



Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Rural Parliament?

A Rural Parliament is an event and a process that provides opportunities for people with an interest in rural communities to share ideas, consider issues and debate solutions. Rural Parliaments allow people and decision makers to work together on priority issues to develop new and creative solutions. They strengthen the voice of rural communities and help them to influence the decisions that affect them. Their success in Europe over the last 20 years has inspired us to initiate a Rural Parliament in Scotland.

When and where is it taking place?

Rural Parliaments usually take place on a two year cycle, culminating in a Rural Parliament event taking place every second year. In between the main events, there is a process of involvement and debate taking place in communities that helps to set the agenda for the next Rural Parliament. In Scotland the first Rural Parliament is taking place this year and will culminate in an event from 6-8th November 2014 in Oban. The next event will take place in a different location.

How can our organisation support the Scottish Rural Parliament?

You can:

- request our logo to display on your website. The logo has an embedded link which will direct people who click on the logo to our website. We will reciprocate and display your logo and details on our website if you email them to us: info@scottishruralparliament.org.uk
- circulate the short survey that we will be releasing soon asking what the top 5 challenges are facing rural communities. It is vital that as many people participate as possible because this will play a major role in deciding what is discussed at and leading up to the Rural Parliament event
- send out information about the Scottish Rural Parliament to your members, using a series of press releases designed by us to share information about the RP and with opportunities for you to insert your own quotes
- Follow us on Twitter and retweet our tweets, or Like us on Facebook and share our posts. You can encourage your members to do the same
- promote and take part in our debates, either as a nominated 'lead debater' where you or your organisation has particular expertise related to one of the debate topics, or just as a general participant
- nominate your own or one of your members projects for our monthly Scottish Rural Parliament Innovators Award

- display our short film about the RP on your website or Facebook page or simply share it with members

If you have not already been given access to these opportunities, then please contact info@scottishruralparliament.org.uk to register your organisation as a supporter with the subject heading SUPPORT

How can our supporters and members get involved?

The process of involvement and debate is starting now. To be involved members should submit their details on the website, follow us on Twitter or like us on Facebook.

They can help us decide what should be discussed at the Rural Parliament, nominate a great project for a Rural Parliament Award, take part in an online debate, attend the Rural Parliament or even organise their own Mini-Rural Parliament event in their community.

We will be releasing more information about all of these over the next few weeks, so stay in touch by submitting your details on our website, following us on Twitter or liking us on Facebook.

Who will attend?

People who live and work in Scotland's rural communities, representatives of organisations with an interest in rural Scotland and decision makers such as MSPs and local councillors. We anticipate that 400 people will attend, at least 300 of whom will be from rural communities. We expect demand for places will be high, and not everyone who wants to attend will be able to – but everyone will be able to get involved in some way.

If you are interested in attending, please stay in touch and look out for more information about places as we get closer to November.

There will also be reserved, paid-for places for the winners of our monthly Scottish Rural Parliament Award.

Who decides what is discussed at the Scottish Rural Parliament?

You do! The Board of Directors are reviewing the information gathered in previous consultations with people in rural Scotland about what the main challenges are facing rural communities. Once this has been completed, we will be going to communities to ask about the issues they want discussed at the Rural Parliament. You may want to circulate this to your members and ask them to respond, and of course you can respond yourself.

What stance do you take on the Independence Referendum?

The Scottish Rural Parliament does not support any political party or political viewpoint and it has no role to play in the Independence referendum. It may instead be the first major event post-referendum and will take place regardless of the outcome of the referendum.

Although the majority of the funding for the Rural Parliament this year has come from Scottish Government, the Board of Directors and staff are independent from Government.

Why does Scotland need a Rural Parliament?

By bringing people together from across rural Scotland we are creating a unique opportunity for them to collaborate and to speak collectively to decision makers. This gives a stronger voice in shaping policy and influencing major decisions which affect Scotland's rural communities.

At the moment rural affairs tend to be dealt with according to the geographic area e.g. Highlands, or the public policy area e.g. health, they seem best to fit with. Bringing these geographic and policy areas together gives us a chance to have a fresh look at how we can develop creative solutions to the challenges that are common across rural Scotland.

The Rural Parliament is a form of participative democracy which brings people together on an interest basis and encourages detailed consideration of issues. This is complementary to representative democracy where people vote for a person or political party to represent them.

Rural Parliaments have been successful in other parts of Europe and there is now a European Rural Parliament which the Scottish Rural Parliament will be able to work with, giving rural Scotland a stronger voice at a European level too.

How do you know it will make any difference?

We know that the Scottish Government wants to listen and they are the primary funder of the project. This is because Rural Parliaments have been successful in other parts of Europe. We have had a lot of interest in the Rural Parliament from decision-makers and we will be announcing over the coming months which Ministers will be attending and which representatives of decision-making organisations.

However, it is up to the people who live in and have an interest in rural Scotland, to make the Rural Parliament successful by their active participation.

What is the role of the Scottish Government?

The Scottish Government is the main funder of the Rural Parliament this year and are very supportive of the initiative. We expect there will be a good Ministerial presence at the event in Oban.

However the board of Directors are independent of Scottish Government and the Rural Parliament itself has no political affiliation. The Scottish Rural Parliament will be discussing issues chosen by the people living in rural Scotland and will not promote any party political or partisan viewpoints.

How many people live in rural Scotland?

Around one million people which is approximately 20% of the population of Scotland. Around 95% of Scotland's land mass is rural.

I want to nominate my project for an award, how do I contact you to do this?

Email your contact details including a website address if you have one and state your interest to info@scottishruralparliament.org.uk with the subject heading AWARD.