



13 May 2005

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE LAUNCHES
INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN
'ACCESSIBLE RURAL AREAS'**

The Scottish Parliament's Environment and Rural Development Committee today announced an open call for evidence for its inquiry into rural development. The inquiry will examine how effective the Scottish Executive's rural development policies are in ensuring the economic prosperity of accessible rural areas.

The inquiry will focus on a number of points, including:

- 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.

Sarah Boyack MSP, Convener of the Committee, said:

"During our fact-finding visits around Scotland in March it was obvious to us that there are some common issues, but there are very different perspectives in different parts of rural Scotland.

"For the next part of our inquiry, we are focussing on what are described as 'accessible' rural areas, to examine what appears to be an emerging gap between policy and funding which addresses city-regions and that which addresses more remote rural areas.

"Many rural areas seem as though they should be prospering because they are relatively near to urban centres, but they are

finding it hard to regenerate and finding that local people have to look to cities for employment and to access services. We want to examine how rural development policy can address the needs of these areas.”

The Committee has already visited different rural areas to find out what difference local people believe the Scottish Executive’s policies are making to rural areas, and what they think the Executive’s priorities should be for taking action to improve prosperity across rural Scotland.

Groups of Committee members visited:

- Barra
- Walkerburn and Jedburgh in the Borders
- Lochgelly and Anstruther in Fife,
- Durness in the north-west Highlands.

Details of the programme and timetable of the inquiry are available on the Environment and Rural Development Committee homepage at

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/environment/index.htm>.

How to have your say

Evidence should be submitted no later than 12 noon on Friday 15 July 2005. Late submissions can be accepted only by prior arrangement with the Committee Clerk.

Evidence should be reasonably brief and typewritten (normally no more than 4 sides of A4). It would be most helpful if responses could be submitted by email:

<mailto:ERDC@scottish.parliament.uk>

Alternatively, responses can be submitted by letter to Christine Lambourne, Assistant Clerk, Environment and Rural Development Committee, Room T1.01, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP.

Evidence received may be published by the Parliament and will be treated as a public document unless the submission specifically requests otherwise. If you wish your evidence not to be public, please discuss this with the Committee Clerk before submitting it. All responses will be circulated to the Committee. All responses become the property of the Scottish Parliament and we are unable to return documents.

For further information, the media contact is:

Richard Holligan: 0131 348 5605

email: richard.holligan@scottish.parliament.uk

For specific committee information, contact:

Mark Brough, Clerk to the Committee: 0131 348 5240

or

Katherine Wright, Senior Assistant Clerk: 0131 348 5221

email: ERDC@scottish.parliament.uk

For public information enquiries, contact: 0131 348 5000

For general enquiries, contact 0845 278 1999 (local call rate)

Text phone: 0131 348 5415

email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

Visit our website at: www.scottish.parliament.uk