



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## **Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee Draft Budget 2017-18 Call for Evidence**

The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee is launching a Call for Evidence to help inform its scrutiny of funding and performance in two priority areas within its remit – **forestry** and **digital connectivity**. The aim of this activity is to inform the Committee's scrutiny of the Scottish Government's draft budget later in the year.

### ***Written evidence***

The Committee invites written evidence on the specific issues detailed below.

#### **Forestry**

The Forestry Commission budget has fallen in both cash and real terms in recent years. However, a report on the Economic Contribution of Forestry in Scotland found that the sector contributed nearly £1 billion to the economy in 2012/13. Employment levels have also increased with over 25,000 FTE now working in the sector. Forestry also makes a significant contribution to meeting Climate Change targets.

The Committee would be interested to hear your views on:

- Sales and acquisition of Forestry Commission Scotland assets
- Planting targets and whether there is funding and incentives available to meet them.
- Challenges from pests and diseases in the face of climate change, and what funds are being directed towards addressing these challenges
- The potential impact of Brexit in relation to SRDP funds from the EU.

#### **Broadband connectivity**

The Scottish Government has committed to spend £90m to deliver superfast broadband access to at least 95% of premises in Scotland by the end of 2017, and 100% by 2021. The Scottish Government also intends to publish a refreshed Digital Strategy in 2017 to set out how it will reach these goals.

The Committee would like to hear your views on:

- The speed and access standards required to meet the needs of consumers and businesses and the funding necessary to meet these standards.
- The impact of restricted access to high speed internet on the rural economy. In particular tourism and local small businesses.
- Future funding for Community Broadband Scotland and funding related performance of community broadband projects.
- The level of investment required to meet the Scottish Government's commitment to provide access to next generation networks to 100% of premises by 2021

### ***How to submit your evidence***

Before making a submission, please read our [Policy on Treatment of Written Evidence by Subject and Mandatory Committees](#).

Please send your views **no later than 2 December 2016**.

Responses should be sent, wherever possible, electronically and in MS Word format to: [Rec.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:Rec.committee@parliament.scot)

Hard copy responses may be sent to: *Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, T3.60, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP*

Ideally, responses should be **no more than four sides of A4 in length**.

**All written evidence received may be published by the Parliament and will be treated as a public document. If you wish to submit evidence in confidence or anonymously please read the policy at the link above or contact Heather Lyall, details below.**

### **Contact**

Should you require alternative formats of this information or further assistance in making a written submission to the Committee, please do not hesitate to contact the clerking team of the Committee.

**For Committee information, contact: Heather Lyall**, tel 0131 348 5229,  
email: [heather.lyall@parliament.scot](mailto:heather.lyall@parliament.scot)

**For further information, the media contact is:** Cat Synnot, tel 0131 348 5605,  
email: [cat.synnot@parliament.scot](mailto:cat.synnot@parliament.scot)

**For public information enquiries, contact:** 0131 348 5000

**For general enquiries, contact:** 0845 278 1999 (local call rate),  
email: [sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk)