



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Environment and Rural Affairs Department
Fisheries and Rural Development Group

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Your ref:
Our ref:

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Dear Ms Lavery

CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP: THE RURAL OBJECTIVE

The Minister for Communities, Margaret Curran, today announced the six objectives of the Executive's Closing the Opportunity Gap initiative. This initiative is designed to contribute to the reduction of poverty and to increase access to opportunity for disadvantaged communities and individuals. One of the six objectives has been targeted to take account of the challenges facing rural Scotland. This rural objective is *'To improve access to high quality services for the most disadvantaged groups and individuals in rural communities – in order to increase their quality of life and enhance their access to opportunity.'*

In order to achieve this objective, a set of detailed targets to underpin the objectives will be published in the autumn. We consider that partnership working will be crucial to achieving these targets and the greater objectives. With this in mind we would like to invite you, or a suitable representative from your organisation, to participate as a member of our Advisory Group for this work.

The proposed Advisory Group will consist of Executive officials and external representatives. The role of this group will be to identify a basket of key services in remote and disadvantaged communities, and to offer input on developing a proactive approach to facilitating partnership working and sharing of best practice. We believe your perspective from local authority, Local Rural Partnership and Community Planning Partnership experience as both a service provider and recipient would be very valuable and we would welcome your involvement in this group.

We hope to make announcements on the outcome of this process at the Rural Services Conference in September. It is envisaged that this group would convene on 5 August 2004 at the Scottish Executive building, Pentland House, with possibly one other meeting in early September held outside Edinburgh. Lunch will be provided and travel and subsistence costs may be met, dependent on circumstances.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

I apologise for the short notice and appreciate that there are likely to be conflicting demands on your time. However I would be grateful if you would reply indicating whether you can contribute by Friday 23 July. If you could provide an email address for rapid communication, this would be greatly appreciated.

Should you have any queries or if you require further information on Closing the Opportunity Gap and the outlined work of the Advisory Group, please do not hesitate to contact Ross Lindsay on 0131 244 4157, who shall be pleased to help.

Yours sincerely

Frank Strang
Head of Division
Land Use and Rural Policy