

Scotland's Rural Parliament: Identifying next steps. A report for the Scottish Government

Rural Policy Centre Research Report

Dr Sarah Skerratt, Dr Jane Atterton and Dr Mike Woolvin

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Executive Summary

Background, Aim, Objectives and Methods

1. Background to the study:

- a. Moving towards the establishment of a Rural Parliament for Scotland is a Manifesto Commitment of the SNP Party; it thus became a Parliamentary commitment following the May 2011 Election.
- b. A group of stakeholders was formed and met for the first time in February 2012, after which a national seminar on a Rural Parliament for Scotland took place on May 29th 2012. Richard Lochhead MSP made a presentation, as did invited speakers from Rural Parliaments in other European countries: Sweden, Estonia, Slovenia and The Netherlands.
- c. Following the national seminar, the event steering group met in June, at which it was decided that: (1) there is now a mandate to take forward a Rural Parliament in Scotland; (2) an inaugural Rural Parliament will take place in September 2013; and (3) a piece of work would be commissioned to listen to stakeholders as to how to take forward that mandate.

2. **Aim of the study:** to identify specific next steps towards the establishment of a Rural Parliament in Scotland in September 2013.

3. **Methods used in the study:** (i) review of findings from May 29th event: workshop notes from the 10 parallel workshops; post-event online survey findings; (ii) telephone interviews with stakeholders; (iii) analysis of these findings; (iv) informing these findings with key points from an earlier study of European Rural Parliaments; (v) identifying priority actions for discussion at a meeting on 21st August 2012.

Section 1: Review of stakeholder views from May 29th event

4. **'Next steps' pointers from parallel workshops:** The Rural Parliament should engage with, and have influence, at national *and* local levels, and should be a rural movement as well as an event; a core organisation group is required, with an independent secretariat and no one group claiming ownership; it needs to tie into existing structures.

5. **'Next steps' pointers from post-event online survey:** Representation in the Rural Parliament should be grass-roots, with good geographic coverage, generating buy-in from those already active across rural Scotland; it should include the private sector; it should be a new, stand-alone structure, which adds to, rather than duplicates, what is already there; it needs to be a vibrant rural network rather than focusing solely on the Rural Parliament events; it must have clarity as to purpose and outcomes, particularly in how it can directly benefit rural areas; the name 'Rural Parliament' is misleading and raised concerns.

Section 2: Stakeholders' views on Scotland's Rural Parliament

6. There *is* a need for national rural representation:

- a. There is broad agreement around the need for national, influential rural representation within national and regional policy dialogue; and the general sense that such representation would not marginalise rural - rather it would actually raise a coherent profile for rural in Scotland.
- b. Many questions and concerns exist, however. Examples include: how the mandate for a Rural Parliament was decided, and how the Rural Parliament will sit alongside existing networks and structures. These and additional questions need to be addressed from this point onwards for the process to be inclusive and effective. This is particularly the case in rural communities, where the mandate for national, rural representation has yet to be built.

7. Its *mission or main job* should be:

- a. A voice for rural communities to influence policy; for networking and to overcome fragmentation; to broaden the range of rural voices being represented and heard; to help rural Scotland and to present evidence on rural issues.

8. It should *not* be called a “Rural Parliament”:

- a. Over two-thirds of respondents do not want it to be called a Rural Parliament, due to this term having certain specific connotations, and the need therefore to constantly explain what it is and is not. A minority are either unsure of the name, or are happy for it to be called a Rural Parliament, particularly because other European countries use this term.
- b. Other suggested names (all with reservations) are: Rural General Assembly, Scottish Rural Assembly, Rural Congress, Rural Forum, Scottish Rural Communities Forum, Rural Gathering, and Rural Tryst.

9. There is a need for a *new, neutral space* bringing in new players:

- a. Much activity is taking place in and for rural Scotland. However, there is a need to overcome fragmentation between different sectors and geographic areas, and broaden representation by bringing in new players at grassroots *and* at organisational levels.
- b. The national-level rural representation needs to include all sectors: private, public, third. Plus it needs to include people and organisations who do not necessarily have “rural” in their title, or see themselves as being rural in their work, but nonetheless operate in and/or for rural areas.

10. A *process of mobilisation and animation* is therefore required:

- a. There needs to be deliberate investment of time and resources in building representation from within rural communities – through networking organisations. We need a better idea of who does what and where, and then build on that. This requires outreach, so that organisations can bring their members to the national rural body.

11. A *Secretariat and Board* are needed, and soon:

- a. A new, resourced secretariat is needed to support these processes, working for/alongside an independent Board. The ‘shadow Board’ should be agreed very soon,

with elections (or other modes of securing the Board membership) taking place at the inaugural national meeting.

12. The national meetings should be every two years, and should be ‘working’ events:

- a. There is almost complete agreement that it should meet **every two years**, in a rural venue, potentially rotating to different parts of rural Scotland each time. There is widespread support for smaller regional, and/or themed, sub-meetings to take place in between the national biannual events.
- b. The Rural Parliament event is a **‘working’ event**, not just a get-together, from which influential papers should be produced. Shaping up themes must begin before the national event, taking place through consultation. People need to come prepared to debate, discuss and make decisions.

13. Influential links into Government *must* be established:

- a. In order to influence Government, a priority is establishing links into Government through building relationships, and establishing the credibility of the Rural Parliament such that it cannot be ignored. High-level politicians and civil servants should be invited to the Rural Parliament “in listening mode”. The Rural Parliament should produce papers that are “tracked” over the two years to see how Government has responded.

14. Priorities for action now and up to September 2013:

- a. **Now: Form a steering group:** this can be interim, with formalities and ratification taking place at the inaugural national event in 2013. It should be representative and inclusive. A steering group will: keep momentum and engagement; organise the inaugural national event in 13 months’ time; and clarify initial governance, decision-making and finance arrangements.
- b. **Now: Identify and articulate the wider purpose and mission of the Rural Parliament,** to give overall coherence to the policy issues being addressed.
- c. **Up to September 2013: Identify policy issues:** this is key in building towards the inaugural Rural Parliament event, in terms of participants being prepared to debate and discuss, and in ensuring outputs from the event. Some ‘quick wins’ will help to demonstrate what this ‘national rural representation’ is seeking (and able) to achieve.
- d. **Up to September 2013: Work with membership organisations to encourage involvement in the Rural Parliament.** This is necessary in order to: (i) reach and animate the ‘grass-roots’ organisations and individuals across rural Scotland; (ii) establish, through participatory processes, the mandate for the Rural Parliament within rural communities; (iii) get a better understanding of what is needed in Scotland’s rural communities, and what the Rural Parliament could then offer.

15. Funding:

- a. **Up to September 2013:** this is an interim, pump-priming phase when Scottish Government should provide most, if not all, of the funding, in order for the focus to be on getting the Rural Parliament established and the event organised.
- b. **Post-September 2013:** funding for core activities should come from Scottish Government, with a need also to identify and secure other sources, whilst recognising concerns about funding buying influence.

Section 3: Key pointers from review of European Rural Parliaments

16. **Findings concerning next steps from the review of European Rural Parliaments:** Effort must be put into making and keeping the Rural Parliament as representative as possible; policy influence takes place by making direct links into Government before, during and after the Rural Parliament events, and by producing outputs from the events; there needs to be multi-stakeholder organisation of the Rural Parliament events, which take place every 2 years, lasting 1-2 days, with focused themes and outputs; there are different levels and types of government involvement in, and support of, the Rural Parliament, with finance from multiple sources.

Section 4: Next steps for a Rural Parliament in Scotland

17. **The following next steps are based on the 26 stakeholder interviews**, the findings of which are also reflected in the May 29th outputs (workshop and online survey) and in the European Rural Parliaments report:

- a. There is **broad agreement for a national rural representation**. However, **many questions and concerns exist** and these **need to be addressed** in these early stages, particularly at **local level** where the mandate for a Rural Parliament has not yet been established.
- b. An **alternative name** needs to be decided upon, given the majority view that 'Rural Parliament' is not suitable.
- c. The **wider purpose and mission** needs to be identified and articulated.
- d. A **neutral space needs to be created**, taking full account of existing organisations and networks, whilst creating **a new space for coherent dialogue, debate and policy influence**.
- e. An **independent, interim secretariat and board** need to be established, to serve until a more formalised and ratified arrangement can be put in place at the inaugural Rural Parliament in 2013.
- f. **Preparation should begin for the September 2013 event**, to be hosted in a rural area. This is not only preparation of **logistics**, but also in terms of **policy themes** and preparatory work on identifying and articulating **key issues and associated outputs**.
- g. A process of **mobilisation and animation** is required **to broaden participation**, both from institutions and at local level. Work should begin with membership organisations to establish **two-way communication**, so that ideas and concerns can be heard, as well as key messages and updates communicated.
- h. **Influential links and relationships with Government** need to be established and nurtured, at high levels in Government.
- i. **Funding sources** need to be identified and/or confirmed, for the Rural Parliament event itself, and for the wider influencing role of the national rural representation.

Background, Aim and Objectives

Background to the study

Moving towards the establishment of a Rural Parliament for Scotland is a Manifesto Commitment of the SNP Party: “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.”⁴ A Rural Parliament thus became a Parliamentary commitment following the May 2011 Election.

