

Action Plan  
2017-19





# Introduction

Scottish Rural Action (SRA) was established in 2013 with the working name of Scottish Rural Parliament and had two aims:

**1 To encourage and actively support the development of an inclusive and sustainable Scottish rural movement that is rooted in Scotland's rural communities and empowers and connects them.**

**2 To support the organisation of a Scottish Rural Parliament that meets with the purpose of giving a stronger, more coherent voice to Scotland's rural communities and enabling them to engage more effectively with government at all levels.**

As SRA has sought to take forward and develop these activities, it has become clear that there is a need for SRA to be a proactive influencer in policy and decision-making, with the driving force for this direction coming from both rural communities and wider stakeholders.

We are consistently being told that policy does not translate to a rural context, and our rural communities feel disempowered and disconnected from decision-making processes and the opportunities to change that. Our rural communities are being asked to deliver more, and given greater powers to do so. Some of our communities have risen to this challenge and are at the helm of transformation for their community. Other communities are getting further and further left behind and facing serious challenges including poverty, depopulation and declining services.

The wider context of political change is having an impact on rural Scotland too, with greater powers devolved to the Scottish Government and our likely exit from the European Union, providing both opportunities and challenges for rural Scotland. Where legislation and policy are being

written or re-written, we need to ensure that they meet the needs of rural communities.

Our Action Plan crystallises our shift in focus to being a powerful voice for the people of rural Scotland. We have had a number of successes over the past few years, but we need to see a step-change in our ability to influence and to better evidence our success in order to meet the needs of rural communities.

We have therefore prioritised policy areas, and actions within those policy areas, with input from a wide number of stakeholders, to identify those that we feel will have the greatest impact. Whilst we fully intend to deliver all aspects of this Action Plan, it will remain a work in progress as we continue to respond to the changing world around us.

We are therefore very pleased to present you with our final Action Plan for 2017-19 and welcome your input as we begin to deliver on these commitments.

**Amanda Burgauer, Chair**

Our Action Plan  
crystalises our shift  
in focus to being a  
powerful voice for  
the people of rural  
Scotland





 **Scottish Rural Parliament**  
YOU DECIDE!

What should be on the agenda for the Scottish Rural Parliament?

Choose 5

<input type="checkbox"/> Rural businesses and employment	<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in rural population demographics
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support for communities to lead with confidence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Access to broadband !!!
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Issues of land use and planning
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rural poverty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transport infrastructure
<input type="checkbox"/> Protecting our natural assets and adapting to environmental changes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivery costs
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____

Scottish Rural Action aims to be a powerful voice for the people of rural Scotland

# Strategic Context

Scottish Rural Action aims to be a powerful voice for the people of rural Scotland. In 2017-2027 Scottish Rural Action is focusing on two strategic objectives:

**OUTCOME 1:** There is a powerful voice for the diverse people and communities of rural Scotland, particularly those not already represented by other interests, to assure that policy and decision-making meets the needs of rural Scotland.

**OUTCOME 2:** Scottish Rural Action will be a sustainable, independent and effective organisation with a clear vision for our future.

## We work by:

- Identifying and sharing issues of concern to rural communities and sourcing evidence to support those concerns.
- Engaging rural communities in identifying key issues and solutions to those issues, and in advocating or campaigning on those issues.
- Providing a high-profile platform for focused discussion and collaboration on rural issues for rural communities and decision-makers through the Rural Parliament.
- Working with policy and decision-makers at an early stage in the policy process to ensure the needs of rural communities are being met.

A commitment to supporting a Rural Parliament for Scotland was made in the Scottish Government's in the Programme for Government 2016-17.

# Action Plan

We will focus our activities on five policy areas in 2017-19 and a number of cross-cutting activities. Each policy area has an over-arching objective to make progress on delivering our Manifesto for rural Scotland and the specific remit has been developed to reflect those areas of work we feel we can deliver and will have the greatest impact, following consultation with stakeholders.

The activities within each policy area will be delivered by a Working Group on that theme, consisting of people and organisations with an interest or expertise in the policy area who are willing to volunteer their time and expertise. The membership of these groups is fluid and by invitation of the Chair. Membership for 2017 has not yet been agreed.

You can express an interest in joining any of the working groups by contacting Fiona Thompson [fiona@scottishruralparliament.org.uk](mailto:fiona@scottishruralparliament.org.uk) and more information is available online at [www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk/volunteer/](http://www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk/volunteer/). Cross-cutting activities are predominantly delivered by the staff team.



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# Policy

## Transport

**CHAIR: EMMA COOPER**

The Rural Transport Working Group will work with partners to deliver the following:

1. Input into the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy throughout 2017- 2019 from a rural perspective to ensure that it explicitly considers and addresses the needs of rural communities, as distinct from those of urban communities.
2. Proactively encourage high levels of rural community engagement into the public National Transport Strategy consultations in 2017-18 by working with others to provide information about rural transport issues and raise awareness of the consultation.
3. A report into rural transport needs, concerns and solutions, from the perspective of members of rural communities, for feeding into the development of policy and practice across Scotland.
4. Input into the Scottish Rural Infrastructure Plan 2017 to ensure that the views and needs of rural communities are understood.



## Business, Employment and Enterprise

**CHAIR: MARY WILLIAMS EDGAR**

The Business, Employment and Enterprise Working Group will work with partners to deliver the following:

1. Investigate the potential for reinvigorating empty retail and commercial property in rural areas using similar principles to the Empty Homes Scheme.
2. Share information and best practice in the implementation of community benefit clauses and Fair Work principles as in the Scottish Government procurement guidelines to encourage greater take-up.
3. Collate background information and case studies on the impact of Universal Credit on micro and small rural business to inform the future roll-out of support.
4. Examine issues of pay and workplace conditions, including access to training and career progression, in the part-time, insecure and seasonal labour markets in the rural workplace.



## Land

### CO-CHAIRS: SIMON BROOKE AND VANESSA HALHEAD

The Land Working Group will work with partners to deliver the following:

1. Engage rural communities in the developing land agenda, to enable information dissemination and input from the rural community perspective as policy and guidance develops.
2. Encourage and support the active engagement of communities in the development of regional land use frameworks.
3. Highlight rural housing need and homelessness as relating to land access.
4. Identify and promote a series of case studies on alternative models of access to land to encourage debate and replication, leading to policy recommendations.
5. Promote understanding of the rights and responsibilities afforded to communities, public, private and third sector bodies in relation to land ownership, management and use.

