

News Release
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STFA CALLS FOR EQUALITY IN RENEWABLE REVOLUTION

The Scottish Tenant farmers Association welcomes the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs announcement at the Black Isle Show of his intention to develop an Agr-Renewable Strategy. Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead has said that the strategy will “ensure that land managers can benefit from the renewables revolution and unlock the green energy potential of their land”.

In response to the announcement STFA chairman Angus McCall said; “The government’s move to bring some order to what has become an increasingly cumbersome and complex planning process is most welcome. There is tremendous potential for the agricultural industry to take advantage of the varied opportunities created by the government’s renewables target and tenant farmers along with other land managers are ready to play their part.

“However, tenant farmers, face different challenges over and above the planning process and I am disappointed that the Cabinet Secretary has not sought to identify these in his announcement. Firstly, tenants are already facing demands from landlords to resume land on which to establish wind farms and they have little defence beyond the planning process. Moreover, there is no proper guidance as to the compensation which they should be due for the inconvenience, disruption and possible disfigurement created by large wind turbines. The tenanted sector requires a robust set of guidelines as to the level of compensation properly due to a tenant from the installation of wind turbines on his land and the planning authority should be directed to assess the impact of the development on the agricultural operation, productivity and amenity of the tenanted unit.

“Secondly, although tenants are at liberty to develop renewable projects on their tenanted holdings there is a lack of clarity as to whether this should be treated as a tenant’s improvement to the farm or as a diversification. Legal advice is not clear-cut and we will be pressing the government and landowners’ organisations to develop guidance so that tenants do not find themselves tied up in legal wrangles as well as having to battle through the morass of red tape that represents the planning process. I would wish to pre-empt the need for an expensive tussle in the Land Court by creating a set of agreed rules within which both parties can work.

“A third of Scotland’s land is tenanted and tenants can make a tremendous contribution towards meeting government targets, but they must be free to operate under the same set of rules as other farmers. Tenants must be allowed to benefit from the renewable revolution and not become its victims.”

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