

25th February 2014

Angela Morgan
Scottish Government
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

Dear Ms Morgan

Scotland Rural Development Programme consultation

Ramblers Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on final proposals for the Scotland Rural Development Programme. Our comments broadly relate to Question 1. We trust these comments will be useful and have attached a Respondent Information Form.

Question 1

How would you rate your satisfaction with the budget as a whole?

Ramblers Scotland is disappointed that the SRDP will be underfunded, with only 9.5% of the possible 15% funding transferred from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2. In addition, we wish to convey our disappointment at the lack of any substantial funding within SRDP to support measures which would benefit access and recreation. In previous programmes, through Land Management Contracts and Land Management Options, funding was available for a proportion of the costs for path construction and provision of signage, bridges, etc, to facilitate access. It is therefore regrettable that the proposed SRDP for 2014-2020 does not directly identify any funding for access provision.

We accept that certain applications made under the forestry grants scheme (eg, WIAT), LEADER and the agri-environment-climate scheme could potentially benefit access in some areas, but this is not their main purpose or a priority outcome for these funding streams.

We note that the Cabinet Secretary refers to the need to 'continue developing and sustaining vibrant rural communities' in his introduction, and would point out that many rural communities and businesses rely on income from economic activity related to outdoor recreation. There are numerous studies which have quantified the economic benefits of tourism based on Scotland's environment, and so it seems short-sighted not to direct a proportion of the SRDP, the largest funding stream for rural Scotland, into support for access provision to enable visitors to access the countryside more easily. Tourism is a major industry in Scotland with nature-based tourism estimated at contributing £1.4bn to the Scottish economy¹. Within this SNH study, walking tourism was valued at £533m/year,

¹ Valuing Nature Based Tourism, Scottish Natural Heritage 2010, <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B720765.pdf>

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while a recent report by Transform Scotland² estimated the value of cycle tourism in Scotland at £239m per year. As a specific example of the value of local path networks, a report³ in 2006 estimated that the Fife Coastal Path generated £24-29m expenditure in local businesses each year, and supported 800-900 FTE jobs. Recreation can also play a huge role in helping the Scottish Government to achieve a lasting physical activity legacy from the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

Investment in outdoor recreation also helps the government to deliver on many other policy objectives, including better health outcomes and higher levels of active travel. The National Performance Framework shows little improvement to date in key indicators relating to physical activity and active travel, with a decrease in the number of visits to the outdoors. Just 39% of Scottish adults meet minimum recommended levels of physical activity, yet there is growing evidence of the massive health benefits which arise from regular exercise, particularly in relation to heart disease, some cancers, type 2 diabetes, and as a means of tackling obesity. Paths help people to make simple lifestyle changes, encouraging higher levels of walking and cycling for everyday journeys and for leisure.

We are hopeful that Direct Payments under Pillar 1 relating to greening and cross-compliance may be targeted to encourage farmers to manage their land in a way which would enhance the natural environment while also having the advantage of improving access provision on their land. For example, leaving wide field margins to act as a buffer for diffuse pollution and for the protection of ground nesting birds or other wildlife would also benefit walkers who are able to use these strips as informal paths. During the period of this SRDP we will be promoting public access to agricultural land as a legacy benefit from the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games so we hope that, in the implementation of Pillar 1 payments, full opportunity is taken to facilitate such access.

We trust these comments are helpful and would be happy to discuss any aspect of this response in further detail at your convenience.

Yours sincerely

Helen Todd
Campaigns & Policy Manager

Ramblers Scotland is the representative body for walkers in Scotland and recognised by **sportscotland** as a governing body of sport. We have 6,300 members across Scotland and 55 local walking groups. Our aims are to promote walking, secure and facilitate public access to land and to protect the countryside.

² The Value of Cycle Tourism to Scotland, Transform Scotland 2013, <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk>

³ Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, 2007, Usage and Impact Study

<http://fifecoastandcounsidetrust.co.uk/userfiles/Fife%20Coastal%20Path%20Study%20-%20Final%20Report%20-%20FV%2018%2005%2009.pdf>

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