

From: [redacted – 11(2)]

Sent: 05 November 2025 12:05

To: Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity >; [redacted – 11(2)]; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs >; [redacted – 11(2)] >; Deputy Director of RPID > [redacted – 11(2)]; Spads Admin >; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 >

Subject: RE: Line to clear - FFIS - Scottish Farmer - noon deadline

Thanks [redacted – 11(2)].

The Scottish Farmer already have the line from yesterday that was originally for the BBC that mentions the additional support.

I'll get this line over to them straight away to meet print deadline and also discuss the use of the previous line too.

[redacted – 11(2)]

News | Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs

The Scottish Government, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh

[redacted – 11(2)] | Portfolio Media inquiries: 0300 244 9029

www.gov.scot/news



From: [redacted – 11(2)] > **On Behalf Of** Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

Sent: 05 November 2025 11:55

To: [redacted – 11(2)] >; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity >

Cc: [redacted – 11(2)]; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs >; [redacted – 11(2)] >; Deputy Director of RPID >; [redacted – 11(2)] >; Spads Admin >; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 >

Subject: RE: Line to clear - FFIS - Scottish Farmer - noon deadline

Hi [redacted – 11(2)]

Mr Fairlie says he is content to clear but asks that a line is added about all the other support being given (with different programmes/schemes named). Says he doesn't need to see the lines again if this part is added.

Thanks,

[redacted – 11(2)]

[redacted – 11(2)] **Private Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity – Jim Fairlie MSP**

The Scottish Government

St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

E: MinisterforAC@gov.scot

T: [redacted – 11(2)]

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From: [redacted – 11(2)]

Sent: 05 November 2025 11:16

To: Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

Cc: [redacted – 11(2); Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs >; [redacted – 11(2); Deputy Director of RPID>; [redacted – 11(2) >; Spads Admin>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024

Subject: Line to clear - FFIS - Scottish Farmer - noon deadline

Good morning,

Scottish Farmer have heard from someone who has also contacted the Minister claiming a contact at their rural payments office told them that the grant decisions were taken by staff in Edinburgh with no agricultural background with a programme written by AI. They have suggested that this person has also contacted the Minister about this directly.

I have called the journalist to confirm that local staff were involved and no AI was used. I would be grateful for clearance of the following line to send before 12 noon in order to meet SF deadline. The story will not lead on these claims, but FFIS more widely and will be the front page.

It has been agreed with policy, spads have not commented yet, but are copied.

Agriculture Minister Jim Fairlie said:

“It is simply not true to suggest that local RPID staff were not involved in the process or decisions were made by AI. The FFIS assessment methodology and application decisions were made solely on the basis of objective scoring and verified eligibility with full audit trails for consistency, transparency and defensibility. The work was led by the Agricultural Development Team, supported by staff from across the RPID area office network, which is experienced in delivering Scottish Government grant schemes, and no AI was used in rolling out or evaluating applications.

“Independent validation was undertaken by a Project Board, which also included RPID Area Office representatives, as well as being reviewed by Internal Audit representatives. While I appreciate many people will be disappointed if they were not successful, there are many others who were and will share in £21 million that will make a real difference to their business.”

Query

Thanks for this – hopefully this clarification on AI shuts down the rumour mill, but just for your context we had this sent in this morning from an Agricultural Agent who wishes to remain anonymous – she has also sent this on to Minister Fairlie.

“Unable to understand the rationale behind the outcomes, I contacted my local Rural Payments office. I have a good working relationship with a higher agricultural officer there, and what I was told was frankly alarming.

They advised that scoring was not conducted by local agricultural staff, but rather centrally in Edinburgh by individuals with no agricultural background. I was told that around four staff members were responsible for assessing approximately 7,000 + claims, and that an AI-based system or “new program” had been used to assist the process, without any actual verification of terms.”

Is it also the government’s stance that this testimonial is false and that it was not centrally decided in Edinburgh?

Thanks

[redacted – 11(2)]

[redacted – 11(2) | Senior media manager Climate Action, Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands | Scottish Government Communications | [redacted – 11(2) | [redacted – 11(2) | <http://www.gov.scot>

From: [redacted – 11(2)]

Sent: 05 November 2025 11:56

To: [redacted – 11(2); Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

Cc: [redacted – 11(2); Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs >; [redacted – 11(2) ; Deputy Director of RPID >; [redacted – 11(2); Spads Admin >; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024

Subject: RE: Line to clear - FFIS - Scottish Farmer - noon deadline -IM

Small addition

It is simply not true to suggest that local RPID staff were not involved in the process or decisions were made by AI. The FFIS assessment methodology and application decisions were made solely on the basis of objective scoring and verified eligibility with full audit trails for consistency, transparency and defensibility. The work was led by the Agricultural Development Team, supported by staff from across the RPID area office network, which is experienced in delivering Scottish Government grant schemes, and no AI was used in rolling out or evaluating applications.

“Independent validation was undertaken by a Project Board, which also included RPID Area Office representatives, as well as being reviewed by Internal Audit representatives. While I appreciate many people will be disappointed if they were not successful, there are many others who were and will share in £21 million that will make a real difference to their business. This government is committed to supporting and investing in the sector. In stark contrast to other parts of the UK we have maintained a range of support schemes including vital direct payments.

[redacted – 11(2)]

Special Adviser to the First Minister
Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands.

[redacted – 11(2)]



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From: [redacted – 11(2)]

Sent: 05 November 2025 11:16

To: Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

Cc: [redacted – 11(2) >; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs>[redacted – 11(2) >; Deputy Director of RPID>; [redacted – 11(2) >; Spads Admin >; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 >

Subject: Line to clear - FFIS - Scottish Farmer - noon deadline

[redacted – Duplicate]

From: [redacted – 11(2) **On Behalf Of** Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

Sent: 05 November 2025 10:42

To: Central Correspondence Unit

Cc: Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

Subject: FW: Future Farming Scheme Fiasco

Hello,

For OR please.

[redacted – 11(2) (she/her)

**Assistant Private Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity –
Jim Fairlie MSP**

The Scottish Government

St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

E: MinisterforAC@gov.scot

[redacted – 11(2)



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From: [redacted – 11(2)

Sent: 05 November 2025 08:02

To: [redacted – 11(2) Fairlie J (Jim), MSP [redacted – 11(2)

Subject: Future Farming Scheme Fiasco

[redacted – out of scope)

Good morning,

I wanted to raise serious concerns regarding the recent results of the Future Farming Investment Scheme (FFIS).

For transparency, I am an agricultural agent who completed just over 30 FFIS applications on behalf of clients. For professional reasons, I would prefer to remain anonymous.

[redacted – out of scope)

Unable to understand the rationale behind the outcomes, I contacted my local Rural Payments office. I have a good working relationship with a higher agricultural officer there, and what I was told was frankly alarming.

They advised that scoring was not conducted by local agricultural staff, but rather centrally in Edinburgh by individuals with no agricultural background. I was told that around four staff members were responsible for assessing approximately 7,000 +

claims, and that an AI-based system or “new program” had been used to assist the process, without any actual verification of terms.

[redacted – out of scope)

Thank you for taking the time to consider these concerns. I hope this matter can be raised in the appropriate channels to ensure fairness and accountability within the scheme.

Kind regards,

[redacted – 11(2)

[redacted – out of scope)