

## EXECUTIVE NOTE

### THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTS (RURAL PRIORITIES) (SCOTLAND) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2009 SSI / 2009 / 1

The above instrument is made in exercise of powers conferred by section 2(2) of 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 2009 (“the 2009 Amendment Regulations”) is to implement modifications to the Scotland Rural Development Programme approved by the European Commission in November 2008. This modification amends typographical errors or omissions from the Programme documentation. It also amends part 2, Table D of Schedule 2 by substituting a new table D containing new entries for: Fell/extract dangerous trees; Manual brashing; High pruning; Early pruning of trees; High pruning of trees; Restructuring with diverse conifers; and Heather restoration. The standard cost for forest plan preparation is amended to give a minimum and maximum payment threshold.

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 Proposal Assessment Committees (RPAC) regions.

#### **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.

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 2009 Amendment Regulations will:

- Amend typographical errors and omissions made in the SRDP and now approved by the European Commission.

## **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.