In October 2011, the Scottish Government commissioned SAC’s Rural Policy Centre to review Rural Parliaments in other European countries, to enhance understanding of how and why Rural Parliaments operate, and the outcomes they generate. This report formed the basis for discussion at the first meeting of a newly-convened group in February 2012. At this meeting, it was decided to hold a first national seminar on a Rural Parliament for Scotland, for a wide range of stakeholders, in May 2012. A sub-group responsible for organising the May 2012 event was then formed⁵.

On May 29th 2012, an all-day seminar to discuss Rural Parliaments took place in Edinburgh. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Richard Lochhead MSP, spoke at the event, as did a number of invited speakers from Rural Parliaments in other European countries: Sweden, Estonia, Slovenia and The Netherlands. Following these presentations, parallel workshops enabled participants to discuss two key questions: (1) What would a successful Rural Parliament achieve for Scotland? (2) How would a successful Rural Parliament be organised? Notes were taken during each of the ten parallel workshops; and following the event, an online survey created the opportunity for participants to give feedback on a range of questions, including whether a Rural Parliament should go ahead. Of the 62 responses to the online survey (representing 66% of event participants), 58% think there should be a Rural Parliament, 34% stated “don’t know, undecided or other” and 8% think there should not be a Rural Parliament.

The majority of the sub-group met after the May 29th event (on June 20th) to discuss and evaluate the event, and its implications for next steps. Three decisions were taken: (1) that there is now a mandate to take forward a Rural Parliament in Scotland; (2) that an inaugural Rural Parliament will take place in September 2013; and (3) that a piece of work should be commissioned to listen to stakeholders as to how to take forward that mandate. This report is the fulfilment of the brief for (3). In it, we give an analysis of the findings from 26 interviews with stakeholders who are: in the original group; in the sub-group that organised the May 29th event; and a selection of those who indicated they wanted to be involved in the Rural Parliament’s next steps when responding to the online survey.

The findings from this report will be presented to the meeting of the original group, plus a selection of those individuals who indicated their wish to be involved (in the online survey), on August 21st 2012. Decisions as to the most appropriate next steps, ahead of a first Rural Parliament meeting in September 2013, will be taken on the basis on the findings presented in this report.

⁴ See Manifesto, p.38; accessed at: http://votesnp.com/campaigns/SNP_Manifesto_2011_lowRes.pdf

⁵ Members of both of these groups can be seen in Appendices 1 and 2.

Aim and objectives of the study

Aim: to identify specific next steps towards the establishment of a Rural Parliament in Scotland in September 2013.

Objectives:

1. Review existing, and gather new, views from stakeholders in Scotland on key elements of Scotland's Rural Parliament next steps, focusing primarily on two broad themes of (i) internal governance and (ii) external influence and impact.
2. Identify specific options for ways forward, particularly highlighting: internal and external structures and connections; essential (governance) processes; timeframes; and funding.
3. Revisit the findings from our report which examined Rural Parliaments in Europe, to focus specifically on governance and process themes, identifying which of these elements may be appropriate to Scotland, particularly given the findings generated through Objectives 1 and 2.
4. Suggest priority actions and timeframes to be discussed at the next Rural Parliament stakeholder meeting, which could then be taken forward between August 2012 and August/September 2013.

Methods used in the study

The approaches we used for this short study are now briefly described.

Firstly, we reviewed the findings from the two reports produced as a result of the May 29th event. These are: (i) a compilation of the facilitators' notes from the ten parallel workshops; and (ii) the Rural Parliament post-event online survey⁶. We focused specifically on identifying those elements which relate to Objective 2 themes above, that is, ways forward and next steps.

Secondly, we conducted 26 confidential telephone interviews⁷, with: (i) members of the initial group (which includes those in the May 29th event sub-group); and (ii) a selection of those who responded to the on-line evaluation survey and gave their contact details. The sample of 26 interviewees included representatives from national agencies (public, private and third sector), community groups, public sector bodies, NGOs and independent consultants.

Thirdly, we carried out thematic analysis of the interview findings to identify options and priorities. Each of the main questions in the interview is a 'theme', and once interviews have been carried out and notes typed up, the responses for each theme are then grouped together from all interviews. Once this has been done, the analysis continues by identifying sub-themes that keep emerging from across the interviews. The aim is to find points of agreement, as well as points where views diverge. This approach allows for findings to be reported in an anonymised fashion, whilst still meaning that specific comments and ideas can be reported.

⁶ These Reports were authored, respectively, by Vanessa Halhead and Norman MacAskill, and can be found on the Scottish National Rural Network website (www.ruralgateway.org.uk).

⁷ Appendix 3 shows the interview format and topics discussed with each interviewee.

Fourthly, we then sought to relate the findings, where possible and helpful, to those which came through from the previous report examining how Rural Parliaments in other European countries had moved forward from their initial stages to their first event, and then towards subsequent events. The Scotland stakeholder responses are presented first, and are *then* related to the European experiences. This is because one of the main points from the first report was that there is a need to make sure that whatever is devised for Scotland “fits” Scotland, whilst taking account of the extensive experience from other countries. So, this approach allowed us to give prime consideration to the Scottish findings, and then look at whether and how lessons from the other Rural Parliaments might be relevant.

Finally, we have produced this report in which we have sought to identify priority actions, as articulated by stakeholders in the telephone interviews. The focus of these is on the time period August 2012-September 2013, although interviewees also discussed the timeframe beyond this. The options and priority actions are written in such a way as to be used as a basis for discussion at the 21st August 2012 meeting, and are therefore not phrased as Recommendations. They represent the views of interviewees, and not those of the report authors.

Structure of the Report

The focus of this Report is on next steps; that is, moving from August 2012 through to September 2013 when the inaugural meeting of the Rural Parliament will take place.

In **Section 1**, we begin the report with a **review of existing stakeholder views about the Rural Parliament in Scotland**, focusing solely on aspects relating to next steps. The two sources for these stakeholder views are both from the May 29th event:

- i. a write-up of parallel workshops (by Vanessa Halhead);
- ii. a write-up of the post-event online survey (by Norman MacAskill).

Both of these reports are available on the Scottish National Rural Network website. Section 1 of *this* Report therefore presents a brief distillation of those points relating to stakeholders’ views on what should happen next and why.

Section 2 is the main part of the report. This is where we present the findings from the **26 stakeholder telephone interviews carried out between July 9th and July 31st 2012**. Appendix 3 outlines the topics covered in these interviews. These topics (which form the sub-sections of Section 2) focus on: the mission or main job of the Rural Parliament; how it should be structured in order to be influential; how democratic decision-making processes should take place; what the priority next steps should be; and where funding should come from for the Rural Parliament.

Having presented the evidence from Scotland, in **Section 3** we then look briefly at findings from the previous Rural Parliaments report produced by SAC, which focused on the nature of **Rural Parliaments in Europe**. Again, we have distilled only those key elements from that report which relate specifically to next steps, that is, moving from the *concept* of a Rural Parliament to the *implementation* of the first and subsequent events.

In the final **Section (4)**, we conclude the report by, firstly, identifying the extent to which the same themes emerge from the telephone interviews as compared with the event workshops and post-event survey. We then briefly do the same exercise for the European Rural Parliaments. We then finish by highlighting priority actions for the next stage of the Rural Parliament process in Scotland, as articulated by interviewees.

Section 1: Review of stakeholder views from May 29th Event

In this section, we review the findings from the two reports produced as a result of the May 29th Rural Parliament event. These are: (i) a compilation of the facilitators' notes from the ten parallel workshops; and (ii) the Rural Parliament post-event online survey⁸. **Given the focus of this report, we specifically focus on those elements which relate directly to actions and next steps: ways forward, ideas, “must-haves”, and structure and process issues.**

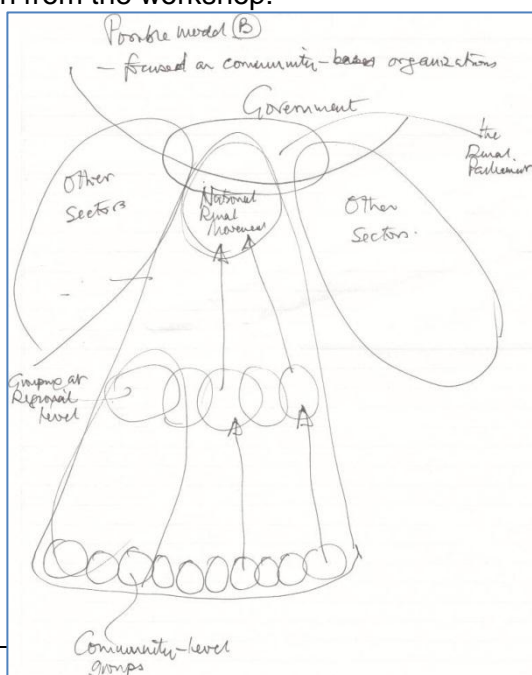
1.1. Parallel workshops: pointers as to next steps

In distilling those points relating to next steps and how the process should move forward from May 2012 to September 2013, we see a number of themes emerging.

Firstly, participants felt that the Rural Parliament should be operating not only to influence at national level, but also very much at local level; and that it should be a rural movement as well as a Rural Parliament event.

To reach these goals, participants felt that there were a number of elements to be put in place: a core organising group, to work on: communication, rural proofing, information-gathering, and speaking to wide range of government and other forums. There should be no one group claiming ownership, and that a secretariat should be independent. It should tie into existing structures, and should engage at national and regional level, for example, through meetings held both nationally and regionally.

