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Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

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29 November 2023

Dear Convener,

Scottish Land Commission – Appointment of Chair and Land Commissioners Candidate Recommendations

I wrote to your Committee on 11 August to agree the approach being taken to appoint a new Chair and two new Land Commissioners to the Scottish Land Commission (“SLC”). I am grateful for your helpful comments on the requirements in Section 11 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 (“the Act”), and the application pack was amended to reflect this. Following a successful recruitment exercise, which attracted 7 applications for the Chair, and 17 applications for the roles of Land Commissioner, I am pleased to propose to Parliament the following candidates:

Michael Russell (Chair)
Craig MacKenzie (Land Commissioner)
Deborah Roberts (Land Commissioner)

As detailed in my previous correspondence and in accordance with the Act, appointments to the SLC are subject to Parliamentary approval. As such, I am writing to seek Parliamentary approval of the aforementioned candidates via the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

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Appointments to the SLC are regulated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner for Public Life in Scotland and I can assure the Committee that the appointments process has been conducted in line with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland (“the Code”), as well as in compliance with the terms of the Act.

Furthermore, the Scottish Government’s Public Appointments Team provided oversight of the appointment process and the assessment process was supported by a Public Appointments Adviser, appointed by the Ethical Standards Commissioner, who was a member of the selection panel.

For assurance purposes and to support the Parliament in its role in approving these appointments, the following supporting information is set out in Annexes A – D:

- ANNEX A: Scottish Government’s approach to the appointment process
- ANNEX B: Person Specification – Chair
- ANNEX C: Person Specification – Land Commissioners
- ANNEX D: Candidate career history and panel recommendation

Should the Scottish Parliament deem the proposed candidates suitable for appointment, the appointees will be appointed for a period not exceeding 5 years in accordance with Part 2, Chapter 1, paragraph 10(3) of the Act. I hope that the information enclosed will enable the Parliament to make an informed decision on the proposed candidates.

I am confident that the Parliamentary stage of the process will be a positive part of these nationally important appointments, and I am grateful for your support to ensure proportionate Parliamentary scrutiny in line with the requirements of the Act.

Yours sincerely,

MAIRI GOUGEON

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ANNEX A – Scottish Government’s approach to the appointment process

Appointments to Scottish Land Commission – Statement to Scottish Parliament under section 11(4) of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 – November 2023

Scottish Government’s approach to the appointment process

1. This Report is laid in accordance with section 11(4) of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 (‘the Act’). It is a statement of how the Scottish Ministers have complied with their statutory duties under section 11(1) to (3) of the Act.
2. The Scottish Ministers consider that the various steps taken through the appointments process, in particular the recommendations made by the selection panel and the final consideration by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, demonstrate compliance with the relevant duties.
3. As well as complying with the terms of the Act, the appointments process was regulated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner, and followed the principles of the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland (‘the Code’).
4. Section 10(2) of the Act states that the Scottish Ministers may appoint a person as a member only if the Scottish Parliament has approved the appointment.
5. This Report is set out in three parts, one part for each duty contained within section 11(1) to (3).

Section 11(1)

6. Section 11(1) of the Act provides that in appointing members to the Commission, the Scottish Ministers must –
 - (a) have regard among other things to the desirability of the Commission (taken as a whole) having expertise or experience in –
 - i. land reform,
 - ii. law,
 - iii. finance,
 - iv. economic issues,
 - v. planning and development,
 - vi. land management,
 - vii. community empowerment,
 - viii. environmental issues,
 - ix. human rights,
 - x. equal opportunities,
 - xi. the reduction of inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage, and
 - (b) encourage equal opportunities and in particular the observance of the equal opportunity requirements.
7. The Scottish Ministers have taken account of these requirements throughout the appointments process to seek to ensure that the Commissioners who are appointed have, in so far as possible, the desired range of expertise or experience. The duty is to have regard to among other things the desirability of the Commission (taken as whole) having expertise or experience in the areas that are listed. The Commission will have

staff to support it in fulfilling its functions, and it will also have the ability to procure additional services should that be desirable.

The selection criteria used

8. The Code provides that when considering any appointment the Scottish Ministers will determine what skills, knowledge, experience and other attributes are needed by the Board for it to perform its statutory functions and to do so economically, efficiently and effectively.
9. Taking into account the areas of expertise set out in section 11(1), section 11(2) and the criteria identified by the selection panel to support an effective Board, the skills, knowledge and experience of the continuing Land Commissioners, and any gaps left by the departing two Land Commissioners and Chair, Ministers agreed the following selection criteria for the Land Commissioners:

Priority Criteria (at least one must be met)

- Finance
- Land Reform and Land Policy
- Legal

Essential criteria (all must be met)

- Strategic thinking and oversight
- Communication, influence and constructive challenge
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Sound judgement

Desirable criteria (not mandatory)

- Gaelic speaker

10. Section 10(7) of the Act provides that Ministers must select one of the Land Commissioners to chair the Commission and a different set of selection criteria were identified for those applying to be Chair. Ministers agreed the following selection criteria for the Chair:

Priority Criteria (both must be met)

- Leadership and Governance
- Stakeholder engagement

Essential criteria (all must be met)

- Strategic thinking and oversight
- Communication, influence and constructive challenge
- Sound judgement

Desirable criteria (not mandatory)

- Gaelic speaker

11. These selection criteria were set out in the applicant information packs for the Land Commissioners and Chair, and applicants were asked to give evidence of some of these in the application forms that were submitted, as indicated in the person specification.

Appointment Plan and Advertising

12. The Code requires that the selection panel agree an appointment plan containing the publicity, application and assessment methods to be used. The application and assessment methods and any positive action measures selected will be based on evidence of what works well to attract and lead to the appointment of a diverse range of able applicants, taking account of relevant information held by, maintained and regularly updated by the Scottish Government for this purpose.
The appointment plan also contains a timetable specifying key dates within the round.
13. The Code says that all materials to be made available to prospective applicants such as publicity or advertisements about posts, details about posts, the assessment criteria to be applied, and the application forms (or equivalent) should be clearly and plainly drafted using simple, easy to understand, language. The objective should be to encourage the optimum number of people to apply for positions and for people to find it a comparatively easy exercise to submit applications.
14. The application forms and information packs were compiled to reflect the selection criteria and the posts were advertised in accordance with the agreed appointment plan.
15. The posts were advertised on the Scottish Government Public Appointments website www.appointed-for-scotland.org on Tuesday 19 September.
16. To augment this approach, the Scottish Government arranged for the advertisement to be circulated to a wide list of stakeholders, covering professional membership organisations, NGOs and public and private sector companies that cover a wide number of subject areas.
17. The SLC organised two online outreach events and the application information pack contained details of a current Land Commissioner from whom potential applicants could seek more information about the roles.
18. Letters from the Cabinet Secretary were sent to the following stakeholders to raise awareness of the appointments round: Community Land Scotland, Development Trusts Association Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, Scottish Land & Estates, National Farmers Union Scotland, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Scotland, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, Institute of Directors Scotland, and Social Enterprise Scotland.

Shortlisting for interviews

19. The selection panel considered all of the applications received and assessed them against the above criteria. In line with the Code, panel members received guidance on how they might score the evidence of each criteria provided by the applicants. Panel members used the markings to draw up a shortlist and assess applicants' suitability for appointment at interview. Decisions were based on an objective assessment of the applicant's suitability for the advertised posts.
20. Throughout the sift, the panel took account of the particular requirements in section 11(1) of the Act. In selecting the Land Commissioner candidates for interview, the panel assessed the application forms against, in addition to certain essential criteria, the priority criteria of Finance, Land Reform and Land Policy, and Legal, and were satisfied that the candidates selected for interview covered the requirements.

21. All applicants invited to interview were notified by phone, and unsuccessful candidates were notified by email of the outcome of the shortlisting meeting.

The interviews

22. Interviews were held on 14, 15 and 16 November. The approach taken, of inviting the candidates to deliver a prepared response to an exercise issued a week prior to the interview and to answer a series of questions, was aligned with the Code's requirements that the assessment methods used to assess applicants will ensure that the most able people on merit are identified and recommended for appointment. The Code provides that the selection panel will assess the merits of applicants against the skills, knowledge and experience needed using the methods they have agreed. The Code requires that no new requirements should be introduced during the appointment round.

23. Before interview, the candidates for Land Commissioner were provided with example board papers and advised in writing that the process would include a five minute discussion on the following:

You are preparing for a board meeting. One of the agenda items is on natural capital and land. The board papers and annexes are attached.

- (i) key issues and points that you wish to discuss and would be ready to raise during the meeting*
- (ii) your initial conclusions on this topic and item.*

24. The candidates for Chair were provided with example board papers and advised in writing that the process would include a seven minute discussion on the following:

You are preparing to chair a board meeting. One of the agenda items is on natural capital and land. The board paper and annexes are attached. Please come prepared to explain in no more than seven minutes:

- (i) how you plan to chair the discussion on this item*
- (ii) key issues and points that you wish to be discussed at the meeting*
- (iii) community feedback that you wish to be discussed at the meeting*
- (iv) your initial conclusions or recommendations on this item*

25. The interviews conducted by the selection panel were used to identify the applicants who demonstrated the skills, knowledge and experience required to be effective in the role and those who did not.

Scottish Ministers' consideration

26. Following the conclusion of the interviews, the selection panel identified the applicants who had demonstrated the skills, knowledge and experience required. The selection panel agreed an applicant summary for each applicant and provided those of recommended candidates to the appointing Cabinet Secretary. The summary set out the panel's assessment of how each applicant demonstrated the skills, knowledge and experience required to be effective in the role. The applicant summary was based on the information provided by each applicant during the appointment round and was intended to be sufficiently detailed to:

- i. Identify to the appointing Cabinet Secretary the most able applicants and

ii. Provide evidence that the panel's assessments were valid.

27. The conclusion of the process involved the appointing Cabinet Secretary considering the candidates who the selection recommended as most able and who, subject to approval by the Scottish Parliament, should be appointed to the Commission. The candidate recommended for appointment to the role of Chair was also approved by the First Minister.

28. The Act provides at 11(1)(b) that in appointing members to the Commission Scottish Ministers must encourage equal opportunities and in particular the observance of the equal opportunities as defined in schedule 5 of the Scotland Act 1998. The selection panel and the Cabinet Secretary took account of this requirement throughout the appointments process, including offering a Guaranteed Interview Scheme and anonymised applications

Section 11(2)

29. Section 11(2) provides that: 'In appointing the Land Commissioners, the Scottish Ministers must take every reasonable step to ensure that at least one of the Commissioners is a speaker of the Gaelic language'.

30. The aspects of the appointments process where particular consideration was given to fulfilling the requirement in section 11(2) are set out below.

The selection criteria used

- Detail in relation to the selection criteria used is set out above. The selection panel recommended to Scottish Ministers that the ability to speak the Gaelic language should be a desirable criteria but not mandatory, so as not to narrow the pool of applicants with other relevant skills and experience. The application form asked applicants to provide evidence of an ability to speak and understand the Gaelic language and culture, and an awareness of the significance of land use in Gaelic culture.

Appointment Plan and Advertising

- Detail in relation to the steps undertaken in terms of the appointment plan and advertising is set out above. In addition, the advertisements were translated into Gaelic and signposted from the English language advertisements.

Shortlisting for interviews

- Detail in relation to shortlisting for interviews is set out above. Throughout the shortlisting, the panel took account of the particular requirements in section 11(2) of the Act.

The interviews and Scottish Ministers' consideration

- Detail in relation to the interviews and Scottish Ministers' consideration is set out above. The panel invited all interviewees to provide evidence of their ability to speak and understand the Gaelic language and culture, and to demonstrate an awareness of the significance of land use in Gaelic culture.

- The candidate selected by Scottish Ministers to be appointed as Chair has been a Gaelic learner for a number of years, and has experience of presenting in Gaelic. It is a skill he continues to pursue.

Section 11(3)

31. This appointment process did not cover the post of Tenant Farming Commissioner – therefore compliance with s11(3) is not applicable.

Selection Panel Recommendation

Scottish Ministers have considered and agreed the recommendations of the selection panel and recommend the following candidates to the Scottish Parliament for appointment as Chair and Land Commissioners of the SLC:

Chair – Michael Russell

Land Commissioner – Craig MacKenzie

Land Commissioner – Deborah Roberts

ANNEX B – Person Specification – Chair

Person Specification

What skills, experience and personal qualities do we need the Chair to have?

This section provides information on the skills, experience and knowledge required for the Chair of the Scottish Land Commission and how these will be assessed in the recruitment process.

In providing the evidence sought, you can draw on examples from your working and/or personal life, or through your participation with a private, public, voluntary, charity or community organisation.

There are two mandatory sections (Sections A and B) in the person specification and one optional section (Section C), so please consider these carefully when completing your application.

