



To Chief Executives

CC: Rural and Urban Affairs Executive Groups

Dear Chief Executive

Inquiry into Economic Development in Accessible Rural Areas

The Scottish Parliament's Environment and Rural Development Committee has just announced its Inquiry into Economic Development in 'Accessible Rural Areas.' A copy of the Committee's news release is attached and further details and background information on the Inquiry can be found on the Inquiry homepage –

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/environment/inquiries/rd/env-rd-home.htm>

Briefly, the Inquiry will focus on the effectiveness of the Scottish Executive's rural development policies in ensuring the economic prosperity of accessible rural areas – areas that are rural (settlements of less than 3,000 population) but are within a relatively short travel time of major urban centres (30 minutes drive to the nearest settlement of over 10,000 population.) The aim of the inquiry is to focus on:

- The aims of accessible rural communities for the development of their area, and the challenges they face in achieving those aims.
- How these issues are reflected in government policy and funding initiatives, (by the Scottish Executive and across other levels of government and public agencies), including the way initiatives are targeted.
- Policy priorities which should be pursued in order to help secure economic prosperity in accessible rural areas.

It is intended that a draft COSLA response will be discussed at the next Rural Affairs Executive Group meeting on 30 June 2005 together with a progress report of the working group coordinated by the South of Scotland Alliance to review policy on small towns. Given the interest of the Urban Affairs Executive Group in the development of City-Regions (and also small towns) the Inquiry will also be discussed at their meeting on 17 June.

Whilst final responses to the Inquiry are not required until 15 July, I would be grateful if you could arrange for views on the issues raised in the Inquiry to be sent to me by 24 June. This would enable me to prepare a first draft of the COSLA response for the meeting of the Rural Affairs Executive Group on 30 June.

Yours faithfully,

Jon Harris
Strategic Director