

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
Wednesday 22 January 2025
3rd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Scottish Government Budget 2025 to 2026

Introduction

1. This paper supports the Committee's evidence session on the Scottish Government's Budget for 2025 to 2026 with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands.
2. The Committee will scrutinise the spending plans for the Rural Affairs and Islands (RAI) portfolio within the Budget and reflect on how recommendations made by the Committee in its pre-budget scrutiny letter have been incorporated into these plans.
3. Following the evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary, the Committee will have opportunity to contribute to the stage 1 debate on the budget to be held on 30 January 2025.

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee pre-budget scrutiny

4. Under the terms of the revised budget process, established by the Budget Process Review Group in Session 5, committees are encouraged to undertake pre-budget scrutiny prior to the publication of the Scottish Government's budget. This approach, which normally involves committees publishing a pre-budget letter or report, is designed to influence the Scottish Government's spending plans for the forthcoming financial year.
5. [Information about the budget process has been produced by SPICe.](#)
6. The Committee considered its approach to pre-budget scrutiny at its meeting on 19 June 2024. Consistent with the approach taken in previous financial years, the Committee agreed to take the following dual approach to scrutiny:
 - Scrutiny of the overall RAI portfolio budget.
 - A specific focus on the Marine Directorate's budget for fisheries management operations and science.
7. The Committee ran [a call for views from 27 June to 9 August 2024, to which 14 responses were received.](#)
8. The Committee undertook a fact-finding visit to the Marine Directorate science laboratories in Aberdeen on 2 September 2024 and took evidence from stakeholders in [a roundtable discussion regarding the budget of the Marine Directorate on 4 September 2024.](#)

9. On 25 September 2024, the Committee then [took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary as part of the pre-budget process](#). The Cabinet Secretary [wrote to the Committee to clarify certain aspects of the evidence given](#).
10. Following the evidence session, [the Committee wrote to the Scottish Government on 31 October 2024](#) setting out its views. The [Scottish Government responded to the Committee's pre-budget letter on 5 December 2024](#).

The Scottish Government's Budget for 2025 to 2026

11. [The Scottish Government's Budget for 2025 to 2026 was published on 4 December 2024](#).
12. Information regarding the RAI portfolio responsibilities, national outcomes and spending plans are set out in Chapter 10 of the budget document (pages 86-93).
13. [SPICe has prepared a briefing on the Scottish Government's spending and tax plans for 2025 to 2026](#).

**Clerks to the Committee
January 2025**