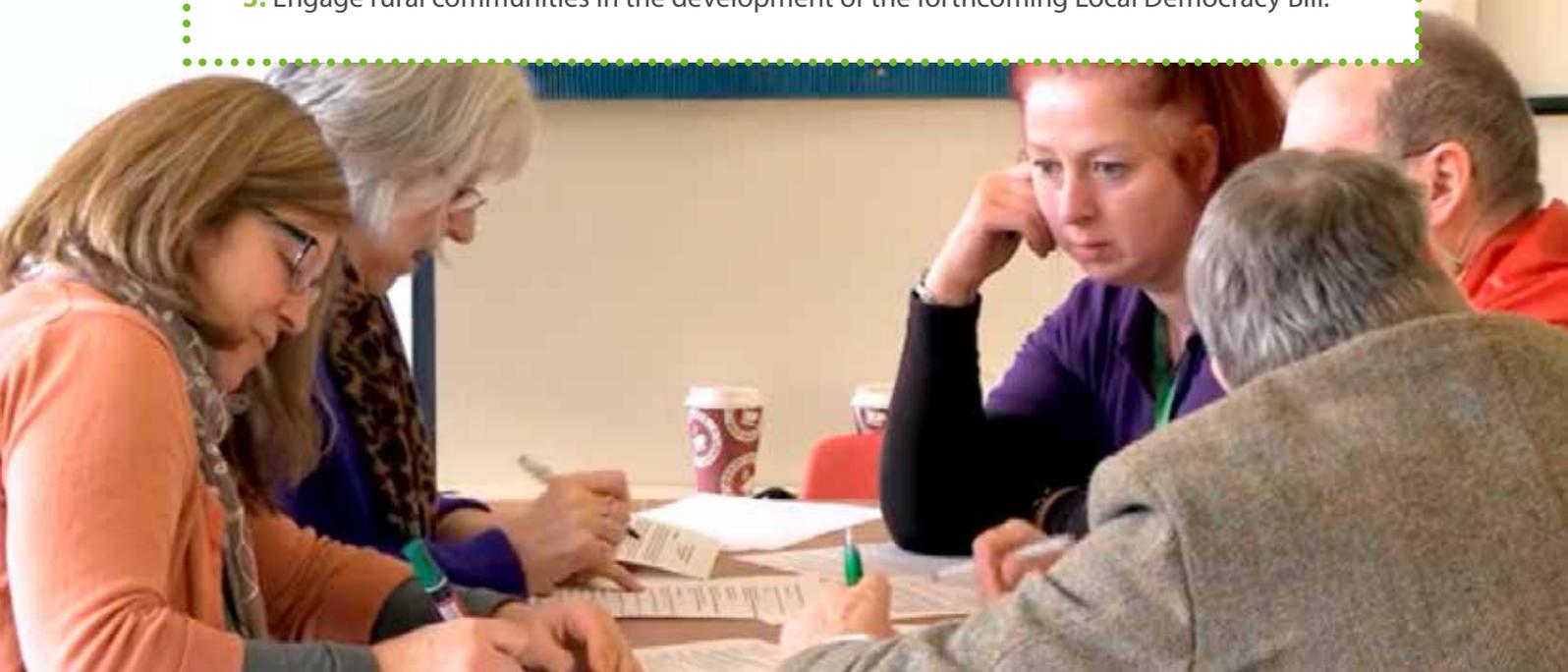


## Democracy and Governance

### CHAIR: AMANDA BURGAUER

The Democracy & Governance Working Group will work with partners to deliver the following:

1. Produce a report that clearly outlines the problems facing rural communities in Scotland in relation to local democracy, including some real examples of how the current system does not work, and highlight possible preferred options or make recommendations as to the way forward towards better democracy for the people of rural Scotland.
2. Raise awareness of opportunities to participate in democracy, including reminders to register to vote.
3. Engage rural communities in the development of the forthcoming Local Democracy Bill.





## Digital Connectivity

**CHAIR: AMANDA BURGAUER**

The Digital Connectivity Working Group will work with partners to deliver the following:

1. Continued engagement with Scottish Government to ensure the recommendations from our 2016 Broadband Report, agreed with the Digital Policy Team, are enacted, including participation in a National Broadband Conference.
2. Monitoring and sharing of information on the progress made towards broadband rollout across rural Scotland.
3. Run an awareness-raising campaign for members and the public explaining the role of an Internet Service Provider and how to switch for the best deal.
4. Investigate mobile connectivity in rural Scotland and engage with mobile suppliers to gather information that will be relayed to the SRA membership and the public.
5. Address the 5G sell-off and examine other aspects of 5G including potential reserving of the 700MHz spectrum and other options, and the new 5G Technology Centre.
6. Run an open Digital Connectivity forum with free registration on the new SRA website to engage the public and other stakeholders in discussions related to all aspects of Digital Connectivity.



# Cross-Cutting Activities

## Rural Funding

**ACTION:** Scottish Rural Action will engage rural communities in discussion about the future of rural funding and policy post-2020 to ensure that their voice is heard as these important decisions are made.

**PURPOSE:** Ensure that funding for rural development, infrastructure and enterprise continues and is fit for purpose.

## Online Forum

**ACTION:** Scottish Rural Action will create and promote an online forum for rural communities.

**PURPOSE:** We will be providing an online platform where communities can discuss matters of importance, share ideas and knowledge and connect with one another, SRA and decision-makers. Alongside our policy-based activities this will help to stimulate a rural movement.

## Volunteers

**ACTION:** Scottish Rural Action will recruit, train and support a network of volunteers.

**PURPOSE:** We will create networks of volunteers to collect evidence and campaign on issues affecting rural communities, build our membership and reach and increase our sustainability. This will help to build a rural movement for Scotland.

## European Rural Parliament

**ACTION:** Scottish Rural Action will input into the Rural Services and Infrastructure work stream arising from the 2015 European Rural Parliament and send a delegation to the 2017 European Rural Parliament.

**PURPOSE:** We will continue to build relationships across Europe both within and outside of the European Union, share knowledge and learn from other countries. Through the European Rural Parliament, we will seek to influence policy and decision-making at the European level.

## Members Day and Scottish Rural Parliament

**ACTION:** Scottish Rural Action will host a member's day in 2017 and the third Scottish Rural Parliament in 2018.

**PURPOSE:** We will bring rural communities and decision-makers together to share knowledge, learn new skills, exchange ideas and identify solutions to the challenges facing rural communities.





For further information, please contact:

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