



# Scottish Rural Parliament

*Pàrlamaid Dhùthchail na h-Alba*



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F Scottish Rural Parliament

# What is a Rural Parliament?

Community-led route to public bodies - **A process** not just an event

- **2-year process** of involvement and debate between the people of rural Scotland and policy makers; collaborative; cross-sector/geography
- **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
- **National gathering** of rural communities and stakeholders to focus on the issues of rural areas, raise their profile and voice
- **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

Not a formal part of government nor a legislative or decision making body

Non party political

# Why do we need it?

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



## Why do we need it?

*“The evidence presented in our Rural Scotland in Focus Report 2012 report shows, unequivocally, the need to tailor national policy to fit rural and the diversity of rural. Not to separate rural, and not to privilege rural over urban, but to fit policy to what rural Scotland and life in rural Scotland is like. The Rural Parliament has a potential to be a key part of that process of tailoring national policy and processes to the specific characteristics of rural and the diversity of rural.”*

**Dr. Sarah Skerratt, Scottish Rural College**

# Why do we need it?

*“unity gives power...if all rural communities were united, came together, inspired each other and communicated to policy makers and each other in the future I think that would be a good way forward for Scotland.*

*If you had a gathering of Rural Scotland, you would have the Ministers and heads of agencies present. If we were all in one room with the rural communities, that could produce dividends.*

*We need “bottom up” development of rural Scotland but also of any forums such as a Rural Parliament. The people who matter should be put in charge of how it operates, I believe that is the right way forward.”*

**Richard Lochhead,  
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment – May 2012**

# The European context

## 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



# Rural Movements in Europe

C19	Norway	1998	Hungary
1976	Finland	2000	Slovakia
1976	Denmark	2001	Iceland
1979	Netherlands	2002	Poland
1980	England	2002	Lithuania
1982	Scotland	2003	Slovenia
1989	Sweden	2004	Latvia
1990	Wales	2005	Czech Republic
1990	Ireland	2006	Croatia
1991	Northern Ireland	2010	Macedonia
1992	Estonia	2012	Serbia
1993	Portugal	2012	Montenegro



**EUROPEAN  
RURAL  
COMMUNITY  
ALLIANCE**

# Key Characteristics

- form part of a wider rural movement
- focused on a number of key issues
- a forum through which to engage with policy-makers and politicians
- initiated and are organised from the 'bottom-up' while others have stronger NGO involvement
- participants include individuals from local rural communities, representatives of NGOs and other organisations with an interest in rural areas and issues, local and national government representatives and politicians

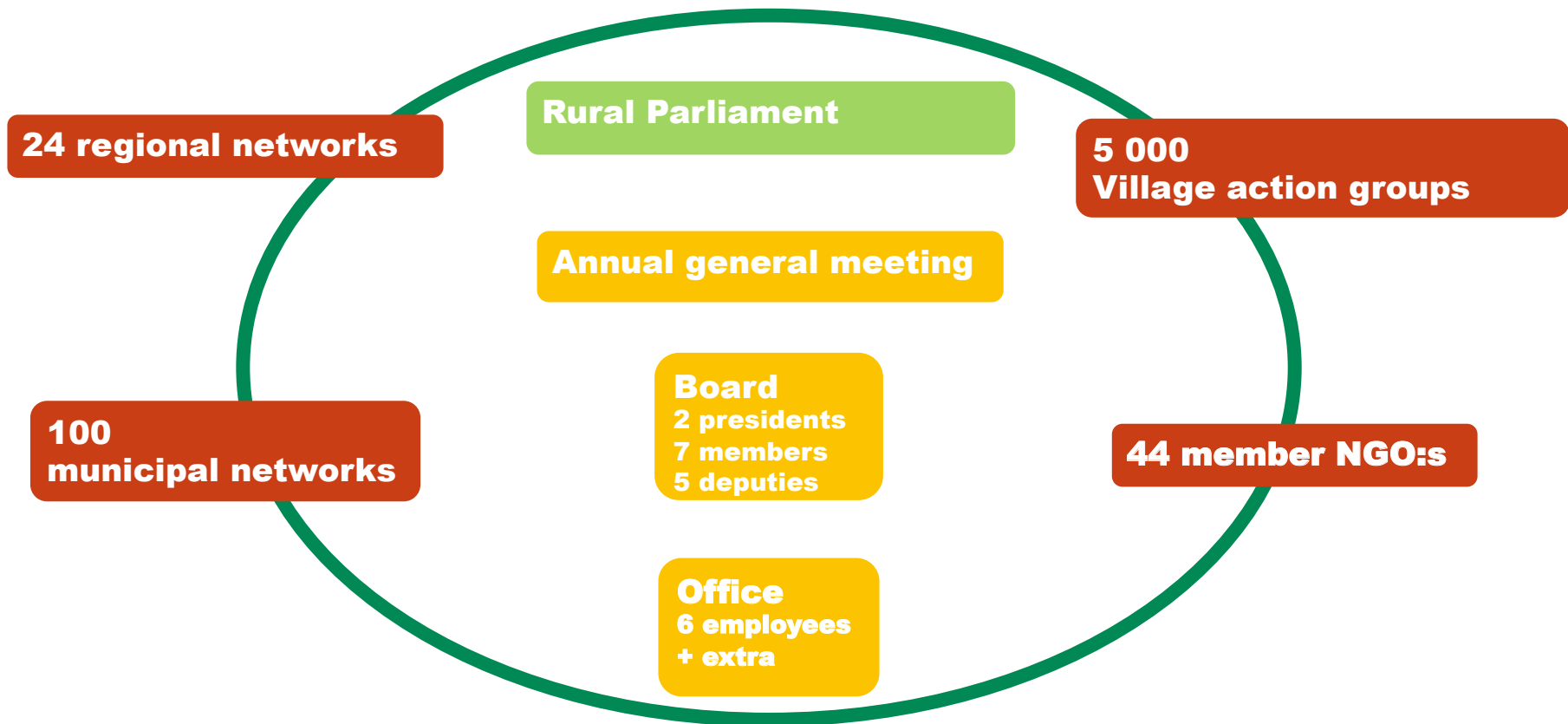


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- role of national and local layers of governance varies between Rural Parliaments

# All Sweden shall live

## The structure of a rural movement



# Development within Scotland

1985-99 Rural Forum Scotland / Highlands and Islands Forum

2002-3 Rural Network initiative

2003-5 Research and report on European Rural Movements

2004-6 Scottish Rural Community Network initiative

2006-7 Rural Advocacy in Scotland - SCC research and report

*“Scottish Government should provide funding for a grass-roots-based representative network of rural community groups”*

2010 SNP Manifesto commitment

*“...to ensure the voice of rural Scotland is heard, we will take forward proposals for a rural parliament to enable rural communities to engage more effectively with government.”*

2011-12 Programme for Government

# Scottish Rural Action

- Company limited by guarantee – not for profit
- Directors nominated from
  - SCVO
  - Scottish Community Alliance
  - Scottish Islands Federation
  - Community Woodlands Association
  - Community Land Scotland
  - RP Adviser and European Rural Community Alliance
  - Scottish Youth Parliament
- Non-democratic but short duration
  - Scottish Rural Parliament /movement will develop own governance

# The process so far

- Jan 2012 SAC research report on rural parliaments in Europe
- Jan 2012 appointed adviser
- Mar 2012 establish Steering Group
- May 2012 consultative conference with European input
- Follow-up consultations and report established support
- Aug 2012 stakeholder workshop to design process
- Scottish delegates to Dutch, Swedish and Estonian Rural Parliaments
- Sept 2013 Ministerial approval for funding
- Oct 2013 establishment of Scottish Rural Action
- Dec 2013 establishment of Advisory Forum – 40+ national bodies representing the broad range of rural interests – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting 18 Mar
- Jan 2014 appointment of staff

# Advisory Forum

Cairngorms National Park Authority	Scottish Churches Rural Group
Community Councils 3 regional networks	Scottish Community Alliance
Community Energy Scotland	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Community Land Scotland	Scottish Crofting Federation
Community Transport Association	Scottish Environment Link
Community Woodlands Association	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
COSLA	Scottish Food and Drink Federation
Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations	Scottish Land and Estates
Countryside Alliance	Scottish Tenant Farmers Association
Citizens Advice Scotland	Scottish Tourism Alliance
Development Trusts Association Scotland	Scottish Women's Rural Institute
Federation of Small Businesses	Scottish Youth Parliament
Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park	Scottish Islands Federation
National Farmers Union Scotland	Scottish Rural College SRUC
Nourish	Voluntary Action Scotland
Rural Housing Service	Voluntary Arts Scotland
Rural Practitioners Association Scotland	Plunkett Foundation
Royal Voluntary Service	<b>Observers</b>
Scottish Allotments & Gardens Society	Scottish Government
Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Scottish Chamber of Commerce	Scottish Enterprise

# The work to come

- To raise awareness and mobilise the involvement of the rural communities across Scotland
- To facilitate the development of the agenda and issues to be addressed by the Rural Parliament
- To organise and deliver the inaugural Rural Parliament event in November 2014
- To monitor, evaluate and report the process, outputs and outcomes of the Rural Parliament
- To promote the development of a long-term rural movement and a biennial cycle of rural parliaments

# Engaging the rural community

## Key steps:

- Engaging with national, regional and local organisations
- Disseminating information, rural news, debating issues, showcasing innovative projects and considering solutions



- Innovators Award: people, organisations, projects
- Twitter debates: rural businesses
- Regional events: debating solutions
- Attending events
- Themes survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/scottishruralparliament>



# Themes

The Scottish Rural Parliament should bring together people from rural communities and decision-makers to consider... Choose 5

Answer Choices	Responses
▼ Rural businesses and employment	61.90% 39
▼ Support for communities to lead with confidence	39.68% 25
▼ Housing	57.14% 36
▼ Delivery costs	6.35% 4
▼ Protecting our natural assets and adapting to environmental changes	49.21% 31
▼ Rural poverty	30.16% 19
▼ Access to broadband	49.21% 31
▼ Issues of land use and planning	61.90% 39
▼ Transport infrastructure	42.86% 27
▼ Changes in rural population demographics	28.57% 18
▼ Other (please specify) <b>Responses</b>	14.29% 9

Total Respondents: 63

# Workshops & Working Groups

## Workshops

- Anyone can participate
- Organised by regional organisations with support from us
- Looking in more detail at the topics, the barriers, the solutions
- Two-way process of learning and debating

## Working Groups

- Stakeholders: public, private, third sector
- Evidence and research
- Formulating recommendations: community, local, national

# Inaugural Rural Parliament

## Oban, 6-8th November

- Gathering of 400-500 people
- 75% from the community; 25% other organisations, decision makers and international - balance as best possible
- Participative not elective – opting in – ‘rural’ not defined
- Engaging and involving process including: plenary debates, issue based workshops, field visits, cultural events, marketplace of rural communities, organisations and produce
- Celebrating
- Agreeing priorities & producing plans/recommendations

# The Rural Parliament

## A two year cycle

2014

- Manifesto to Ministers and policy makers
- Tasks for – communities/ local authorities/ government/ EC
- Identify work streams and encourage collaboration to implement
- Monitor progress

2016

- Report on progress in intervening period
- New Manifesto
- Encourage collaboration to implement
- Monitor progress

# Anticipated Outputs

- Policy ideas and solutions
- A 'Rural Manifesto' – with a cyclical process of implementation and monitoring
- Strengthened links between rural communities
- A stronger voice for rural people
- National shop window and publicity for rural areas
- A Scottish rural movement

# Where to find more information



[http://  
www.scottishruralparliament.org.u  
k/resources/](http://www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk/resources/)



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