

# Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

1st Meeting, 2024 (Session 6), Wednesday, 17  
January

## Scottish Government Budget 2024-25

### Introduction

1. This paper supports the Committee's evidence session on the 2024-25 Scottish Government Budget with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands. The Committee will scrutinise the Rural Affairs and Islands (RAI) portfolio spending plans within the Budget and reflect on the recommendations made by the Committee in its pre-budget scrutiny letter.
2. Following the evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary, the Committee will have the opportunity to contribute to the stage 1 debate on the budget to be held at the end of January.

### Rural Affairs and Islands Committee pre-budget scrutiny

3. Under the terms of the revised budget process, established by the Budget Process Review Group in Session 5, committees are encouraged to undertake pre-budget scrutiny prior to the publication of the Scottish Government budget. This approach, which normally involves committees publishing a pre-budget scrutiny letter or report, is designed to influence the Scottish Government's spending plans for the forthcoming financial year.
4. [Further information on the budget process has been produced by SPICe.](#)
5. The Committee considered its approach to pre-budget scrutiny at its meeting on 28 June 2023. Consistent with the approach taken in previous financial years, the Committee agreed a dual approach to scrutiny, which included—
  - 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.
6. To inform scrutiny of the overall RAI portfolio, the Committee undertook a consultation over summer recess asking for views on the Scottish Government's spending priorities. The Committee received three responses, from the [NFUS](#), [Scottish Land and Estates](#), and [Shetland Islands Council](#).

7. With regards to the funding commitments associated with the implementation of the national islands plan, the Committee wrote 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. 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](#).
8. On [27 September 2023](#), the Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands as part of the pre-budget process.
9. Following the evidence session, the Committee wrote to the Scottish Government on [22 November 2023](#) setting out its views. The Scottish Government responded to the Committee's pre-budget letter on [29 December 2022](#).

## The 2024-25 Scottish Government Budget

10. [The 2024-25 Scottish Government budget was published on 19 December 2023.](#)
11. Information regarding the RAI portfolio responsibilities, national outcomes and spending plans are set out in Annexe A.8 of the budget document (pages 91-97).
12. [SPICe has also prepared a briefing on the Scottish Government's spending and tax plans for 2024-25.](#)

**Rural Affairs and Islands Committee clerks  
January 2024**