

Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

26th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday, 5 October

Pre-budget scrutiny – Scottish Government Budget 2023-24

Introduction

1. When the Committee considered its work programme in June, members agreed to take a dual approach to its pre-budget scrutiny and to focus on the impact of the resource spending review on the rural affairs and islands (RAI) budget and on the [£4 million funding package announced as part of the £30 million Islands Programme](#), established to support the implementation of the National Islands Plan.
2. With respect to the Islands Programme, the Committee agreed to focus its pre-budget scrutiny on the extent to which the Scottish Government's islands budget could support population growth on those islands deemed vulnerable to depopulation.
3. To inform this approach, the Committee wrote to the [Scottish Government](#), [Scottish Futures Trust](#) (SFT, who support the delivery of the Islands Programme) and the [six islands local authorities](#) seeking further information on the new competitive process and investment panel relating to the allocation of the £4m capital funding for the islands programme for 2022-23.
4. [Responses from the Scottish Government, SFT and four local authorities](#) (North Ayrshire Council, Argyll and Bute Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Orkney Islands Council) are published on the Committee's webpages.
5. On 28 September 2022, the Committee held an evidence session with three of the local authorities (North Ayrshire Council, Argyll and Bute Council and Orkney Islands Council) and the SFT regarding the allocation of the £4m capital funding for the island's programme for 2022-23.
6. Building on this evidence, today's evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands will focus primarily on this year's Islands Programme funding.
7. In addition, the recent [Resource Spending Review](#) and [Programme for Government](#), as well as the Deputy First Minister's [announcement relating to tackling the cost of living crisis and the emergency budget review](#), all raise budget issues touching on other areas of the Cabinet Secretary's remit.

8. This evidence will help shape the Committee's pre-budget scrutiny letter which will be agreed at the meeting on 26 October and is intended to seek to influence the spending proposals in the upcoming Scottish Budget.

**Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee clerks,
September 2022**