

EXECUTIVE NOTE

THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTS (RURAL PRIORITIES) (SCOTLAND) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2008 - SSI 2008/233

The above instrument is made in exercise of powers conferred by section 2(2) of and paragraph 1A of Schedule 2 to the European Communities Act 1972. The instrument is subject to negative resolution procedure.

Policy Objectives

The purpose of the Rural Development Contracts (Rural Priorities) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations (“the 2008 Amendment Regulations”) is to add actual cost agri-environment capital items to Schedule 2 of the Rural Development Contracts (Rural Priorities) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 SSI 2008/100 (RDC(RP) Regulations). These capital items are:

Removal of vegetation/debris from sites designated for their geological features;
Erosion control;
Renewable energy power pumps for water troughs; and
Capital works required for SSSI and Natura features to help bring them into favourable condition.

The 2008 Amendment Regulations also make certain necessary amendments to the provisions of the RDC(RP) Regulations as a consequence of the insertion of the 4 actual cost agri-environment capital items into Schedule 2.

The RDC(RP) Regulations allow Scottish Ministers to pay European and national funds from the Scotland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (SRDP) to beneficiaries of Rural Development Contracts (RDC) Rural Priorities and operate the application process. RDC Rural Priorities contribute to delivery of the Scottish Government’s strategic objectives through regional priorities agreed with stakeholders for each of the 11 SRDP RDC Regional Project Assessment Committees (RPAC) regions.

The capital items are included in the SRDP and were omitted in error from the RDC(RP) Regulations. Adding these items will make the full range of agri-environment activities available to applicants.

Background

The European priorities for 2007-2013 are laid down in the Rural Development Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) 1698/2005) and consist of 4 Axes:

- Axis 1 – Improving the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sector
- Axis 2 – Improving the environment and countryside
- Axis 3 – Quality of life in Rural Areas and diversification of the rural economy
- Axis 4 – LEADER

RDC Rural Priorities cover measures (referred to as options in the RDC(RP) Regulations) in the SRDP across the three main thematic Axes 1, 2 and 3.

To achieve these priorities in Scotland, the five main outcomes are those established for rural development in the Scottish National Strategic Plan as follows:

- Improved business viability
- Enhanced biodiversity and landscape
- Improved water quality
- Mitigating climate change
- Enhanced development of rural communities

The 2007–2013 SRDP aims to contribute to all these outcomes and so will RDC Rural Priorities as part of the Programme.

Rural Priorities, together with Land Managers' Options (LMO), for which there is a separate SSI, make up the Rural Development Contracts funding stream under the SRDP 2007-2013 approved and partly funded by the European Commission. Although Rural Priorities is new for 2007-2013, it brings together a range of separate schemes previously available both within and outwith the 2000-2006 SRDP, for example Rural Stewardship and Farm Business Development, and builds on these with new measures.

RDC Rural Priorities is a competitive, targeted scheme open to a wide range of beneficiaries including land managers, members of farm households, rural businesses and community groups. Funding is available for a wide range of environmental, social and economic measures.

The focus of RDC Rural Priorities is on the delivery of priority outcomes with an emphasis on collaboration to deliver integrated and/or landscape scale benefits. Priority outcomes are set at a regional level in partnership with stakeholders but must fit within the context of the Scottish National Strategic Plan fully taking account of the related national rural strategies.

Regulations

The 2008 Amendment Regulations will make provision for:

- Adding the actual cost agri environment capital items, included in the SRDP, to the RDC (RP) Regulations.

Consultation

[The Consultation on the Strategic Framework](#) was launched as part of Scottish Environment Week 2005, and ran until 29 March 2006.

[The Consultation on the Scotland Rural Development Plan](#) itself was launched on 4 April 2006 and closed on 30 June 2006; and nine public meetings were held around Scotland during this period, with over 1,400 copies of the consultation document being distributed. Additionally, the Consultation was available on-line. An [analysis of responses](#) was undertaken by the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC).

A total of 259 written responses were submitted from a range of organisations and individuals. The responses comprised answers to closed questions, as well as extensive textual answers to each of the 21 questions set out in the consultation document.

Financial Effects

The instrument uses funding which the Scottish Government and the European Commission have allocated to the RDCs under the SRDP.

We foresee no increase in costs to the Scottish Government, local government, or business. We have therefore not carried out a Regulatory Impact Assessment.

Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
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