's call in the Press and Journal for freedom of contract in letting land as mischief making. In his response to the Tenant Farming Forum on Thursday, Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead made his commitment to the tenanted sector quite clear; he stated..... **“ Agricultural tenancy arrangements in Scotland should provide broadly the same level of protection for tenants as has been available to date.”**

It is simply untrue to claim that the Scottish Government is “sympathetic” to the idea of freedom of contract. The only change being contemplated in SLDTs and LDTs is to make term lengths more flexible. STFA firmly believes that the behaviour of this minority of land agents over the last few months fully justifies the need for regulation in Scottish tenancies.

Notes for editors:

See previous News Release of 9th December – “RECORD NUMBERS OF TENANTS FACE LAND COURT”

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