

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

24th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday, 27 September

Pre-budget scrutiny – Scottish Government Budget 2024-25

Introduction

1. In line with the recommendations of the [Budget Process Review Group \(BPRG\) report](#), Scottish Parliament committees undertake pre-budget scrutiny, in advance of the publication of the Scottish budget.
2. The purpose of pre-budget scrutiny is for committees to provide comment to the Scottish Government, in the form of a letter or report, at least six weeks prior to the Scottish budget with the aim of influencing the budget when priorities are set.
3. [Further information on the budget process has been produced by SPICe.](#)
4. The Committee considered its approach to pre-budget scrutiny at its meeting on 28 June 2023 and agreed a dual approach, which includes—
 - scrutiny of the overall rural affairs and islands portfolio; and
 - a specific focus on the funding commitments associated with the implementation of the national islands plan
5. To support the Committee’s scrutiny of the overall rural affairs and islands portfolio, it agreed to issue a short consultation over summer recess asking for views on the Scottish Government’s spending priorities.
6. The Committee received three responses, from the [NFUS](#), [Scottish Land and Estates](#), and [Shetland Islands Council](#).
7. With respect to the funding commitments associated with the implementation of the national islands plan, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government, Scottish Futures Trust and the six island local authorities to ask for further information about how the Committee’s 2023-24 budget recommendations have been implemented.
8. The Committee received responses from the [Scottish Futures Trust](#), [Argyll and Bute Council](#), [Highland Council](#), [Orkney Islands Council](#), [Shetlands Islands Council](#) and [North Ayrshire Council](#).

Background – 2023-24 budget scrutiny

9. The Committee took a similar dual approach to its pre-budget scrutiny of the 2023-24 Scottish Government budget, focussing on—
 - the impact of the resource spending review (RSR) on the overall rural affairs and islands portfolio budget; and
 - the funding commitments associated with the implementation of the islands plan.
10. In relation to the RSR, the Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary seeking answers to a number of questions.
11. In relation to the islands programme, the Committee looked at the £3m allocated to the islands plan capital funding programme (the islands programme). The programme was administered by the Scottish Future's Trust (SFT) using a competitive tendering model. In addition to written questions to the Cabinet Secretary, the Committee sought the views of local authorities and took evidence from the SFT and three local authorities.
12. [Further information relating to the Committee's 2023-24 budget scrutiny](#) can be found on the Committee's web pages.

For decision

13. The Committee is invited to—
 - Reflect on the written evidence received and take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary at agenda item 1; and
 - Agree to consider its draft letter to the Scottish Government, in private, at a future meeting.

**Rural Affairs and Islands Committee clerks
September 2023**