In respect of these posts, the priority criteria are weighted over the essential criteria (once met), and of the candidate or candidates who meet the essential criteria, those that provide the strongest evidence against the two priority criteria will be considered most able to fulfil the role. In the event that candidates provide evidence of equal merit against the priority criteria, the panel will then take into account the strength of the evidence presented against the essential criteria in determining the candidate(s) most able to fulfil the role.

1. **Section A – Priority Criteria:** applicants for Chair **must** evidence **both priority criteria** in order to be considered for appointment.
2. **Section B – Essential Criteria:** applicants for Chair **must** be able to demonstrate evidence of **all** these criteria in order to be considered for appointment.
3. **Section C – Desirable Criterion:** it is desirable to appoint an additional Gaelic speaker to the Board although this is not an essential requirement.

If you also wish to be considered for a Land Commissioner role as well as the Chair role, please refer to the separate application pack and application form for Land Commissioner.

Please note the word limits in each case. Any words in excess of the limits will not be taken into account in assessing your application. Evidence provided in a tailored career history should be no more than 400 words in total.

Section A

All applicants for Chair **must** demonstrate evidence of both of the priority criteria listed below.

Knowledge, experience and skills required	What does it mean?	Where it will be tested
<p>Leadership and Governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to build and chair a high performing board which understands its non-executive functions and accountabilities and sets direction • Experience of ensuring and implementing effective governance at a senior level • Understand fiscal and legal board responsibilities including audit and risk management 	<p>You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion and you will also be asked to outline relevant experience in a tailored career history. We will also discuss this at interview, and as part of the practical exercise if you are shortlisted.</p>
<p>Stakeholder engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track record of developing collaborative relationships and partnerships with internal and external stakeholders to achieve shared objectives and purpose • Able to influence relationships and outcomes with partners and stakeholders • Able to act as an ambassador for, and represent, the Commission effectively with a wide range of external stakeholders. 	<p>You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion and you will also be asked to outline relevant experience in a tailored career history. We will also discuss this at interview, and as part of the practical exercise if you are shortlisted.</p>

Section B

All applicants for Chair **must** demonstrate evidence of **all** of the criteria listed below.

Knowledge, experience and skills required	What does it mean?	Where it will be tested
Strategic thinking and oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to look ahead and consider issues over the short, medium and long term and identify relevant implications• Able to evaluate organisational and board performance	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion. We will also discuss this at interview , if you are shortlisted.
Communication, influence and constructive challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to communicate effectively with different audiences and in public settings• Able to challenge constructively, particularly in a Board setting	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion. We will also discuss this at interview , if you are shortlisted
Sound judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to weigh up evidence and balance a number of considerations within the wider context• Confident in making reasoned judgements and in articulating and justifying the rationale	We will discuss this at interview , and as part of the practical exercise if you are shortlisted.

Section C

It would be desirable to the Board if you could evidence the following:

Knowledge, experience and skills desired	What does it mean?	Where it will be tested
Gaelic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to speak and understand the Gaelic language• An awareness of the significance of land use in Gaelic culture	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion (if applicable) and this may be discussed at interview if you are shortlisted.

ANNEX C – Person Specification – Land Commissioners

Person Specification

What skills, experience and personal qualities do we need Commissioners to have?

This section provides information on the skills, experience and knowledge required for Commissioners of the Scottish Land Commission and how these will be assessed in the recruitment process.

In providing the evidence sought, you can draw on examples from your working and/or personal life, or through your participation with a private, public, voluntary, charity or community organisation.

There are two mandatory sections (Sections A and B) in the person specification and one optional section (Section C), so please consider these carefully when completing your application.

In respect of these posts, the priority criteria are weighted over the essential criteria (once met), and of the candidate or candidates who meet the essential criteria, those that provide the strongest evidence against at least one of the priority criteria will be considered most able to fulfil the role. In the event that candidates provide evidence of equal merit against the priority criteria, the panel will then take into account the strength of the evidence presented against the essential criteria in determining the candidate(s) most able to fulfil the role. The Minister will appoint a combination of candidates as Commissioners who together most closely meet the priority criteria in order to achieve the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience on the Board.

4. **Section A – Priority Criteria:** applicants for Commissioner **must** be able to demonstrate evidence of **at least one** of the priority criteria in order to be considered for appointment.
5. **Section B – Essential Criteria:** applicants for Commissioner **must** be able to demonstrate evidence of **all** of these essential criteria in order to be considered for appointment.
6. **Section C – Desirable Criterion:** it is desirable to appoint an additional Gaelic speaker to the Board although this is not an essential requirement.

If you also wish to be considered for the Chair role as well as a Commissioner role, you will need to submit a separate application form for Chair.

Please note the word limits in each case. Any words in excess of the limits will not be taken into account in assessing your application. Evidence provided in a tailored career history should be no more than 400 words in total. Full details on how to apply are set out on page 12 of the pack and in the application form.

Section A

Applicants wishing to be considered for the role of Commissioner must demonstrate **evidence of at least one of the three priority criteria below**. You are asked to consider which of the priority criteria listed best fit your skills, knowledge and experience. If appropriate, you can provide evidence against more than one of these priority criteria.

Knowledge, experience and skills required	What does it mean?	Where it will be tested
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience of finance and/or audit in one or more of the following: financial scrutiny, financial sustainability, investment appraisal and investment management• Able to contribute to the effective working of the Board in relation to finance, audit and risk	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion and you will also be asked to outline relevant experience in a tailored career history . We will also discuss this at interview , if you are shortlisted.
Land Reform and Land Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of the role of the Scottish Land Commission in urban and rural land policy• Knowledge of statutory and policy issues relating to land reform• Understanding of external factors impacting on land policy in Scotland	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion and you will also be asked to outline relevant experience in a tailored career history . We will also discuss this at interview , if you are shortlisted.
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expertise in human rights legislation and devolved/reserved powers in the context of Scottish land and property matters	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion and you will also be asked to outline relevant experience in a tailored career history . We will also discuss this at interview , if you are shortlisted.

Section B

All applicants **must** demonstrate evidence of **all** of the essential criteria listed below.

Knowledge, experience and skills required	What does it mean?	Where it will be tested
Strategic thinking and oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to look ahead and consider issues over the short, medium and long term and identify relevant implications• Able to evaluate organisational and board performance	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion.. We will also discuss this at interview , if you are shortlisted and it will be assessed as part of the practical exercise .
Communication, influence and constructive challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to communicate effectively with different audiences and in public settings• Able to challenge constructively, particularly in a Board setting	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion. We will also discuss this at interview , if you are shortlisted and it will be assessed as part of the practical exercise.
Teamwork and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience of collaborating with others to achieve shared objectives• Able to build a range of effective working relationships	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion and you will also be asked to outline relevant experience in a tailored career history . We will also discuss this at interview , if you are shortlisted.
Sound judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to weigh up evidence and balance a number of considerations within the wider context• Confident in making reasoned judgements and can articulate and justify the rationale	We will discuss this at interview , and it will be assessed as part of the practical exercise if you are shortlisted.

Section C

It would be desirable to the Board if you could evidence the following:

Knowledge, experience and skills desired	What does it mean?	Where it will be tested
Gaelic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to speak and understand the Gaelic language and culture• An awareness of the significance of land use in Gaelic culture	You will have up to 300 words in your application form to provide evidence against this criterion (if applicable) and this may be discussed at interview if you are shortlisted.

ANNEX D - Candidate Career History and Panel Recommendation

1. The recommended appointees have provided the following tailored career history summaries as part of their application, which outline their relevant experience and suitability for the aforementioned board positions.
2. Copies of the full application forms submitted by the recommended appointees can be provided to the Committee if required.

Chair – Michael Russell – Tailored Career History

I have been a strong supporter of land reform, and have a unique perspective on, and experience of, the issue having held Ministerial responsibility for the process as Environment Minister from 2007 - 2009, which included my support for the sale of Rum to the community: having, as the MSP for Argyll and Bute, supported local communities in their land reform journey - for example on Gigha and then on Ulva - whilst maintaining an active involvement in farming issues including those of tenant farmers in areas of difficulty such as Islay and having been a member of the Scottish Parliament Committee that scrutinised the 2016 Land Reform Act which of course set up the Scottish Land Commission. I was also involved in the passage of the Community Empowerment Act, and had a particular concern with regard to rural asset transfer.

In addition I have frequently written on the subject and remain interested, not least because I live in a rural community where the issues and pressures arising from farming, forestry (including for offset) and land use and ownership are always to the fore.

I believe I can make a significant and useful contribution to the issue as Chair of the Scottish Land Commission given my unique career history and the relevance of my experience in leadership, governance, stakeholder engagement, strategic thinking, oversight, communication, influence and constructive challenge plus my knowledge of not only the Highlands and Islands but - having been brought up in Ayrshire and having been a South of Scotland MSP for two terms - in other areas of Scotland too.

I have indicated in response to other parts of this application the way in which my experience running an innovative Community development Project in the Western Isles (Cinema Sgìre) from 1977-1981 developed my skills as well as the way in which they were exercised when I founded and ran (from 1980 - 1983) the Celtic Media Festival.

My work as an MSP built on those experiences, and they were further embedded and extended by my lengthy service as a Scottish Government Minister.

I have been a writer and commentator for many years including periods as a Cultural Columnist for The Herald, as a Political columnist for Holyrood Magazine and currently for The National and as an education columnist for the Times Educational Supplement. I am also the author of seven books, have been a television director and producer and currently contribute to two podcasts.

I have held a variety of offices within the SNP including being the first CEO from 1994-1999. I am currently Honorary President. I understand however that I would have to withdraw from active involvement and holding any political post were I to succeed in this application.

I am also Honorary President of the European Movement in Scotland, Patron of the Scottish Adult Learners Forum and the Burgh Hall, Dunoon and a member of both the Colintrave & Glendaruel Community Council and the Cruach Moor Wind farm Trust.

Panel Recommendation

Mr Russell demonstrated good evidence against each of the criteria set out in the person specification for the role of Chair of the SLC. He showed a real passion for land reform, and an impressive breadth and depth of relevant experience. The panel were confident that Mr Russell would provide leadership to the SLC in its current form and as it evolves in the future.

Mr Russell highlighted potential conflicts of interests, but demonstrated to the panel how he would mitigate against these. He confirmed his conduct to date was compatible with this public appointment; provided assurances he could meet the time commitment required; and confirmed that whilst he has been involved in political activity in the last 5 years, he has agreed to demit his post as Honorary President of the SNP, and cease to donate to the party, if appointed to this position.

The panel had no hesitation in concluding that **Mr Michael Russell should be recommended to the Cabinet Secretary and First Minister as the applicant most able to meet the requirements of the role and needs of the Chair of SLC.**

Land Commissioner – Craig MacKenzie – Tailored Career History

- **2014-2023 Head of Strategic Asset Allocation and Multi-Asset Sustainability, Abrdn** (formerly, Aberdeen Standard Life).
 - Led strategic asset allocation team, modelling return and risk across asset classes. Advising large (£10bn+) pension fund and insurance clients on asset allocation.
 - Lead portfolio manager for two climate change funds and closely involved in development of natural capital fund proposition.
 - Overall responsibility for sustainable and responsible investment process and delivery across £100bn multi-asset portfolios.
 - Participation in company-wide strategy, governance and risk committees.
 - Recently opted to leave the business as part of business restructuring.
- **2007-present Senior Lecturer, Sustainable Enterprise, University of Edinburgh Business School.**
 - Alongside work in asset management, I've been a part-time senior lecturer in accounting and finance at Edinburgh University.
 - Set up the Centre for Business, Climate Change and Sustainability (BCCaS), the Carbon Benchmarking Project and helped develop MSc programmes in carbon management and climate finance. Taught various finance and investment courses, including teaching investment appraisal.
 - Core research focus (and principal activity on leaving Abrdn PLC) is natural capital and rural land use change in Scotland.
- **1997-2006 and 2010-14 Roles as head of governance, responsible and sustainability investment** functions and Friends Ivory & Sime, Insight Investment and Scottish Widows Investment Partnership.

- Oversight of corporate governance on behalf of shareholders. Scrutiny, challenge and voting with boards of e.g. FTSE 100 companies.
- Research and engagement on corporate performance with companies on climate, sustainability, human rights issues.
- Research and management of ethical and sustainability investment funds.
- Innovative fund and service development.

