

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
Wednesday 25 September 2024
23rd Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

Pre-budget scrutiny for 2025 to 2026: evidence from the Cabinet Secretary

Introduction

1. This paper supports the Committee's evidence gathering for its pre-budget scrutiny for 2025 to 2026.
2. 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 Government's budget.
3. 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 Government's budget for the purpose of influencing the budget when spending priorities are set.
4. [Further information on the budget process has been published by SPICe.](#)

Background

5. At its meeting on 19 June 2024, the Committee agreed to take the following dual approach to pre-budget scrutiny:
 - Scrutiny of the overall budget of the rural and islands portfolio.
 - Giving specific attention to the Marine Directorate's budget, focusing on fisheries management operations and science.
6. 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.
7. The Committee received 14 responses to its consultation. [The responses can be read on the Parliament's webpages.](#)
8. [The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands wrote to the Committee on 22 July 2024](#), providing information about the Marine Directorate's budget.
9. The Committee undertook a fact-finding visit to the Marine Directorate science laboratories in Aberdeen on 2 September 2024 and took oral evidence in [a roundtable session with stakeholders regarding the budget of the Marine Directorate on 4 September 2024](#).