



Scottish Rural Parliament

Pàrlamaid Dhùthchail na h-Alba



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A great opportunity for rural Scotland

Inspiring rural communities to come up with radical ideas to fundamentally change their future

- A collaborative process across rural areas and interests
- Community-led route to public bodies
- Ear and support of government
- Development of ideas and solutions
- A celebration of rural Scotland
- A rural movement or network



What is a Rural Parliament?

- A new initiative designed to give rural Scotland a stronger voice and influence in decision making
- An opportunity for all of rural Scotland to consider the challenges we face together and find innovative solutions

A process not just an event

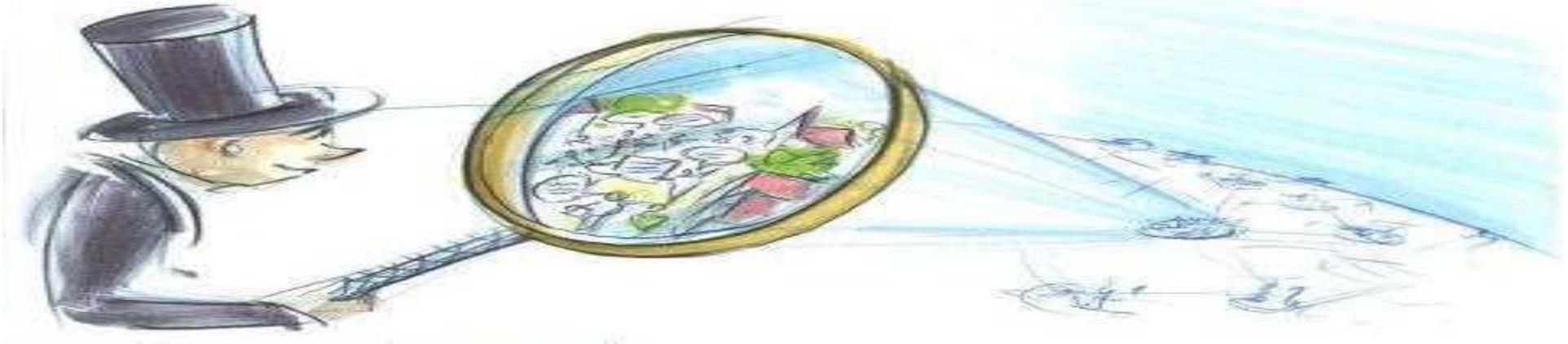
- **2-year process** of involvement and debate between the people of rural Scotland and policy makers to discuss challenges and solutions
- **National gathering** of rural communities and stakeholders to focus on the issues of rural areas, raise their profile and voice
- **Debating platform** to put important issues on the political agenda, influence and speak to Government about the needs of rural areas
- **Network** between rural communities and organisations to meet, exchange, inspire and mobilise
- **Celebration** and **shop window** for rural areas, making their rich experience, work and produce visible in the national context
- Part of a **European family** enabling communication with Brussels and across Europe

What isn't the Rural Parliament?

- **It is not a form of representative democracy**, where people are elected to represent other people – it is participative democracy, where everyone represents themselves - this means anyone can take part
- **It is not a part of government**, it is independent from, but supported and part-funded by the Scottish Government – so we know they are listening
- **It has no formal decision making powers**, but Scottish Government and other decision-makers are involved and listening to the voices of rural people

Why do we need it?

- Rural Scotland is big and important - 95% of land and < 20% of population (1m) trying to be heard within 5.3m
- Rural areas have many issues in common, with many differences to urban – need a strong common voice
- Policy tends to be ‘sectoral’ or geographical - needing better integration to reflect reality
- No single mechanism for enabling a comprehensive rural voice, inclusive of all interests and geographical areas
- Few opportunities for the collective interests of rural communities to be debated and communicated to Government
- Evidence from other parts of Europe shows the benefits to rural areas of their Rural Parliaments in achieving this



A strong track record in Europe

23 national rural movements

Civil society networks mobilising rural communities to:

- support local action for local development
- celebrate local identity and culture
- provide a voice for rural communities
- build local, national and international networks to influence policy
- hold rural parliaments – 20+ years experience

European Rural Community Alliance

- The network of national movements and European rural networks

European Rural Parliament

- First held in December 2013
- Will alternate between Brussels and different countries



The Rural Parliament process

- Initial consultations across Scotland – 2012-13
- Formation of an independent organisation to implement
- Formation of an Advisory Forum of 42 national NGOs
- Research into key rural issues
- National consultation on key issues – identification of key themes
- Local & regional events to gain local perspectives on key rural issues
- ‘expert’ work groups to take the information on the key themes and propose policy motions for the Rural Parliament
- Twitter discussions, Rural Innovator Awards
- Inaugural Rural Parliament – 6-8 November 2014
- Report on findings to government and policy makers
- Follow up on impacts and actions
- 6 month presentation to government
- Presentation of issues to the European Rural Parliament
- Initiate 2017 SRP process

What we talked about

We asked people all over rural Scotland to tell us the top challenges facing rural Scotland and we also looked at existing research.

We found the most important themes were:

- Rural businesses and employment
- Transport infrastructure
- Protecting our natural assets and adapting to environmental change
- Land use, planning and land reform
- Broadband and digital connectivity
- Communities leading with confidence
- Delivery of health and social care

These were the key topics for discussion regionally and at the SRP.

Format of the SRP

- Plenary presentations – informative/ inspirational
- Key themes workshops – distilled from regional meetings and workgroup
- Openspace – new ideas/ angles
- Plenary debate and voting – on main outputs

Also:

- Field visits & Cultural events





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- Scotland's first Rural Parliament in November 2014 closed with a call for action to achieve a more empowered, connected and sustainable rural Scotland.
- Delegates agreed also to ask the Scottish Government to commit to a national conversation on local democratic renewal as a first step towards radical reform of local government that will bring power much closer to communities.
- More than 400 delegates attended over the three days of the Rural Parliament, and in the final session agreed by an overwhelming majority that the Rural Parliament should continue, with the next full session taking place in 2016.



<http://www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk> - website

<https://vimeo.com/117957842> - SRP film

<https://vimeo.com/111339522> - Peter Peacock



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The Scottish
Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

What most needs to change and
what barriers are there to success?

What actions could address these concerns and who needs to do this?