

## PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

### DESIGNATION OF A BILL AT STAGE 1: AGRICULTURE AND RURAL COMMUNITIES (SCOTLAND) BILL

#### Introduction

1. The Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill was introduced in the Parliament on 28 September 2023 by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon MSP

#### Discussion

2. The Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill has five parts.
3. Part 1 provides for objectives of agricultural policy and the creation of a rural support plan. Section 1 lists what the overarching objectives of agricultural policy are. Section 2 provides that Scottish Ministers must prepare a rural support plan the aim of which is to provide information about the expected use of the powers conferred to them by section 4 (power to provide support) in Part 2.
4. Part 2 deals with support for agriculture, rural development and related matters. Section 4 provides Scottish Ministers with the power to provide support for the purposes as described in Schedule 1. The remaining provisions of Part 2 provide further details of the support provided for under section 4. This includes guidance, power to cap support, the powers available to Scottish Ministers during exceptional market conditions and eligibility.
5. Part 3 amends the Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Act 2020 to provide Scottish Ministers with the power to continue, modify or end relevant Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) legislation.
6. Part 4 contains four distinct provisions. Section 26 states that Scottish Ministers must prepare a code of practice on sustainable and regenerative agriculture. Section 27 provides Scottish Ministers with the power to make provision for continuing professional development for farmers, crofters, land-managers and such persons providing advice or services to the aforementioned or to rural communities as would be specified in the regulations. Section 28 amends the Animal Health Act 1981 with regards to prescribing and regulating the means of identifying animals. Section 29, which is the final section of Part 4, provides for Schedule 2 which repeals various provisions of agricultural-related legislation.
7. Part 5 contains final provisions such as defined terms and commencement.

8. The Bill falls within the remit of the following committees:

Rural Affairs and Islands  
Committee

The remit of Rural Affairs and Islands Committee is to consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, excluding matters relating to matters relating to land reform, natural resources and peatland, Scottish Land Commission, Crown Estate Scotland, and Royal Botanic Garden. The Bill provides for support for agriculture, forestry, food and drink and rural communities. The remit of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee is therefore engaged.

Net Zero, Energy and  
Transport Committee

The remit of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee covers matters relating to land reform, natural resources and peatland, Scottish Land Commission, Crown Estate Scotland, and Royal Botanic Garden. falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands. As the Bill makes provision to provide support for natural resources such as plants and soil and climate change, the remit of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee is engaged.

9. It is understood that the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee has the main interest in this Bill.

**Recommendation**

10. It is suggested that the Bureau recommend to the Parliament that the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee be designated as the lead committee. We are not aware of any desire on the part of any other committee to be designated as a secondary committee. However, the lack of a formal designation does not prevent any committee from considering the Bill if it so wishes.

**Parliamentary Business Team  
September 2023**