Two models of Rural Parliament structures were presented in one of the ten parallel workshops; according to the workshops report, the most preferred model is presented here as a PDF of the sketch from the workshop:



The **Angel's** body and dress expresses the upward cascade from a multiplicity of rural community-based organisations, through county regional groupings, to a national network, these together forming the prime constituent of the national rural movement. The wings contain other sectoral organisations who play a supporting role. The Angel's head provides the movement's link with Government and others, through the periodic RP and its on-going activity. Sweden, Finland and Estonia use essentially this model. (Michael Dower, Pers. Comm. 18/06/12)

⁸ These Reports were authored, respectively, by Vanessa Halhead and Norman MacAskill, and can be found on the Scottish National Rural Network website (www.ruralgateway.org.uk).

We return to these comments in Section 4 of this report.

1.2. Post-event online survey: pointers as to next steps

The online survey covered a number of themes, including evaluation of the May 29th event itself. Here, we focus on those aspects which relate to taking the Rural Parliament process forward in Scotland.

Who the Rural Parliament represents, or should represent, is a theme which interviewees explored, stating that it should be grass-roots, with a good geographic coverage (including the islands), generating buy-in from those who are already active across rural Scotland. It should also include the private sector, which is felt to be largely overlooked. It should be a new, stand-alone structure, with robust communication and local support structures to keep involving people at grass-roots level. This, it is felt, would give a vibrant rural network, rather than having the focus solely on a Rural Parliament 'event'.

Survey respondents indicated that the Rural Parliament must have an outcome and not just be another place for exchange of views. To achieve this, it needs to be really clear as to what it wants to, and can, achieve. Significantly, respondents stated that clarity needs to exist on how the Rural Parliament will directly benefit rural areas.

There are concerns as to whether it will duplicate, rather than add to, what is already there, and whether it will simply be another layer of bureaucracy "crowding into those areas where there is already a lot of local activity". Some respondents question whether better use should also be made of Community Councils and Community Planning Partnerships.

Finally, respondents were asked to comment on the name 'Rural Parliament'. For those who felt it was not a good name, the reasons were that it implies: a rigid structure, whereas it is an event; a law-making and democratically elected body; that it has legislative powers. There are concerns that 'Rural Parliament' is therefore a misleading name.

We return to these comments in Section 4 of this report.

Section 2: Stakeholders' views on Scotland's Rural Parliament

Introduction: Key points before reading the interview findings

1. We carried out **26 telephone interviews** with people who participated in the initial meeting in February 2012, the sub-group who organised the May 29th event, plus a selection of respondents to the Survey Monkey event evaluation survey who indicated a desire to become further involved in the development of the Rural Parliament. The interviews took between 40 minutes and two hours, and generated a significant amount and level of information which has been distilled into the following section.
2. **The findings that are presented below are not the views of the report authors.** So, when you read, for example, "this should happen" or "this must be a priority", these are from **the perspective of those whom we interviewed.** We have sought to indicate where these are **majority and/or minority views.**
3. We used a **semi-structured interviewing approach covering 5 main themes**, with an opportunity for interviewees to add their own comments at the end on issues that had not been covered in the interview. These additional comments were subsequently incorporated under the most relevant themes or new categories were created.
4. The reason for using a semi-structured approach is to be able to **delve deeper into issues**, and **to allow for themes, ideas and concerns to come from interviewees**, rather than them being constrained by a questionnaire structure. This approach also allows us to focus on the "why?" rather than simply the "what?"
5. What it also means is that we are **not looking to give indications as to percentages of interviewees giving a particular type of response.** This is for two reasons: firstly, we want to understand the different aspects of people's answers, rather than being able to say "x% agreed with this statement" without knowing why. Secondly, when dealing with a sample of 26 interviewees, percentages become meaningless at best and can convey incorrect impressions at worst. However, in writing the thematic analysis, we do aim to convey whether certain views are dominant amongst interviewees.
6. We have chosen to include **extensive extracts from interview notes**, in order to give a **real flavour of stakeholder perspectives** and to **retain the subtleties and nuances that people were keen to convey to us in the interviews.** Where these individual quotes are cited, this is because they are illustrative of a particular theme or sub-theme, and we are not aiming to imply that they represent a uniform voice. In addition, no conclusions should be drawn from the number of quotes cited under each sub-section, as this is not an indication of the level of agreement around that theme. Finally, we have ensured that all quotes have a respondent code assigned to them, thus allowing **anonymity** to be maintained; any identifying references (such as the name of the interviewee's organisation and other identifiers) have also been removed.

2.1. What do you think the mission, or main job, of Scotland's Rural Parliament should be?

Section Summary:

1. The mission, or main job, of Scotland's Rural Parliament:

- a. A voice for rural communities to influence policy
- b. For networking and to overcome fragmentation
- c. To broaden the range of rural voices being represented and heard
- d. To help rural Scotland and to present evidence on rural issues

2. Questions and concerns about the Rural Parliament:

- a. How the mandate for a Rural Parliament was decided
- b. Understand better what is/not already working in and for rural Scotland
- c. Where the Rural Parliament fits into wider strategic Government policy
- d. Resources that will be required and implications for other funded activities

2.1.1. The mission, or main job, of Scotland's Rural Parliament

In this first section, interviewees outlined what they considered to be the mission, or main job, of Scotland's Rural Parliament.

2.1.1.1. A voice for rural communities to influence policy

The overwhelming majority of interviewees stated that the Rural Parliament must be **a conduit through which coherent and timely messages must be delivered, and heard:**

The Rural Parliament should act as a forum where rural voices can be amplified, allowing participants not just to talk to themselves but also politicians. [SRP23]

An avenue for people to increase their confidence that community matters can be taken to the next level. All parties involved would know the timescale, deadlines etc. for the events and the processes between events therefore providing a well defined route to Scottish Government ministers with a tangible timescale. [SRP10]

It's to get people with an interest in rural Scotland together – this might include those working and living in rural areas, private sector actors, those living in urban areas with an interest in rural areas – anyone involved in rural Scotland in some way. Its mission should be to get all of those voices heard in a more coordinated way and to get people working together. [SRP18]

It is important that this conduit is **seen to be effective and have impact**, otherwise the incentive to participate may decline:

It needs to be filling the needs that are out there and adding value to *proper engagement* – engagement that is inclusive, that adds value, and that wasn't there before. It needs to be across geographies, across sectors, and so that people can see something as a result of a contribution; we're an over-consulted group. [SRP05]

We have a problem with 'consultationitis' in Scotland and people are starting to not engage. [SRP04]

The Rural Parliament should also focus on '**rural-proofing**', that is, highlighting the differential effects of policies on rural Scotland and tailoring policies as a result:

The Rural Parliament needs to ensure that rural communities no longer get lost and that policies are devised and delivered in a way that is sensible for rural communities. [SRP22]

The key role is getting the rural agenda in its widest sense at the right level. We hear too much about urban areas and Cities Strategies etc. in Scotland and the Rural Parliament offers the opportunity to get rural issues onto the same level and therefore of the same importance as cities issues. I'm excited by that. We're constantly fighting to promote rural and the role of rural (e.g. economically but also socially) onto the agenda and the Rural Parliament would help this process. [SRP04]

Interviewees felt that this maintenance of a rural profile should be not only at Scotland level, but also at **UK and EU levels**:

It needs to influence Government policy thinking at different levels – Scotland, UK and EU. Many policies are initiated beyond Scotland (e.g. CAP, SRDP) so the focus should be *beyond* Scotland. The Rural Parliament would provide an opportunity to get some collective thinking and to influence Government thinking – this should be the primary purpose. [SRP26]

2.1.1.2. For networking and gathering to overcome fragmentation

The majority of interviewees highlighted how there is not one single rural 'voice' and that **rural concerns are often fragmented according to sectoral and geographic interests**. While this is seen as potentially being a necessary part of the 'rural landscape', a national rural representation needs to encompass, and give coherence to, these different elements if it is to be influential on key issues.

The **rural voice is fragmented and sectoral** and the Rural Parliament has a role to play in **overcoming this fragmentation**:

The event will hopefully help people to talk beyond current sectoral boundaries, for example, those who usually deal with woodlands talking about care for the elderly. This means that people can go right around the pie chart in terms of the issues that they discuss. [SRP01]

To allow for the identification, exploration and promotion of common rural themes, to work against sectoral “silo-isation” common in Scotland and in Scottish policy... crossing geographical and sectoral and interest groups [SRP13]

Beyond the 2-year Rural Parliament event itself: forming connections in between times, as part of a wider process or movement that itself leads to greater connections. [SRP03]

To get people who are working in the rural domain together. There is a diverse and varied range of interests across rural Scotland and therefore they are currently rather unconnected and fragmented – the Rural Parliament would help to bring them together to connect and network under one roof. [SRP26]

At the moment views in rural Scotland are polarised - this was evident at the Holyrood meeting. We need to get to a point where different actors, sectors etc. are not attacking one another but can work together and overcome their entrenched views. [SRP18]

There is a need to enhance not only the connections between ‘rural people’ but also to **reduce vertical fragmentation**:

The Rural Parliament offers an opportunity to get politicians, bureaucrats, other agencies and rural people together to achieve a better understanding of different perspectives... Asking people to come and sit in a room with politicians will not be attractive, but they will be attracted by opportunities for peer-to-peer networking. [SRP02]

We have an existing Scottish Parliament with rural MSPs but diverse, grassroots voices do not necessarily get well heard through the filter of these existing elected representatives. The Rural Parliament would therefore help to add to the normal Parliamentary process. [SRP26]

This engagement through the Rural Parliament needs to focus on **cooperation and sharing of good practice**:

Participation must be on a positive basis and people will get more out of that. It should not be a shouting match. It needs to involve those who will cooperate. [SRP08]

There are huge benefits to be gained from bringing people together to share ideas and successes, and sharing of good practice. [SRP22]

When discussing these aspects of sharing of ideas, interviewees also felt that this should be **with the purpose of creating influence on policy**, rather than simply showcasing and celebrating:

Providing a focus for celebration is fine but to a certain extent this is being done already by, for example, local CVS and through skills fairs, festivals of talent, newsletters about what is going on in their local areas, sharing best practice etc... much of this happens, and should happen, at local level especially if the aim is to involve local people. It needs to be local and I question the extent to which it could happen successfully at the national level... The Rural Parliament “is not a show”. [SRP10]

2.1.1.3.To broaden the range of rural voices being represented and heard

The majority of those interviewed stated that **the Rural Parliament needs to broaden the “church” in four main ways**: beyond the traditional interests of agriculture and land; beyond urban-led policies; to encompass more geographical areas; and beyond institutions and more to grass-roots.

Broaden beyond more traditional interests and representation of agriculture and land:

To allow for a representation of broader rather than narrow rural interests. [SRP09]

Whilst there are many bodies and organisations that claim to represent rural Scotland, it's debateable about how far this is the case: there's a land owning and agricultural representation, but I'm not sure that there's a collective rural movement including communities. [SRP16]

This already happens well at the moment on a sectoral interest basis so the Rural Parliament's useful role would be to bring together those sectoral interests and overcome some sectoral territoriality. It would help to bring the different networks together and help to encourage networking between networks. It could also act as a 'mop up' for people who do not currently feed in their views (for whatever reason/s). [SRP01]

There are plenty of powerful voices and organisations (e.g. the farmers, landowners, fishermen), but the Rural Parliament could offer something new by focusing on the futures work. This is the most interesting and exciting as it is about what might and should change. However, other rural voices are not heard so loudly and the Rural Parliament would give them that chance to shout and be heard. [SRP24]

Broaden the focus beyond urban-led policies:

It's important to recognise how rural Scotland is ruled according to urban and/or central rules and policy; policies that represent a very narrow rural interest. The Rural Parliament has the potential to redress this balance; but it's not going to happen overnight. [SRP09]

Serving to bring more information from grassroots rural areas to the Scottish Government decision-makers, i.e. an informing role. This is important as there is a real divide between decision-makers and rural – they don't understand rural living and are urban-based with urban-centric thinking with limited rural experience... The Rural Parliament will enable rural people and Government officials to “inter-mingle” more. [SRP11]

Broaden geographical participation and thinking:

Some organisations such as HIE are constrained to particular regions of Scotland. Therefore the Rural Parliament presents an opportunity for a coherent voice for rural Scotland. [SRP16]

It's also important that it is an opportunity to look beyond the shores of Scotland – not to just be introspective but take into account wider dimensions: rest of UK, Europe, world. There could be areas in which experiences could resonate with Scotland and lessons that could be learnt, as well as opportunities to do things in new ways. [SRP25]

Broaden it **beyond institutions**:

Hearing the voice from those who are really at the grassroots. [SRP21]

2.1.1.4. To help rural Scotland and to present evidence on rural issues

A small number of interviewees highlighted how a Rural Parliament should **ultimately be about helping rural areas to thrive**, and that this should be its focus:

It would help to identify the ways in which we can keep fragile areas alive. [SRP16]

It should also play a lobbying role where information is exchanged on key issues. This should not just be moaning but an opportunity to develop good things further. Policy issues are usually treated separately in Scotland but setting up a Rural Parliament offers the opportunity to treat issues in a more integrated way to benefit the development of rural Scotland. [SRP11]

I feel that the “thrust” of the Rural Parliament *has* to be economic development: if economic development is working well, then everything else flows from this. Social needs are vital, but these are best served by a strong business sector... It’s important for the Rural Parliament to add value: there are lots of economic development forums, the Rural Parliament would be Scotland-wide, not regional, so would offer a whole view. Issues that might be discussed include: employment in rural areas; keeping young people in rural areas; future of children in rural areas; recognising the opportunities in rural areas and encouraging businesses and communities to come together. [SRP19]

To deliver this, the Rural Parliament needs to focus on “**futures-thinking**”, looking at where rural Scotland could or should be going, not only in the next 1-3 years, but further ahead:

I believe that *the* most important and most useful role for the Rural Parliament is in terms of identifying: What’s next? What themes, issues and challenges will be important in future? What is going to be important moving forward? It is fine to show that “we can produce excellent cheese in this part of Scotland” but I wouldn’t attend the Rural Parliament to hear about this. I see much more interest and relevance in talking about the future – the challenges and issues and how to address them. This futures work should be the focus of the Rural Parliament. [SRP24]

The Rural Parliament could then be **providing evidence**, again to benefit rural communities:

It should gather evidence and identify issues of common concern in rural areas across Scotland, rather than only those which are distinct to a particular area. [SRP14]

It also has a role in highlighting for Government and academics where there are gaps in knowledge and understanding. [SRP18]

The Rural Parliament should also act as a consultative body which provides for the rural proofing of policy, which at the moment doesn’t really happen. [SRP23]

2.1.2. Questions and concerns raised by interviewees about a Rural Parliament for Scotland

Over half those interviewed have **questions and concerns about the Rural Parliament**, whilst still being supportive of a national rural representation in principle.

Interviewees have expressed some **surprise at the way in which a mandate for a Rural Parliament was stated in June**, and are curious as to **the basis for that mandate** and the associated decision-making process:

Is there a mandate for this from rural communities? Do people really think this is necessary? This needs to be established. [SRP14]

Many concerns expressed at the event were not answered so where has the mandate to go forward come from? These concerns must be addressed for this to be seen to be truly bottom-up, otherwise it will only be seen to be Government-led (although it is good that the Scottish Government is keen and committed). [SRP01]

At the May meeting it seemed as if two or three key stakeholders have all the power: this also happens in rural Scotland more generally, this cannot happen. Need to address this now, and ensure that all stakeholders are involved at all stages, particularly when decisions are made. [SRP15]

Coupled with this interest in how the mandate was decided is **a desire to understand better what is and is not already working in and for rural Scotland**, and how this can (or cannot) be **built upon rather than bypassed**:

The Rural Parliament can add to what already exists in Scotland but the analysis has not yet been done to establish what is out there and what is or isn't working. [SRP22]

We need to identify to what degree we have communities we can speak to and involve. [SRP06]

My real concern is that it will duplicate effort and replicate (and potentially undermine) things that are already happening. It is critical that these existing organisations and networks are not undermined - if they stop being consulted because the Scottish Government can say that they have the Rural Parliament instead, that would be very dangerous. It would be a disaster if ministers were able to delay/get out of talking to organisations and say that these discussions now happen at the Rural Parliament instead. [SRP01]

A second theme in the questions from interviewees is **the need to have a better understanding of where the Rural Parliament fits into wider strategic Government policy**, and whether there is genuine, long-term commitment from Government:

Has the Cabinet Secretary decided that the Rural Parliament is going ahead, or is it only going ahead for now? What is the budget from Government for this first phase? [SRP07]

What happens when there is a change of Government next time? This might be seen as being Richard Lochhead's Rural Parliament and therefore not something that the next Government wishes to continue. [SRP18]

A fear would be that this is a tick box exercise coming from a party manifesto... a tokenistic attempt to placate people from rural Scotland. If this is the case, a Rural Parliament will be unsuccessful. [SRP17]

At the moment, there's a lack of coherence in rural policy. The Land Fund has been positive, the Road Equivalent Tariff has been positive, but the overall strategic focus is lacking. [SRP16]

It's been lobbied for so long to get rural issues mainstreamed, we don't want to see a backlash from urban areas. I would have once been in favour of a Rural Parliament, but SNP have to be congratulated for what they've done in terms of outcomes for rural areas. We shouldn't lose sight of how far we've come. [SRP12]

Are the Scottish Parliament *worried* about a Rural Parliament? Are they going to establish it and then *neuter* it? How do they (SP) let it run? The CEO and Chair of the Rural Parliament need to be politically sensitive *and* they must *not* be risk averse in this political context. [SRP05]

I wouldn't want to see Rural Parliament sidelining rural areas, taking them outwith mainstream Parliament and – for example – the Parliament not commenting until the Rural Parliament has commented. [SRP25]

A third area of concern focuses on **resources that will be required to establish the Rural Parliament**, and the **implications this use of resources may have for other funded activities** in rural Scotland. Linked to this is the need to know **what a Rural Parliament will add** to the representation of rural in Scotland, over-and-above what is already in place:

Many existing organisations are struggling to survive and having to eat into their reserves – they would benefit from much smaller sums of money to help, but will see huge amounts of funding going to the new Rural Parliament. We are missing a structure where networks can be made and best practice ideas exchanged – maybe the Rural Parliament can do this, but if not, this is really the priority. [SRP22]

I'm somewhat sceptical about what additional things the Rural Parliament could bring: will it be able to contribute more than an individual representative body might do? We need to be clear about what it will add that is new and to ensure that it doesn't end up trying to do too much and cannot reach a consensus. [SRP14]

Its role should be to bring people together with an interest in rural issues, but whilst it might need some improving the SNRN (Scottish National Rural Network) already does this. There is nothing new that it would appear to bring or needs to bring. [SRP12]

2.2. How do you think Scotland's Rural Parliament should be structured so that it is effective and influential?

Section Summary:

1. **Ensuring broad representation in the Rural Parliament:**
 - a. Building representation from within rural communities
 - b. Ensuring a representative Rural Parliament Board
 - c. Building on what is already there
 - d. Ensuring geographical representation
 - e. Creating a new space to include new people
2. **How to create influence:**
 - a. Establishing links into Government
 - b. Being strategic as well as fire-fighting
3. **Meetings of the Rural Parliament:**
 - a. Geographical location: rural Scotland
 - b. Frequency: every two years, with sub-meetings in between
4. **Administration of the Rural Parliament:**
 - a. A new, resourced secretariat is needed

2.2.1. Ensuring broad representation in the Rural Parliament.

This section of the interview generated a considerable range of responses and themes, with inclusive representation being felt to be the foundation of an effective Rural Parliament.

