

ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

REPORT BY SPOKESPERSON

- (a) On 19 January 2009 I was a member of the Panel at the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Final Report on the enquiry they carried out into the current condition of agriculture in the Highlands and Islands area of Scotland.

The meeting was very well attended by a wide range of farmers, rural agencies and some of our Argyll and Bute Councillors.

- (b) On 4 February 2009 I met Richard Lochhead, Minister for Rural Affairs in Edinburgh, to discuss the situation regarding the dramatic fall in milk production in the ring fenced area of Arran, Bute, Cowal and Kintyre. We now have only 60 dairy farms in total in these four areas. In May 1987 there were more than 140.
- (c) Saturday 7 February 2009 saw Stuart Stevenson, Minister for Transportation, open the new Linkspan and Inner Harbour Development in Rothesay. The new facility will be of great benefit to the Island's tourism industry after 30 months of prolonged work at the Harbour area.
- (d) On 25 February 2009 the Council Chamber hosted an Economic Seminar which was organised by Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce. The speakers for the day were David Sutherland, Liz Cameron, David Douglas and our Council Leader, Dick Walsh. They were all introduced very capably by Jane MacLeod.
- (e) As has been reported in the Leader's report, the change over from Vestas to Skycon at the factory site near Machrihanish took place on Thursday 26 March 2009. This momentous occasion was attended by the First Minister, Alex Salmond, who paid tribute to the Danish Company, Skycon, Scottish Development International, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Argyll and Bute Council, who all worked extremely hard to deliver what will be a new chapter in the Kintyre area. Eventually it is hoped that 400 people will be employed at the Company, plus of course, the ancillary industries that will be required for the works. The boost to Argyll and Bute will be far reaching and it was a privilege to be at the launch.
- (f) Development Services held a Development Management User Forum Seminar on 25 March 2009 which was well attended by around 50 architects, agents, Community Councils and local builders. Everyone present received an update on the Planning Reform Agenda and how the Council were going to deliver on this.

On 3 August 2009 new Planning Regulations come into force. Planning Services have been preparing for this with colleagues in Corporate Services and have drawn up new governance arrangements (ie, single planning committee/local review panel), are preparing a new scheme of

delegation, have produced an annual improvement plan and a new local development plan scheme. Planning Services are also working on new application forms and guidance notes and considering options for Community Council and elected Member training.

Councillor Robert Macintyre
Spokesperson for Economy, Environment and Rural Affairs
30 March 2009