



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**Joan McAlpine MSP**  
South of Scotland Region

The Duke of Buccleuch  
Drumlanrig Castle  
Thornhill,  
Dumfries & Galloway,  
DG3 4AQ,

Your Grace,

I write to you on behalf of my constituents Alison and David Telfer, your tenants at Cleuchfoot Farm in Eskdale. This couple have lived and worked hard on Cleuchfoot for two decades. All they ask is to stay in their home and work until they retire. This verbal promise was made to them by the previous Duke, but is now denied by your estate managers who are taking back their hill ground for tree planting and demanding they quit the rest of the farm in November 2019. Although the farm is now for sale (in different lots) as part of the Evertown Portfolio, the Telfers are not in a position to buy, as it is only recently they have received any direct payments. The Telfers only agreed to give up their high ground because refusal would result in an eviction in February.

I am not seeking to challenge your property rights. I am simply asking you to see the human side of this story - two people close to retirement face losing their home. When you attended the public meeting with Oliver Mundell MSP in Langholm earlier this year, you said you were listening. That is why I am writing to you now. You will be aware that the Scottish Land Commission asked you to behave in a reasonable way towards Mr and Mrs Telfer. The First Minister has agreed there is a human rights element to their case. An online petition has now gathered more than 18,000 signatures and the case has been widely covered in the media.

Mr Telfer is now 61 and only requires a lease of four or five years. Until this can be negotiated, Mr and Mrs Telfer request that the hefted sheep, which are being counted and valued by your estate managers as I write, remain on the hill – at least until November 2019 but ideally longer if you would reconsider extending their lease.

The estate has not yet applied for planting permission so there does not seem any pressing reason to remove the flock. As I previously said in my parliamentary question to the First Minister, the government in my view should not give planting grants in these circumstances. I continue to press this case which has public support. In the meantime, I hope that you can ask your estate managers to reconsider and allow this couple to remain at Cleuchfoot.

Yours sincerely,

**Joan McAlpine MSP**

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