2.2.1.1. Building representation from within rural communities

The overwhelming majority of interviewees described this aspect as *the* most important in establishing Scotland's Rural Parliament; as such, building representation from within communities received the highest level of comments and discussion across all interview themes. Key points are that **there is a need to reach out to rural communities, through networking organisations, over the next 12 months**. Time and resources need to be committed to doing this, to **establish a two-way communication process**: from communities to those organising the September 2013 event, and from the organisers to communities.

Firstly, interviewees stated that there has to be **commitment to animation at community level**:

There needs to be a resource committed to animate rural debate and to crystallise an agenda. So far, it's been a top-down process, and to turn it around takes time; and that's not cheap. It's going to take a lot of effort. There is a lack of belief at community level of what

can change at national level. There's a lot of cynicism. There needs to be a lot of energy to change that; where's that going to come from? [SRP07]

The voices of grass-roots groups and larger organisations need to be on an even footing. [SRP16]

It should not simply be the usual suspects, especially in terms of agency representatives. The emphasis should be placed on including those living in rural Scotland – the citizens of rural Scotland... It must be driven by the citizenship. [SRP11]

To do this, **existing membership and networking organisations that have a focus on community should be used:**

We need to base it around existing community-based organisations, not environmental NGOs (for example) or intermediaries. Need to use these existing networks to access people on the ground. There needs to be resources made available to these organisations *to deliver our members to the Rural Parliament*. [SRP09]

The Rural Parliament “needs something underneath it” – a network on which to draw for its participants, and a way in which those involved ‘on the ground’ – for example community development workers – can be engaged with. [SRP01]

We should use those intermediaries to animate their members, not bypass them. I don't think any community networks have the aspiration to control the Rural Parliament agenda; instead, they would be happy for a clearer agenda to be coming through *from* their rural members. So, therefore, we have to invest in them to animate their own memberships, otherwise we will become yet another initiative that they become aware of but have no desire to be part of. We should also look to these organisations to provide specialist knowledge and advice. [SRP07]

Getting grassroots representation now will be difficult as to recruit people democratically we need an informed electorate and people do not yet know about the Rural Parliament. This will take time and effort and we don't have enough of this before September 2013. Grassroots representation now will rely on appropriate individuals being sent from relevant organisations. [SRP02]

Representatives should be selected by their grassroots organisations to participate in a Rural Parliament. This is important otherwise it will be an opportunity for the usual organisations to shout louder. [SRP15]

There could be national groupings (6 or 7 areas) that would each have separate rural communities as members, sending representatives of those areas and communities to come together to share their issues. [SRP21]

In parallel, there is a need to **involve “active” communities:**

It should also involve grassroots representatives too – including people representing active communities (such as community energy projects). [SRP08]

An easier option is to have representatives from across rural Scotland and those who are already active in existing networks, like local LEADER groups, but we'd also need to be careful to not end up with complete mavericks who don't have the necessary experience and knowledge. [SRP01]

Interviewees also discussed the importance of how to **involve people who are not part of organisations yet are still active in rural communities**:

There is a real question about how we include those people who are not represented. How far are CVOs at the local/regional level representative? [SRP11]

The Rural Parliament also needs to engage individuals from communities not involved with groups: for example through community groups canvassing the neighbourhood, or through Local Authority citizen's panels. [SRP14]

Then there is another level – the individual farmer, business man, community and voluntary sector person - who are not attached to organisations but are active in rural areas or on rural issues – they should also have the opportunity to participate. How to best get them involved is not clear. [SRP26]

There is a need also for the Rural Parliament to be **representing what rural Scotland looks like**:

The Rural Parliament should be generally representative of the rural population. So, if 6% of the rural population are unemployed then 6% of those present should be unemployed, if 4% work in farming, then 4% of those present should represent farming, if 10% of the Scottish population lives on islands then... etc. This is the most credible way to make up the Rural Parliament otherwise it will risk becoming a bunch of semi-retired people on a decent pension who are looking for a jolly and it will not be representative of rural Scotland. [SRP24]

It needs to be attentive to those individuals in communities that might be involved in diverse ways, such as religious leaders. [SRP21]

And, on a similar theme, interviewees talked of the importance of **ensuring the involvement of young people** in the Rural Parliament:

It also needs good youth representation and maybe should have a separate youth section/group which feeds into the main Rural Parliament. [SRP11]

When looking at Sweden and Estonia, I was impressed with how important they felt it was to involve young people from the start. It is vital to have some involvement in any rural movement going forward. Far too often, young people aren't thought of, and when they *are* involved, people are surprised at what they can contribute. We want a rural Scotland where there are opportunities for young people to remain in communities, and to want to come back to communities when they've finished their study, and to have structures that are there for them to participate in. [SRP03]

The Rural Parliament has got to be inclusive of young folk; it's got to be fleet-of-foot to be responsive to these people and interests. [SRP05]

Many interviewees talked of the importance of **involving the private sector** in the Rural Parliament, for a range of reasons:

The private sector needs to be involved – this was something missing from the Rural Parliament event in May. For example food producers, rural employers, but also organisations sourcing products from rural areas. [SRP16]

The private sector should be involved although not to the extent that it becomes overwhelming. Perhaps it is better to have organisations that represent the private sector, like SLE, NFU, Crofters. [SRP08]

The private sector should be involved. They are as valid a sector as any other – for example, SLE, FSB. All three sectors have to be equally represented. [SRP11]

The Rural Parliament needs to be holistic and include all sectoral interest groups. I felt that this was omitted from the May 29th event, and particularly some sections of the private sector, like aquaculture (including fishing, fish farming, shellfish, fish processing) and other marine industries/leisure. [SRP02]

Private sector (SMEs) should be engaged, and social enterprises. [SRP23]

The private sector should be involved, on the basis of its share of the workforce in rural Scotland. [SRP24]

It should involve Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and other trade organisations, such as the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, Road Hauliers Association etc. [SRP10]

The private sector is a very mixed beast, right through from crofters to large corporations – companies operating in the renewables sector are particularly important actors now in rural Scotland. The private sector could be engaged through representative organisations, such as the CBI, SCDI, Chambers of Commerce (although these are patchy in their coverage in rural Scotland). The Enterprise Networks might be useful links in identifying who should be involved. We face the issue of some of these organisations not being specifically rural ... but having rural interests/members alongside an interest in urban or generic issues such as transport or macroeconomic issues. [SRP26]

The private sector should be involved. Although it is questionable what they will get out of it – it is about public gain rather than gain for individual businesses. [SRP04]

The private sector should be there – people talk disparagingly of not having “too many suits” but they are critical players as people living and working in rural Scotland, and being involved in local community, sports etc. events. If people want jobs in rural Scotland and want a thriving rural Scotland then the private sector has to be represented. If they don't attend we need to find out why. [SRP18]

One interviewee also emphasised how the **boundaries between public, private and third sectors are not always crystal clear**:

The private sector must be involved. OK, unless you take the community with you, you won't get anywhere. But there are a lot of good community people who are also in the private sector. And there are a lot of good community people who are in the public sector. So, the boundaries aren't always that clear. [SRP05]

On the theme of **Community Councils (CCs)**, interviewees' views are fairly **polarised**, although there is recognition of **the need to involve them in the Rural Parliament**:

It should not be dominated by CC members or by local politicians. Whether it should involve people at the CC level is an interesting question... [SRP08]

It doesn't seem a good idea to use CCs – they are statutory bodies and “Council-run” although Councillors are elected. But it doesn't feel like the right local level organisations to be relying on to make the Rural Parliament representative. Theoretically this would be where to look but they don't work well. Their link with councils is particularly problematic. [SRP11]

It is also important to include the Community Council type organisations. Many of these operate in rural areas but do not necessarily see themselves as a rural voice - or part of a collective rural voice. Representatives of this generalist voice need also to be invited. [SRP26]

Community Councils are under a great deal of pressure at the moment and they are failing in rural areas, and are sometimes non-existent. It is hard to get them to engage and questionable as to whether they are effective. [SRP04]

Finally, interviewees also talked of the need to **involve civil servants** in the Rural Parliament:

It's also important to involve civil servants: they're less visible but do a lot behind the scenes. It's relatively easy to engage with your MSP in your constituency, if you want to, but often it's the civil servants that make things work and it would be helpful to have them engaged with the Rural Parliament. [SRP16]

