

Cross-Party Group Annual Return

Name of Cross-Party Group

Cross-Party Group on Rural Policy

Date Group Established (the date of establishment is the date in this parliamentary session that the Group held its initial meeting, where the office bearers were elected and not the date that the Group was accorded recognition. All Groups should hold their AGMs on, or before, the anniversary of this date.)

16 November 2022

Date of Most Recent Annual General Meeting (AGM)

16 December 2025

Date Annual Return Submitted

14th January 2026

Date of Preceding AGM [this date is required to aid clerks in verifying that the most recent AGM has taken place within 11 to 13 months of the previous AGM]

4 December 2024

Group Meetings and Activities

Please provide details of each meeting of the Group including the date of the meeting, a brief description of the main subjects discussed and the MSP and non-MSP attendance figures.

Details of any other activities, such as visits undertaken by the Group or papers/report published by the Group should also be provided.

Wednesday 5 March 2025

Attendance: 3 MSPs, 78 Non-MSPs

Topic Discussed: Human Rights in Rural Scotland

Guest speakers:

- Dr. Luis Yanes, Scottish Human Rights Commission, focusing on their recent report on human rights in Highlands and Islands
- Lydia Murphy from Poverty Alliance focusing on their Rights in Action project
- Reflections from Professor Lorna Philip (Aberdeen University) and Dr Mags Currie (James Hutton Institute)

Wednesday 4 June 2025

Attendance: 1 MSP, 62 Non-MSPs

Topic Discussed: How Can We Make the Rural Economy More Circular?

Guest speakers:

- Roy Hiddleston, Managing Director, Solway Recycling
- Simon Flemington, Chair of Trustees, Moray Waste Busters
- Helen Ross, Chair, Arran Ecosavvy
- Cheryl Robb, Partnerships Manager, Zero Waste Scotland

Wednesday 8 October 2025

Attendance: 2 MSPs, 85 Non-MSPs

Topic Discussed: How can we change the food system to benefit people and planet?

Guest speakers:

- Professor Alexandra Johnstone, The Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen
- David Thomson, CEO Food and Drink Federation Scotland
- Benjamin Nunn, Knoydart Farm CIC

Tuesday 16 December 2025

Attendance: 4 MSPs, 13 Non-MSPs

Topic Discussed: AGM business only

MSP Members of The Group

Please provide names and party designation of all MSP members of the Group.

Finlay Carson MSP (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party)
Brian Whittle MSP (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party)
Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party)
Ariane Burgess MSP (Scottish Green Party)
Mercedes Villalba MSP (Scottish Labour)
Tim Eagle MSP (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party)
Rhoda Grant MSP (Scottish Labour)
Colin Smith (Independent)

Non-MSP Members of The Group

For organisational members please provide only the name of the organisation, it is not necessary to provide the name(s) of individuals who may represent the organisation at meetings of the Group.

Individuals	Barbara Kelly, Pat Neeson
Organisations	A Heart for Duns Development Trust, Aberdeen University, Advice Direct Scotland, AIC, Angus Council, Arthouse Galleries, Barnardos, British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI), Buccleuch Estates, Built Environment Forum Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Centre for Rural Health, UHI, Citizens Advice Scotland, Crichton Carbon Centre, Dormont Estate, Dumfries and Galloway LEADER, Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER, Federation of Small Businesses, Argyll and Bute Council, Here We Are Project, Heriot Watt University, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, James Hutton Institute, Landmaps Ltd, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, MAKAR Ltd, RSABI, RSPB, Rural & Islands Housing Associations Forum, Rural Matters, SAC Consulting/SRUC, SAOS (Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society), Scottish Association of Young Farmers, Scottish Churches Rural Group,

Scottish Crofting Federation, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Government, Scottish Land and Estates, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum, Scottish Rural Action, Scottish Rural Health Partnership, Scottish Wildlife Trust, SRUC, Stirling University and the Cooperative Group, Change Mental Health, The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA), James Hutton Institute, The Stove Network, Dumfries, The University of Edinburgh, UHI, University of Edinburgh, Urban Animation/Dhu Rural, Whitehill Design Studios, Whitmuir Community Farm Ltd, Whitmuir Organics Limited, Woodland Trust

Group Office Bearers

Please provide names for all office bearers. The minimum requirement is that two of the office bearers are MSPs and one of these is Convener – beyond this it is a matter for the Group to decide upon the office bearers it wishes to have. It is permissible to have more than one individual elected to each office, for example, co-conveners or multiple deputy conveners.

Convener	Emma Harper MSP (Scottish National Party) Edward Mountain MSP (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party)
Deputy Convener	None
Secretary	Rural Policy Centre, SRUC (Scotland's Rural College)
Treasurer	None

Financial Benefits or Other Benefits

Please provide details of any financial or material benefit(s) the Group anticipates receiving from a single source in a calendar

year which has a value, either singly or cumulatively, of more than £500. This includes donations, gifts, hospitality or visits and material assistance such as secretariat support.

SRUC's Rural Policy Centre provides the Secretariat for the Group. Funding to enable it to do so (e.g. to cover SRUC staff time at Full Economic Cost, T&S expenses for speakers, etc.) comes from SRUC and from Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme 2022-27 funding. The cost of running the Group is estimated to be approximately £8,000 per annum.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CONVENER

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 6 OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT (Please tick all boxes that apply)

I, Convener of the Cross-Party Group on 14th January 2026, hereby declare that, in line with the requirements of Section 6 of the Code of Conduct, this CPG has:

5 MSP Members from 3 different political parties	✓
Held at least 2 quorate meetings in the last 12 months	✓
Held an AGM within 11-13months of the date of registration or the last AGM	✓
Submitted an annual return form within 30 calendar days of the AGM	✓

Provided Standards Clerks with 10 calendar days' notice of all meetings	✓
Provided minutes of all meetings	✓
Signed	
Date	14 th January 2026