



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

RURAL AFFAIRS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Richard Lochhead MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food
and Environment

Scottish Government

Via email only

c/o Clerk to the Committee
Room T3.40

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4 September 2015

Dear Richard

SRUC proposals for changes to the network of Veterinary Disease Surveillance Centres ('VDSCs')

The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee took oral evidence¹ from SAC Consulting Ltd on 2 September on proposed changes to VDSCs.

Following that evidence session I have written to the SRUC to highlight the Committee's grave concern about the proposed changes, and have sought further information on this. I attach a copy of this correspondence.

In the summary document of responses received to its consultation on the future of VDSCs, the SRUC stated that "there is no timetable for the next steps, but they include a recommendation on the proposed changes to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment by the Strategic Management Board. Final decisions are dependent on the outcome of these discussions and will be made public in due course."

The Committee is keen to ensure that there is a clear strategic vision for veterinary surveillance services in Scotland and decisions on the future of the service are based on this vision, reflect the needs of service users and are informed by cost-benefit analysis. The Committee has asked the SRUC to provide information about the strategic vision for VDSCs in Scotland that underpins proposed changes, and for any cost benefit analysis that has been taken on the current situation and proposed changes.

¹ Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, Official Report, 2 September 2015: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10062>

The Committee would like to draw your attention to our concerns. We would also like to ask when a final decision on the future of VDSC, which takes accounts of concerns expressed by respondents to SRUCs consultation and the Committee's concerns, will be made.

The Committee would welcome a response from you on this by Friday 2 October 2015.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Gibson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Rob Gibson MSP
Convener

ANNEX

RURAL AFFAIRS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Janet Swadling
Acting Chief Executive
SRUC, Scotland's Rural College

c/o Clerk to the Committee
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and

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Managing Director,
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Via email only

4 September 2015

Dear Janet and Mike

SRUC proposals for changes to the network of Veterinary Disease Surveillance Centres ('VDSCs')

I am writing to you following the oral evidence session the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee undertook on 2 September, on the proposals for changes to the network of Veterinary Disease Surveillance Centres.

As was clear from the meeting the Committee has grave concerns about the proposals for change and has a number of points on which it seeks clarification. Fundamentally, we are concerned by the lack of a clear strategic vision underpinning the review which will be vital to ensuring the successful delivery of an animal disease surveillance service fit for the 21st century.

A number of issues arose in discussion, and I would refer you to the Official Report transcript of the evidence session.²

We are seeking the following specific information from you—

- An explanation of the time lag between the publication of the Kinnaird Review and the SRUC consultation of the proposed changes, and why there appears to be a rush to implement changes when alternatives are not in place;
- Clarity on the overall level of funding for the VDSC service;³
- The strategic vision underpinning the proposals for change;

² Scottish Parliament Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, *Official Report 2 September 2015*, Columns 57 to 75. Oral evidence session Veterinary Disease Surveillance Centres: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10062>

³ See Columns 73 to 75 of the Scottish Parliament Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, *Official Report 2 September 2015*, Official Report: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10062>

- The cost benefit analysis undertaken by the SRUC on business as usual and the proposed alternatives;
- If no such cost benefit analysis has been undertaken, the rationale for this approach;
- Clarity on the timetable for reaching a decision on potential changes;
- Details on what access to services will be provided for current Inverness clients if the VDSC at Drummondhill in Inverness is closed. This includes access for post mortem/disease surveillance services for marine mammal strandings and support to the investigation of incidences of wildlife crime;
- Information on any commercial valuation, formal or informal, the SRUC has carried out on the value of the VDSC facilities and property at Drummondhill in Inverness and at Auchincruive in Ayr.

The Committee is seeking a response from you on these issues by Friday 2 October.

I have also written to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Environment and Food and have copied this correspondence to him for information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Gibson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Rob Gibson MSP
Convener

Cc. Richard Lochhead MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Environment and Food