2.2.1.2. Ensuring a representative Rural Parliament Board

The **central importance of ensuring a representative Rural Parliament Board** was emphasised by the majority of interviewees. Most agree that there is a need for an **interim board** to take the Rural Parliament through to September 2013, after which a more formalised group can be put in place:

From now until Sept 2013, there needs to be a self-selected, non-elected group to take these next steps, and then, at the first Parliament, we will have the opportunity to elect or indicate a mandate for the next 2-year period. This could be called a “management group” rather than necessarily being labelled as “leaders”. September 2013 then becomes an event that does some work, and has outcomes, with a mandated group to take it forward. [SRP09]

We definitely need a Board/Steering Group to “get this into shape”. The Scottish Government with SAC should decide who should be on this Group, they should not be voted on. In time perhaps the membership of this Group could be elected by Rural Parliament members. Chair of this Group should rotate. [SRP08]

There should definitely be a Board or Steering Group. Without that we will simply go round in circles. We are already in danger of having the same conversation four times. Now we need to ‘just do it’ and a Board will be critical in ensuring that it gets done. We have enough good people who are in the know on the Steering Group already to ensure that the process can be taken forward effectively. [SRP04]

There is scope for an elected element at the Rural Parliament itself, as a type of AGM, to allow the management group to be composed of those involved and those who are key to ensuring it goes forward successfully, *and* provides an opportunity to involve those who are interested. [SRP03]

An interim Board may be required with the ‘real Board’ appointed at the inaugural Rural Parliament meeting. Nominations should be made at the inaugural meeting. [SRP10]

Voting people onto the Steering Group raises the question of who should vote them on? This might happen over time but it cannot happen now as we don’t have people to vote individuals on - an election at present for this would be absurd. I’m happy to trust the Scottish Government and others on the current Steering Group to decide the membership of the Steering Group going forward for now. The Rural Parliament is a process of evolution – as long as it is clear at the outset that the Steering Group and administration are appointed for now this shouldn’t be a problem. This will be hard to avoid at first. [SRP24]

There is a current Steering Group which is taking things forward but it seems rather *ad hoc*. It is hardly representative but also not unrepresentative. The Scottish Government has to bite the bullet and get the main constituents represented by building on the Group that is already in place. Difficult to vote people on now as who would vote them on? [SRP26]

A board/steering group is important: the question would be how it would be selected. If people were to be voted on, this would give a degree of authority that I don’t think is achievable. Perhaps people could be nominated, or appointed by ministers? [SRP25]

When considering the Board going forward, for example beyond September 2013, interviewees made suggestions as to **how that group should be constituted and led**:

In terms of leading the Steering Group it is important that this is not the Scottish Government. They need to provide some admin/financial support to allow the seed to germinate and be given a chance to grow but then the Scottish Government needs to stand back. [SRP01]

There needs to be a higher level management group that gets things done. Leadership should rotate. The Rural Parliament will not work without this group, but it is only there to make things happen. This group should not be dominated by powerful individuals, so it

should not be the XXX President. It should be formed on the merit of individuals rather than their organisational position. [SRP11]

The chairmanship of this group needs to be neutral, not held by any organisation of any particular group, and needs to be rotated. [SRP06]

The Rural Parliament must have an effective Chair and CEO with a complementary relationship where there is a mix of skills, and mutual respect and esteem between the two. [SRP05]

There needs to be a standing committee to represent particular themes, such as transport or affordable housing, each with representatives of the public, private and third/community sectors who would ensure representation. There's an analogy with the LEADER LAGs: a Chair of each LAG sits on strategic board. The LAG is composed of representatives across the sectors. [SRP20]

Board or Steering Group: membership should very definitely include people at grass roots. [SRP13]

Having a Board/Steering Group is important. This should have fair representation across the spectrum – drawing on people who are already active in existing rural networks (like the Association of Housing Associations, Chambers of Commerce, DTAS). Having representatives of these groups is critical. [SRP02]

A Board/Steering Group is important. This should be half people from the local area that is hosting the Rural Parliament, representatives of the area that hosted the previous event plus a couple of people from the Scottish Government and SAC representatives (for example) as advisors. Membership will therefore change each time (with some consistency). [SRP18]

A small number of interviewees also suggested the need for **an external advisory group**:

There should also be external advisors outwith the Executive Committee/Steering Group/Board, for example, Mark Shucksmith, Willy Roe, Sarah Skerratt. They will be especially useful – to temper an elected group. The Group should have an obligation to take the advice of the advisors, or if not give very good reason for not doing this. [SRP11]

It might also be helpful for advisors to be appointed to support the Board but these individuals would not have decision-making powers. [SRP10]

2.2.1.3. Building on what is already there

A significant majority of interviewees stated that **it is essential for the Rural Parliament to build on what already exists**. To do this, there is a **need to find out who is doing what where**:

First of all, it's important to undertake mapping: who is doing what already? This is already being done to some extent. For example, as a condition of funding from the Scottish Government, Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) in each Local Authority are combining databases from Volunteer Centres and Councils for Voluntary Service to provide a comprehensive 'map' of the voluntary sector landscape in each Local Authority. [SRP20]

Look at where our existing strengths are; that actually needs some analysis because we don't know what these are. [SRP06]

Need to identify what is going on at the moment, in terms of groups and organisations currently already active. [SRP21]

Existing organisations can then be a conduit through which people can be engaged across rural Scotland:

There are national networks and alliances which could be used to engage individuals and organisations. If networks could be engaged, the Rural Parliament would be a "real goer". [SRP16]

It is critical that those organisations that represent and are connected to rural people are the key players (such as SCVO, LEADER groups). These people are "what it is about". [SRP08]

It needs to be based on legitimate, rural bodies, that make access into communities easy. [SRP06]

We already have very effective networks in Scotland and a young, accessible Scottish Government; talking to Ministers and local MSPs happens anyway, CES/CLS/Community Woodlands and LEADER are already good, highly effective networks in Scotland that many other countries (including England) don't have. [SRP01]

It needs to be all hands to the pump. We need to be very involving of those who want to be involved for this first Rural Parliament. We need to keep on board those involved so far, and those who wish to be involved (who indicated this from the Survey Monkey survey) and new ones who want to come on board. [SRP06]

We cannot and should not prevent the 'usual suspect' organisations (such as SNH) from being there. It's just that they shouldn't be given undue influence so as to make the Rural Parliament not representative. These organisations have an important role to play – and many are already lobbying effectively on their issue/issues. [SRP24]

There could be some kind of roadshow to get people involved and engaged in the Rural Parliament process from the outset. This requires a network of folk who know their way around to point in the right direction. This can be done at a regional level with people helping to identify who should be approached to get involved in the Rural Parliament. The Olympic torch relay - it might be useful to have something along those lines. [SRP10]

We're not, in Scotland, coming from a standing start, it's not a blank canvas. We need to work with movements and networks and build from there and try and create a common purpose across these even if it is not with specifically-rural organisations – these organisations can animate bits of their community networks that focus on rural. [SRP07]

Alongside this, interviewees emphasised that **many people active in rural Scotland may not necessarily label themselves as 'rural' or as 'activists'**, but are nonetheless involved in, and

often integral to, their communities. It is therefore important to **ensure their involvement** in the Rural Parliament:

Realistically it probably has to be the movers and shakers, those people who are already active but including a good breadth of organisations and people. [SRP01]

A challenge is to engage those who wouldn't self-identify as 'rural' or as being concerned with 'rural' issues, but are engaged with (for example) a parent's committee in a rural school. Engaging with these less formal networks as a means to engage with these individuals is important. [SRP23]

In terms of individuals within communities of place, it'd be helpful to engage those who might be most likely to express leadership roles, for example headmasters (beyond usual groups) – they might be engaged in community leadership roles of a local village organisation, and/or board/steering group level activity. [SRP17]

There are many individuals who are actively *doing* rural development but they don't necessarily see that. It may be possible to get these people involved through recommendations from intermediary organisations. Having everyone involved won't be possible as it will become unmanageable but we should aim to set as broad participation as is logistically possible. [SRP26]

As well as working with existing groups, individuals and networks, interviewees talked of **working with existing agendas, themes and priorities**:

Over the course of the next year, we could invest in different areas through groups, in housing, transport, energy, land management. The Rural Parliament could be working with those networks to animate an agenda, and bring it to the Rural Parliament in September 2013. So, working with existing agendas that people have. Let's go with the flow of where the energy is; we've got various strands of energy and resource that are already committed, by people, by groups. [SRP07]

2.2.1.4. Ensuring geographical representation

This aspect is considered important, and is also addressed by interviewees in their responses to the discussion about geographical location of the Rural Parliament in September 2013 and beyond (see below). Firstly, interviewees recognise **the challenge of having a national event that is also meaningful, relevant and useful at regional and local levels**:

The Rural Parliament would need to involve regional levels in this process. This needs a lot of thought as to how to do it. We need to involve that layer that is intermediate between national and local level; something with roots in the local area. [SRP06]

The Rural Parliament needs to develop a commonality across all of Scotland, a body that can be accessed locally and is the same experience everywhere, like the CAB. This network could be virtual/online... Acting locally is very important. [SRP20]

It is critical that there are regular gatherings at local and regional level to generate nominations for people to attend the national gathering. But this will also generate more meetings and use more of people's time. [SRP22]

The journey of the Olympic torch has been great at generating enthusiasm, animation and interest at the grassroots level in the Games – perhaps similar Rural Parliament roadshows might have the same effect for the Rural Parliament in terms of stimulating discussion and debate. [SRP02]

