26 February 2016

Dear Mr Machray and Ms Swadling

CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE SRUC OF 5 FEBRUARY 2016

I write to thank you for the correspondence\(^1\) you provided to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment (RACCE) Committee on 5 February 2016 in response to the issues we raised with you in our correspondence\(^2\) of 17 December 2015.

The Committee considered your correspondence at its meeting on 24 February 2016. Unfortunately we remain concerned that you have failed to provide a satisfactory response to the questions raised. These issues have arisen as a result of continuing concerns in relation to the governance arrangements at SRUC and in relation to the lack of a clearly articulated and achievable strategic vision for the organisation, along with a clear plan to deliver that vision.

The Committee recognises the financial and infrastructural challenges faced by SRUC management in dealing with the legacy of the amalgamation of the four predecessor institutions. We also recognise the impact of the failure of the strategic alignment with the University of Edinburgh and the potential impact of this on the focus and direction of SRUC in the medium to long term. However, it is imperative that SRUC management provide a clear deliverable strategic vision, which can be achieved in a reasonable timescale. Central to

\(^1\) Letter from the SRUC 5 February 2016
\(^2\) Letter from the RACCE Committee 17 December 2015
this process will be the appointment of a new Principal/Chief Executive, and the sooner this recruitment process is completed the better.

It is right and proper for a parliamentary committee to undertake scrutiny of important issues which fall within its remit, and to do so in a public and transparent way. The role of SRUC is central to the development and growth of a successful rural economy in Scotland. Therefore, the Committee’s intention is to ensure, as far as possible, that SRUC meets its full potential, both as a cornerstone of Scotland’s rural economy, and as a world class rural education institution, attracting the highest calibre of students from both home and abroad.

We do not seek any further response from you at this time. However, the Committee has agreed to highlight, in its Session Four Legacy Report, the need for our successor committee to consider the challenges faced by SRUC and address those issues as part of its future work programme. The Committee has also agreed to bring its Legacy Report recommendations to the attention of the successor committee to the Education and Culture Committee.

Finally, we also considered matters raised in relation to the cash reserves and resources of the predecessor institutions of SRUC. The Committee has agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretaries for both Education and Lifelong Learning, and Rural Affairs, Food and Environment on these matters.

Yours Sincerely

Rob Gibson MSP
Convener

CC: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment