



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## **RURAL AFFAIRS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

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and Lifelong Learning

and

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Via email only

26 February 2016

Dear Angela and Richard

### **RACCE COMMITTEE SCRUTINY OF SRUC**

You will both be aware of the scrutiny the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment (RACCE) Committee has undertaken in recent months in relation to the governance and strategic vision of SRUC-Scotland's Rural College.

The RACCE Committee took oral evidence<sup>1</sup> from the senior management of SRUC on 25 November 2015. It followed up this session with a series of written questions<sup>2</sup> to the SRUC on 17 December 2015. SRUC responded<sup>3</sup> to these questions on 5 February 2016, and the RACCE Committee considered this response on 24 February 2016. Our views on the response received from SRUC are outlined in correspondence to SRUC today, and this has been copied to you for information.

One of the issues which arose from the Committee's scrutiny is the current extensive and dispersed property portfolio of SRUC. This is a legacy of the property inherited from SRUC's predecessor colleges when it was established

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<sup>1</sup> RACCE Committee Official Report 25 November 2015, Cols 20-21:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10238&mode=pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [Letter from the RACCE Committee 17 December 2015](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Letter from the SRUC 5 February 2016](#)

in October 2012, namely the Scottish Agricultural College, Elmwood College in Fife, Oatridge College in West Lothian and Barony College in Dumfries.

Consolidating its property and asset portfolio is one of several complex and challenging issues which senior management of the SRUC are working to address. However, the Committee is concerned about the potential implications of this in terms of SRUC's ability to deliver core academic courses in areas which support key aspects of the Scottish rural economy, such as forestry-related studies, courses which support the tourism sector like golf course green keeping qualifications, or continued development and improvement in sectors facing major challenges, such as the dairy industry.

Another area of concern to the Committee is the position of the cash reserves held by the predecessor institutions of SRUC and how such reserves have been, and continued to be, utilised by SRUC in addressing the ongoing challenges it faces.

The Committee would welcome your views on these issues and is seeking a written reply from you in advance of the Dissolution of the Fourth Session of the Parliament on 24 March 2016. In doing so your views will supplement the recommendations the Committee is making to its successor, on SRUC, in its Legacy Report.

The Committee looks forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Rob Gibson' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rob Gibson MSP  
Convener