



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

RURAL AFFAIRS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

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c/o Clerk to the Committee
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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.¹

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;²

¹ 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>

- The strategic vision underpinning the proposals for change;
- 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



Rob Gibson MSP
Convener

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

² 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>