



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Mairi Gougeon
Cabinet Secretary for
Rural Affairs, Land Reform and
Islands

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
c/o Clerk to the Committee
The Scottish Parliament
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By email only

11 July 2023

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

2024-25 pre-budget scrutiny

At its meeting on 28 June 2023, the Committee agreed to continue to focus its budget scrutiny on the islands programme budget and the funding associated with the national islands plan. This follows a similar focus during its scrutiny of the 2023-24 budget.

To inform this scrutiny, the Committee agreed to write to ask for further information about how the Committee's 2023-24 pre-budget recommendations have been implemented. It would be helpful, therefore, if you could provide information in response to the following questions—

- With many of the 37 projects from 2021-22 (year 1) now completed, what analysis has the Scottish Government done to measure the impact they are having on island communities?
- How are the 11 projects awarded funding in 2022-23 (year 2) progressing?
- How will the 13 projects funded in 2023-24 (year 3) support the national islands plan's strategic objectives?
- To what extent have island communities been involved in the design, development and delivery of 2023-24 (year 3) projects?
- In light of the [Committee recommendations following its 2023-24 pre-budget scrutiny](#), was the competitive bidding process conducted differently this year compared to last year and, if so, how?
- What is the Scottish Government's view of local authorities' experiences of the competitive bidding process and the support they received from the Scottish Futures Trust for 2023-24 (year 3) allocations?

- Has the Scottish Government reconsidered its decision, as set out in the capital spending review, not to provide any capital funding for the islands programme in 2024-25 (year 4)?
- What are the challenges of delivering capital projects on Scotland's islands?
- How important is it to have a pipeline of capital projects?
- How is the Scottish Government and the Scottish Futures Trust ensuring that capital projects funded through the islands programme are additional, critical and transformative?
- Whether funding to support the national islands plan is adequate given we are halfway through the five-year lifetime of the plan and only a fraction of its commitments have been fulfilled?
- How the resource element of the islands plan budget has supported the delivery of the national islands plan over the past three years?
- How has the £1.4m Island Cost Crisis Emergency Fund been allocated, on what criteria were allocations made and how has the Scottish Government evaluated the allocations?
- Given the cross-government nature of spending on islands, how has the islands team influenced budget decisions made by other directorates over the past two years?
- Can you provide an update on the Committee's recommendation that the Scottish Government consider how funds available to island local authorities could be "amalgamated or streamlined" to address the concerns expressed to us last year about the "cluttered landscape" of funds and budgets.

The Committee also agreed to seek more general views on the Scottish Government's priorities for the overall RAI budget and a [link to the call for views is provided here for your information](#).

A response by Friday 1 September would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Finlay Carson MSP
Convener
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee