

SNP President steps down to chair Scottish Land Commission

Michael Russell, the former MSP and President of the SNP has resigned today. He will now bid to take up the non-party political role as Chair of the Scottish Land Commission.

Mr Russell has been involved with the SNP for almost fifty years. He joined the SNP in 1974 and first stood for election in Clydesdale at the 1987 election, being elected as a senior office bearer the same year. He became the first full time Chief Executive of the party in December 1994, holding that post until he was elected to The Scottish Parliament as a list MSP for South of Scotland in May 1999. He lost his seat in 2003 but returned to serve the same region from 2007 to 2011 before he was elected as the MSP for the Argyll and Bute constituency, a position he held until retiring in 2021. Mr Russell was elected party President in November 2020, and was also acting Chief Executive for a short period earlier this year following the resignation of Peter Murrell.

SNP Leader, Humza Yousaf said: "On behalf of the SNP, I'd like to give my heartfelt thanks to Michael for his outstanding contribution to the party over almost five decades – a true stalwart of the SNP and the wider independence movement.

“Michael has been a member of our party since before I was born and, throughout all the highs and lows of that period, he has served the SNP in almost every conceivable way – as a party activist, as Chief Executive, as a politician and as our Party President.

“He’s a deeply respected and much-loved figure in our party – and rightly so – and has always been there to provide support and guidance to me personally and to many others whenever it has been needed, helping our party to remain anchored to our core values.

“The party owes Michael a great debt of gratitude and I wish him all the very best as he seeks to begin a new and very important role in Scottish life , in an area of work which he has long supported.”

Mr Russell also served in The Scottish Government, and was appointed as Environment Minister in the first SNP Government in 2007, subsequently holding the posts of Culture Minister and then Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. He left Government in late 2014 but returned in August 2016 becoming Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland’s Place in Europe, then Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations, and, latterly, Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs.

After an independent process, Michael has been recommended for appointment to be Chair of the Scottish Land Commission – an appointment which is subject to the approval of the Scottish Parliament. Parliamentary scrutiny of the recommendation will now take place and the final decision on appointment will, as the legislation requires, be made by the Parliament.



Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. 30 July 2020

Pictured: Michael Russell MSP – Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations.

Nicola Sturgeon MSP – First Minister of Scotland and Leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) giving a ministerial statement: COVID 19 Next Steps.

Credit: Colin Fisher/Alamy Live news/SP Pool.