



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Fergus Ewing
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy
and Connectivity

By email only

c/o Clerk to the Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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(RNID Typetalk calls welcome)
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27 January 2017

Dear Fergus,

Draft Climate Change Plan (RPP3) – agriculture and soil testing

I am writing with regard to the Scottish Government's recently published draft Climate Change Plan.

As you will be aware, the following Scottish Parliament Committees have adopted a collaborative approach to scrutiny of this plan, in order to ensure the specialist expertise of each Committee is applied when reviewing each sector:

- Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee
- Local Government and Communities Committee
- Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee
- Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee is considering the following areas of the plan:

- Overview, development of draft Climate Change Plan;
- Climate change governance (including monitoring and evaluation);
- Water Industry;
- Resource use;
- Land use (including peatlands and land use by the public sector); and
- Behaviour change

The Committee has hosted one evidence session to date and took evidence from Scottish Government officials involved in the development of the document to hear more about the overall plan and climate change governance. The official report of this meeting is available [here](#).

The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee has also previously considered the Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) report on [Reducing Emissions in Scotland – 2016 Progress Report](#) and the CCC Adaptation Sub Committee's [assessment](#) of Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme. As part of this, the Committee [took evidence](#) from Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, on 25 October 2016 and she made the following statement:

*“Obviously, **compulsory** soil testing is going to be part of the climate change plan—this is a rare occasion on which I can tell you about something that will be in it—and there will be a separate consultation on the compulsory soil testing scheme subsequent to the draft climate change plan being published.”*

Upon publication of the draft Climate Change Plan, the Committee were interested to note the language used in describing the policy associated with this commitment. The draft Climate Change Plan states:

*“From 2018, we will **expect farmers** to test the soil in all improved land every 5/6 years, and we will work with them to establish how best to achieve this. This will be for pH and we will consult on including testing for potassium and phosphorus”.*

As part of its exploration of how the carbon envelopes for each sector were established in the development of the plan, the Committee asked about this language with Scottish Government officials at its meeting this week. You can find the relevant exchange [here](#).

It is consequently not clear to the Committee whether the plan is mandating farmers to carry out compulsory soil testing from 2018 and we would appreciate confirmation from you on the following points:

- Will soil testing be compulsory for all farmers?
- If so, how will this be audited and evaluated?
- Will this be compulsory from 2018? If not, what are the timescales for the implementation of this policy?
- On which types of soil will farmers be required to carry out this testing?
- How often will testing be required?
- When will the consultation on compulsory soil testing be published? The Committee previously asked this in a [letter](#) to Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham, following its consideration of the CCC Adaptation Sub Committee report on Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme and has not received a response on this point as it was indicated the answer would be included in the plan.
- What information the Scottish Government holds on current levels of uptake of soil testing across Scotland?

I would be grateful for your prompt attention to these questions and request a response by **Wednesday 1 February 2017**. This will allow the Committee to take account of your response when questioning stakeholders on issues relating to peatland and land use at its meeting on 7 February 2017.

The Scottish Parliament's Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee is considering the sections of the plan on the agriculture and forestry sectors, and as such I am copying this correspondence to Edward Mountain MSP, the Convener of the Committee. I am also copying this to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform as it references previous correspondence and evidence she has provided to the Committee.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Dey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Graeme Dey MSP

Convener

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

cc. Edward Mountain MSP, Convener, Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee and Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham