



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Call for Evidence on impact of COVID-19 on the rural economy and connectivity

The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee invites all interested individuals and organisations to submit written evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on the rural economy and connectivity in Scotland.

The Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity on the resilience of transport services and networks in Scotland during the current COVID-19 outbreak at its meeting on 18 March 2020.

You can access the papers related to this meeting [here](#), the Official Report of proceedings [here](#) and the video of this session [here](#).

The Committee subsequently took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism on the impact of COVID-19 on their respective portfolios at a virtual meeting of the Committee on 13 May 2020.

You can access the papers related to this meeting [here](#), the Official Report of proceedings [here](#) and the video of this session [here](#).

The REC Committee plans to host further evidence sessions with ministers as the Scottish Government's response to the current COVID-19 emergency and the specific impacts on Scotland's rural economy and connectivity continue to develop.

Your response to this call for evidence will help to inform members about the specific issues and questions they should be raising at these future meetings with ministers. In particular, you are invited to respond to the following questions:

1. What particular impacts has COVID-19 had on the lives of people in Scotland's rural and island communities and what lessons have these communities learned for the future?
2. Which specific sector(s) does your evidence relate to?
 - a. Digital connectivity
 - b. Transport
 - c. Agriculture, land management and forestry
 - d. Fisheries (including the fish processing sector) and aquaculture
 - e. Food and drink

3. What has been the experience, particularly in island and rural communities, of maintaining access to food supplies during the COVID-19 emergency?
4. To what extent have the sector(s) been equipped to mitigate these impacts directly and to what extent have they needed to rely on interventions from Scottish and UK Governments / other external bodies?
5. Can you share the findings of any research that may have been undertaken into the impacts of COVID-19 on the sector(s) and communities in question and how they have responded? Are there examples of innovation and best practice internationally in responding to COVID-19 that could benefit the sector(s) and communities in question in Scotland?
6. What has been the immediate impact of COVID-19 on the sector(s), including on livelihoods and on the wellbeing of those working in the sector(s) and in dependent communities?
7. What is your assessment of the resilience of the sector(s) to the COVID-19 crisis, and how might resilience to future shocks, including further waves of infection from COVID-19 and future pandemics, be improved?
8. How effectively has the support provided by the relevant division(s) of the Scottish Government and/or related bodies addressed that sector's / those sectors' needs? Has support been equitable, and has it been appropriate to the long-term recovery that you would like to see?
9. What lessons can be learned from how the relevant divisions of the Scottish Government and/or related bodies have responded to the impact of the COVID-19 emergency on the sector(s) in question? Are governance arrangements adequate to deal with disruption, such as that caused by COVID-19? Can you provide specific examples of good practice in this respect?
10. In what ways do you anticipate that COVID-19 will result in longer-term or possibly permanent changes to ways of working in the sector(s) and what are the practical and financial implications of these changes?
11. What should the Scottish Government be doing to support the sector(s) in question to deal with these future challenges?

How to submit your evidence

Before making a submission, please read our [Policy on Treatment of Written Evidence by Subject and Mandatory Committees](#).

This is an open call for views and there is currently no deadline for responding.

Responses should be sent, wherever possible, electronically and in MS Word format to: rec.committee@parliament.scot

Hard copy responses may be sent to:
*Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, T3.60, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh
EH99 1SP*

Ideally, responses should be **no more than four sides of A4 in length.**

All written evidence received may be published by the Parliament and will be treated as a public document. If you wish to submit evidence in confidence or anonymously please read the policy at the link above or contact Alex Bruce, details below.

Contact

Should you require alternative formats of this information or further assistance in making a written submission to the Committee, please do not hesitate to contact the clerking team of the Committee.

For Committee information, contact: Steve Farrell, email:
rec.committee@parliament.scot

For information about submitting evidence in confidence or anonymously, contact: Alex Bruce, email: alex.bruce@parliament.scot

For further information, the media contact is: Baktosch Gillan, email:
baktosch.gillan@parliament.scot

For general enquiries, contact: email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

Further information on how laws are passed:
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/visitandlearn/100529.aspx>