Voluntary roles

- In addition to my asset management and university work, I have held a number of non-exec advisory roles, including:
 - **2023- Financial Reporting Council**, Sustainability Reporting Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
 - **2001- 2023** Member/former chair, **FTSE/London Stock Exchange Sustainability AC**
 - **2018- 2019** Co-chair, **IIGCC Net Zero Investment Framework** workstream
 - **2012- 2014** Board, **Institutional Investment Group on Climate Change**
 - **2011- 2012** Chair, Reporting Committee, **Principles for Responsible Investment**
 - **2004- 2008** Member, TAC, **Global Reporting Initiative**
 - **2001- 2002** Advisory group **Dept Work and Pens. sustainable investment regulation**
 - **1999- 2002** Board director, **UK Social Investment Forum**

Panel Recommendation

Mr MacKenzie successfully evidenced all of the criteria set out in the person specification for the role of Commissioner of the SLC. He showed a particular strength in the Priority criterion of finance, with deep knowledge and experience of natural capital investment and improving ESG standards. He was also able to demonstrate a good understanding and interest in the wider land reform agenda and showed that he had a range of relevant experience he could bring to the SLC going forward.

Once he has left Ayr, Mr MacKenzie will have no conflicts of interest. He demonstrated his understanding and awareness of potential conflicts by confirming that he would not pursue a potential Non-Executive opportunity with Finance Earth if he was appointed as a Commissioner. He confirmed his conduct to date was compatible with this public appointment; provided assurances he could meet the time commitment required; and confirmed in his application that he had not been involved in any political activity in the last 5 years.

The panel had no hesitation in concluding that **Mr Craig MacKenzie should be recommended to the Cabinet Secretary as one of the two applicants most able to meet the requirements of the role and needs of a Commissioner of SLC.**

Land Commissioner – Deborah Roberts – Tailored Career History

2020 - Deputy Chief Executive James Hutton Institute

Shared responsibility for the overall running of the Institute, deputising as required for the CEO and co-chairing the Senior Management Team. Member of the SEFARI Directors Executive Committee, Director of ClimateXChange, member of the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital steering group and, from 2023, President Elect of the UK Agricultural Economics Society. Member of the Academic Advisory Panel to ARIOB.

2016 - Director of Science, James Hutton Institute

Reporting to the Chief Executive, member of the Executive team, responsible for the delivery of the Institute's science strategy. Chair of the Institute's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Environment Committee (responsible for the development and delivery of our Net Zero Plan) and Quality Assurance Committee and Chair of the Scottish Promotions Panel (Scottish Research Institutes) from 2018 - 2020.

2012 - 2016 Science Group Leader, James Hutton Institute

Reporting to the Director of Science, responsible for planning, developing and assigning research capability in the Social Economic and Geographical Sciences (SEGS) group. This included identifying strategic areas of research, ensuring the quality of science, encouraging inter-group collaborations and supporting the career development of staff. From 2012, representative on the North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group (NESAAG).

2001 - 2020 Progressed from Research Fellow to Senior Lecturer to Reader and (in 2012) to Chair in Real Estate, University of Aberdeen

Responsibilities included leadership in both research and teaching including PhD supervision in the Business School, as well as contributing to the development of the research culture and capacities. Personally required to undertake high quality research and sustain international collaborations leading to publications in international, peer-reviewed journals and significant impact. Discipline lead for the University's submission to the Architecture, Built Environment and Planning Unit of Assessment in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014.

1998 - 2001 Senior Economist Macaulay Land Use Institute

1996 - 1997 Research Fellow, Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, University of Aberdeen

Appointed as the first Research Fellow for the Centre. Responsible for developing interdisciplinary funding bids and establishing a network of researchers across the University with interests in rural issues as well as developing my own personal research agenda on issues including rural tourism and rural transport.

1989 - 1996 Lecturer in Agricultural Economics, University of Manchester

Panel Recommendation

Prof. Roberts demonstrated throughout the assessment process that she is a strong candidate, who excelled against the criteria set out for the role of Commissioner of the SLC. She showed strength in both of the priority criteria that she applied under (Finance and Land Reform). She provided a well-evidenced perspective on land reform, grounded in practical experience. The panel were particularly impressed by her strong communication skills and dedication to teamwork, and concluded that she has a great deal to contribute to the SLC.

Ms Rogers did not highlight any current conflicts of interest, and satisfied the Panel that she would know how to deal with them if any did arise. She confirmed her conduct to date was compatible with this public appointment; provided assurances she could meet the time commitment required (with approval from the JHI board) and confirmed in her application that she had not been involved in any political activity in the last 5 years.

The panel had no hesitation in concluding that **Ms Deborah Roberts should be recommended to the Cabinet Secretary as one of the two applicants most able to meet the requirements of the role and needs of a Commissioner of SLC.**