

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee
Tuesday 25 November 2025
27th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Human rights, equalities and access to services in rural areas of Scotland – Note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 13 May 2025, the Committee agreed to hold a short inquiry into rurality.
2. A common thread running through much of the Committee's work has been rurality. That is to say, the extent to which cross-cutting policy objectives are looked at with a view to equalities impacts in a rural setting. For example, do people with disabilities living in remote or rural areas have the same access as other citizens as may be the case in urban areas?
3. The [SHRC's Report on Economic Social and Cultural Rights in the Highlands and Islands](#), published in late 2024, details threats to human rights in rural Scotland, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, where insufficient access to healthcare, housing, and food, along with fuel poverty and poor transport, hinders economic, social, and cultural rights. Today's session will focus on these issues in rural Scotland.

Evidence

4. Last week the Committee took evidence via a roundtable discussion with—
 - Dr Luis F. Yanes, Legal Policy Development Officer, (Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Lead), Scottish Human Rights Commission
 - Artemis Pana, National Coordinator, Scottish Rural Action
 - Megan MacInnes, Board Member, Community Land Scotland
 - Sheena Stewart, Chief Officer, Uist Council of Voluntary Organisations
 - Kirsty Harding, Senior Development Officer, Highland Third Sector Interface
 - Wendy Hand, Deputy and Facilities Manager, Voluntary Action Shetland
 - Juliana Amaral, Chief Executive Officer, Borders Community Action/Borders Third Sector Interface
 - Alan Webb, Chief Executive Officer, Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway

- Alasdair Ross, Policy and Consultations Officer, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action

5. At this week's meeting the Committee will explore the themes emerging from that roundtable discussion with Kaukab Stewart, Minister for Equalities.

Next steps

6. The Committee will discuss the evidence taken over the course of the inquiry and consider its next steps.

Clerks to the Committee
November 2025