It may be necessary to organise Rural Parliament small-scale (evening?) meetings, roadshows in localities, to keep the process alive. These meetings must be made interesting and social but focused on explaining what the Rural Parliament is and what it is doing. This process will help to build the rural movement that is currently lacking. [SRP11]

Although interviewees would like representation from most Local Authority areas that have an interest in 'rural', **the challenge of putting structures in place to ensure broad geographical representation** is realised:

It would be difficult to ensure balanced local/regional representation as we don't have the local sifting mechanism, local democratic structures, to ensure that this happens. [SRP01]

It *will* be possible to get grassroots representatives but it's also extremely difficult. Where we are, we often hold meetings in a central location to make them accessible, but still some people will not come because of the distance even if their travel is paid. There will always be some people who will not come. [SRP22]

Further, there is **reluctance for a structure of quotas** due to small and varied population numbers in rural Scotland:

Regional representation? It's difficult to do quotas in any meaningful or fair way because of population numbers; for example, in Orkney, their numbers are low so they'd probably only get one person representing them! And if you invite Thurso to be represented, you'd then have to invite Wick. I'd see it as a failure if there was, for example, no-one from Dumfries and Galloway presented, but that's different from getting formal quotas in place... But I don't think you can make quotas for representation so explicit. [SRP09]

2.2.1.5. Creating a new space to include new people

A number of respondents emphasised the importance of ensuring that any structures put in place in the Rural Parliament allowed for **the creation of a new, neutral space**:

We have to create neutrality, a neutral space... Because relationships are entrenched, and because everyone falls into line, you need to set up some different ways of working; you need this new space, a gathering-point, that's neutral, a common space that partners can come to with a degree of open-ness. [SRP07]

The Rural Parliament will add to what is already happening by bringing interests together in a new forum. This should be done in an environment where people don't feel that their views will be ignored or attacked. [SRP18]

Important in this new, neutral space is **the need to move beyond those more 'usual' organisations**, whilst still including them:

We don't want to look like a continuation of what's gone before: certain groups already lay claim to representing rural Scotland (it's questionable whether they do)... we need something *truly new*... the active citizen should have a voice. [SRP16]

As we begin to design this, we should be really open-minded and creative, and think beyond the usual way of doing business. Let's think really hard: "what could this Rural Parliament look like?" We can design it as a new, creative and responsive entity, so people feel excited by it. [SRP06]

There are some who have a reputation for being "stodgy" when it comes to community development. However, it's not so much about the organisations that are on the Group; it's more about the people and making sure that they are the right ones for the job. [SRP24]

As well as moving beyond 'typical' organisations, interviewees emphasised the need to **include those individuals at community level who are not typically involved**:

In terms of representation at all levels, there are the 'usual suspects' such as LAGs... The 'usual suspects' might be sufficient, but if we want to try something new, we need to go to grassroots individuals. To encourage these individuals from the grassroots, the Rural Parliament needs to be structured in such a way that enables them to have an interest in the issues and feel able to influence them. [SRP25]

Representation is at the heart of my concerns – there's a real risk that it's another opportunity for the same people to shout louder. There's a democratic deficit and the core aim of the Rural Parliament should be to address the democratic deficit at the individual and community level. [SRP23]

2.2.2.How to create influence

Having examined how the Rural Parliament should be structured so that it can be inclusive and representative, we now examine interviewees' responses as to how the Rural Parliament should be structured for it to be **influential**.

2.2.2.1.Establishing links into Government

The overwhelming majority argued strongly that **formal links must be established between the Rural Parliament and the Scottish Parliament**:

There needs to be a formal link, an obvious connection, between the Rural Parliament and Scottish Parliament, that's built into the machinery. The worst thing in the world would be that you had a Rural Parliament, discussed certain themes, and it's ignored. [SRP16]

We need to have a formal way for Holyrood to hear and listen to the outcomes from the Rural Parliament. Otherwise there is no point in having the Rural Parliament and it will just be a nice networking event every couple of years. [SRP04]

Further, the Rural Parliament should be (and become) **legitimate enough to gain a response from Government**, and from high levels within Government:

The Rural Parliament needs to be something that cannot be ignored. [SRP01]

There could be a formal response to the output document from the Rural Parliament (which should be produced), or a new committee/forum within which the Scottish Parliament considers response to Rural Parliament. It's really important to engage at a high level, for example, with Richard Lochhead. [SRP16]

Sheer strength of numbers has influence, and that the Rural Parliament can definitely prove that what you're saying is rooted in rural communities. The Rural Parliament is a very extensive voice coming from communities themselves. [SRP06]

The Rural Parliament has *got* to be mainstreamed; absolutely; it's got to be linked into everything. The Rural Parliament has got to have clout behind it, and visible Government support – in terms of Government listening to what the Rural Parliament says. It's got to involve the civil service at a high level, with mainstreaming of accountability to the Ministers. [SRP05]

Structures should also be put in place so that the Rural Parliament has a **rural-proofing function, feeding directly into the Scottish Parliament**:

The Rural Parliament could provide a space within which certain issues or policies can be 'rural proofed', or for the necessity (or otherwise) of this to be identified, linking the Rural Parliament to Scottish Parliament. [SRP16]

Someone within the steering group needs to take ownership in order to effectively articulate key messages and engage with Government- this would require a staff resource and therefore an organisation to host this. [SRP14]

As well as having structures in place, interviewees stressed the importance of **building good relationships** as a component of ensuring influence for the Rural Parliament:

Having good buy-in from the civil service is critical to ensure that influencing occurs. Good relationships are important. [SRP01]

Achieving influence means having the ear of ministers, this takes time. [SRP20]

Relationship to Government is important. This Rural Parliament initiative is beginning with Government. In terms of expediency for Government, there's a hope, I imagine, that the Rural Parliament will allow Scottish Government to deliver other aspects of their brief. In my view, there needs to be discretion used by Scottish Government so that they don't load too many things on the Rural Parliament, to achieve through the Rural Parliament. Achieving

things through the Rural Parliament should be negotiated over time as the Rural Parliament gets established. [SRP06]

Given the importance of these relationships, it was also felt to be critical that the Rural Parliament is structured from the outset to **welcome Ministers and other senior stakeholders to hear what is being discussed in the Rural Parliament:**

The Steering Group has an important role to play in getting the right people there to listen and to ensure that decisions are considered and responded to – to ensure that the debate/issues are taken seriously. [SRP22]

It should invite Cabinet Ministers and other MSPs to participate in the Rural Parliament, to be questioned and challenged. [SRP13]

For this to be effective, it is critical that high level policy-makers attend the Rural Parliament. This must include both Scottish Government officials and MSPs. [SRP11]

Parliament makes a great play of listening and partnerships - it should be called to account at Rural Parliaments – if it is not a complete addition to the fabric of our democracy it would be pointless. [SRP17]

Representatives from the Scottish (and other) Parliaments will also need to be present at the event – participating but not dominating, in listening mode rather than speaking/influencing mode. It's important that Ministers don't come along and deliver "set pieces", set speeches, but we do need a mechanism whereby senior influential politicians can come to the event and witness the rural voice. [SRP26]

Ministers, MSPs, shadow ministers etc. need to be there to listen and be questioned, not just to speak; in fact this should not be major element of what they do there. [SRP18]

In terms of structures in place to enhance its influence, there was general agreement on the need to **produce statements as the considered view from the Rural Parliament.** Although it is readily recognised that it will not always be possible for a single voice to be articulated (see section below on voting/consensus aspects), it will nonetheless be **critical for the Rural Parliament to be able to produce coherent statements and papers:**

If an issue is discussed at the Rural Parliament and widespread consensus is reached (such as on a valuable piece of legislative change) then a strongly worded statement could be issued. [SRP01]

Papers and recommendations do need to be produced. [SRP20]

Consensus would send a good signal to politicians. [SRP13]

The degree of influence relates to and is dependent on the outcomes of the event itself, so making recommendations, such as through a Communique, which is designed to generate a response from Government and Parliament, would be positive. [SRP03]

The Rural Parliament will have different products. Responses to consultations, legislative changes etc. will be the principal outputs – this is the primary function of the Rural Parliament. It is critical that the Rural Parliament can influence Committees as this is where the primary decisions on legislation are taken. The secretariat should have a dedicated section responsible for consultation responses. [SRP02]

The event will need to produce some form of consensus statement which is formally tabled to Parliament. [SRP26]

There will also need to be a parallel mechanism put in place to show **the extent to which these statements or papers from the Rural Parliament are having an impact:**

The Rural Parliament needs to be producing policy papers, statements and making good use of digital media to show that the Rural Parliament engagement with Ministers and stakeholders is working. [SRP05]

Outputs are important: papers would be useful. The outcomes have to be followed up, it's important to translate decisions into actions. It's important that process is short, quick, rapid. Participants need to know that what they are saying is being taken forward. Communication is extremely important. [SRP15]

2.2.2.2. To be influential, the Rural Parliament needs to be strategic as well as fire-fighting

The majority of interviewees agreed that the Rural Parliament, whilst addressing key (sometimes short-term) issues, needs to **create and maintain a strategic focus to maximise its influence and coherence**. It therefore needs to be structured in a way that supports this strategic focus.

Those who argue that a **strategic rather than only fire-fighting** approach is preferable, state that:

Ideally, the focus needs to be strategic – primacy should be given to this, rather than 'fire fighting', but this will be more challenging. The Rural Parliament is an opportunity for strategic thinking on economic and social policy in rural areas. [SRP16]

The Rural Parliament should be strategic, focusing on a big issue like energy, land use, migration, refining these issues with a local voice. It needs to be well planned and looking ahead. [SRP08]

Its focus needs to be strategic; if it is purely on fire fighting it won't go anywhere. [SRP20]

The Rural Parliament needs to avoid articulating 'hobby horses' and identify issues of common concern across rural Scotland. [SRP14]

The Rural Parliament must be strategic because it is about visioning for the future. It is about 5 or 10 years time. [SRP04]

Fire-fighting is fine if you meet regularly and have lots of resources: otherwise being strategic is more important. Representative bodies fight fires; the Rural Parliament would probably be too large and unwieldy to do this. [SRP19]

The majority, who feel that **the Rural Parliament needs to perform both functions**, argue that:

For the Rural Parliament to be effective, you've got to give it some quick wins to be able to say quickly that this is an effective body; you need to identify short-term achievable targets. However, coupled with that, you need the Rural Parliament to be strategic overall. [SRP05]

The Rural Parliament has to be strategic. Fire-fighting is already being done by existing organisations. But if the Scottish Government needs action/discussion on an issue fast, then this can be brought to the Rural Parliament so that the Rural Parliament can add weight to what a group/sector is already saying. [SRP01]

Ideally the Rural Parliament needs to be strategic so that people can fully prepare for the event. However, if a hot topic arises a month before the event then discussion will be dominated by this anyway. [SRP22]

The Rural Parliament has to be both strategic and do some fire-fighting – show flexibility but also have long-term goals. Perhaps the event should be strategic but in-between activities might be more about fire-fighting. [SRP02]

The Rural Parliament needs to be both strategic and fire fighting. On some issues a strategic approach is required (like on the future of the SRDP) but then if something like the foot and mouth outbreak happens or another significant issue comes up (like milk prices) then it's important that the Rural Parliament can address those important issues of the day – it would be daft not to talk about current issues. However, we need to make sure the Rural Parliament has a long-term strategy and a structured approach to long-term issues such as rural housing or rates relief on rural properties. [SRP26]

Those who feel that the focus should be more on **specific themes** described how this is what **will draw people in** to wanting to participate in the Rural Parliament:

When you're trying to convince people to join the Rural Parliament you have to do it on issues, like rural housing. You don't attract people by saying we've got these fabulous structures in place but we haven't decided what we want to focus on yet. It's the issues that will draw people in. [SRP09]

To support **the identification of key major and subsidiary topics** that the Rural Parliament should be addressing, interviewees outlined what needs to be put in place:

As an output from the main session, there should be an effort to try and identify some particular consensual policy areas. Find a way to go for the top things. The Rural Parliament needs to be able to say: "Here are the 4 or 5 issues that Government should have in mind, and that we're going to hold you to account on over the next 2 years". Then, in addition, some minority reports could be produced on specific topics, possibly with a vote. So, aim to

get emergent themes, identifying where more work needs to be commissioned, and communicate this in a report. [SRP13]

It's about how it's organised: you have to have a focus on a small number of selected issues, to explore whether there's a consensus around these. Firstly, there's a process to identify what are the major obstacles, like in housing and planning, then identify the 5 priorities *within* housing and planning, and *then* an elected body or mandated group takes it forward. [SRP09]

Again, to enhance influence of the Rural Parliament, there need to be structures and processes in place which mean that **the considered views of the Rural Parliament then go forward to key decision-makers in Government:**

It is critical that the event has tangible outputs. Proceedings (including a report of the discussion and agreed actions) should be produced and presented to the national Parliament. This will inform the Scottish Government about the event. It could go as far as issuing statements like "We the Rural Parliament ask of the National Parliament..." – which would ask for things that should be considered, priorities to be addressed, or things that were non-negotiable. [SRP11]

The Rural Parliament could be composed of multiple 'panels' which would specialise in particular issues, for example a housing panel, or a broadband panel. These could then feed into the Scottish Government but they'd need to be neutral in their construction. The discussions and outputs from the panels could then be put to the steering group, who then meet with the Scottish Parliament to explain the issues. [SRP15]

2.2.3.Meetings of the Rural Parliament

Interviewees discussed the Rural Parliament events at some length, focusing on the significance of geographic location, and the frequency of the events.

2.2.3.1.Geographical location of the event

This topic generated many responses. For the overwhelming majority of interviewees, **geography clearly matters**, not only in terms of event logistics, but in terms of who is then able to participate, as well as the 'signals' that are sent out by choice of location.

The majority of interviewees feel that the Rural Parliament should definitely take place in a rural location. There is, therefore, a need to think about **venues** that would be able to accommodate several hundred people:

It is important that we "make a statement about rurality through the chosen location". [SRP26]

In principle yes, but there are not many places big enough to have it (assuming you've got 300 people). But I'm also reluctant to have it in a meeting room in Edinburgh or at Glasgow's SECC. Venues are limited and there's appalling public transport infrastructure. I guess Aviemore (at the MacDonald Highland Hotel) or Stirling are going to be likely options, rather than Barra or Peterhead. There just aren't the places to have things north of say Eden Court (Inverness) – you could take that over I suppose. I think you'd be looking at a north-south axis up the A9. [SRP09]

Stirling would be a good venue, or Perth. Needs to be somewhere that is easily accessible. [SRP08]

It could possibly use a university campus e.g. Stirling. [SRP08]

The Rural Parliament should meet in rural Scotland - it should not bring rural people to Edinburgh but vice versa. Inverness is not rural Scotland and we shouldn't have it in the Macdonald Hotel in Aviemore! It should be in the Borders or Shetland for example. [SRP11]

It is odd that all of the meetings so far have taken place in Edinburgh. It is logical but it does not put a spin on the process that is representative of rural Scotland. This reflects the geography and distances involved in rural Scotland (as opposed to somewhere like Holland for example). [SRP24]

Local places could do it - so Richard Lochhead says that we will have a Rural Parliament next year, we hope to get 300 people attending, for 2-3 days – who would like to host it? It would be good to have it out of season so that it provides a boost to a local economy. Local people in the chosen area are therefore centrally involved in organising it and participating, including local community groups, local business groups, Chambers of Commerce etc. [SRP18]

The **location also affects who can participate**, so interviewees state that very careful thought needs to be given to **location** as it **directly impacts on how inclusive the Rural Parliament will be**:

Is it more authentically rural if you go somewhere very remote that a lot of people then can't get to? It needs to be in a central location, such as Perth; it keeps it neat, and people know what to expect. Otherwise, you decrease the number of people who can make it. [SRP13]

It should be acknowledged however that the location will influence who will/can attend. [SRP24]

You can't force people to attend, for example, from the Western Isles to an event in Dumfries. However you need to make it a situation where people become part of the Rural Parliament family and talk to each other saying "see you in two years time", so that they feel if they don't go then they will be missing out. People need to feel that it is worthwhile to attend. [SRP18]

Many interviewees suggested that the Rural Parliament **biannual event should move around the country**:

Meetings should move around and should not necessarily be held in a hotel. It will take some thought and planning but the principle should be to have it in a rural location and have it moving around. [SRP02]

Meetings should move around to ensure fairness across rural Scotland. [SRP10]

The first Parliament in the world was in Iceland – a Gathering of the people. The name (Althing) also applies to Dingwall, the Isle of Man Parliament and to Ting in Shetland and a place in Isla which means “meeting place”. Therefore there is a strong argument for the first Rural Parliament to take place in Dingwall to really “fire the imagination”. But there is a strong argument for alternating between Dingwall and somewhere in the south of Scotland. [SRP10]

Perth racecourse is a possibility, it’s a central location. Aviemore also has the big facility at the hotel but it is further north. Equally Dumfries might be problematic. A rotating venue would be best. [SRP26]

There would be merit in holding it in different locations, rotating it around Scotland. This would allow for the identification of best practices in different regions, but also differences. [SRP25]

You might want to consider a process whereby a number of towns bid to host the Rural Parliament – only some places will have the necessary infrastructure to host an event of this size. The Rural Parliament will also serve as an economic driver for the place. A little bit like places hosting party conferences. [SRP04]

Some interviewees also suggested the need to have **local and/or regional events too**, to feed into the national event. This point is returned to in the report (below) where we present findings on maintaining momentum, but it is worth stating here too:

The event is likely to have to take place on the mainland but this is where local/regional events will be critical for folk on the islands for example to feed into the process. [SRP02]

Some interviewees stated that there is a **trade-off that needs to be considered**, between having the Rural Parliament in **a rural location**, and **being physically near to Government**:

There are two alternatives: locate in Edinburgh to have the ear of decision makers, or locate elsewhere (such as Inverness) to avoid the “same-old-same-old” and achieve greater credibility. [SRP16]

It would be good if meetings rotated between the Scottish Parliament (maybe not the building itself but somewhere near Holyrood) and a rural location (like East Aberdeenshire). I’m always in favour of having such an event in a rural area, but having it in Government would enable politicians and civil servants to come to discussions and the social events, ceilidhs etc. Every 2 years the event would then be enmeshed with MSPs and this would give it real weight and value. [SRP01]

I definitely don't think it should be at the Scottish Parliament, because: (a) that's in the city, and seen as central Scotland; and (b) the Rural Parliament needs to be seen to be independent of the Scottish Parliament. [SRP13]

Finally, the view that **the Rural Parliament should not meet in Edinburgh or the Central Belt** was also expressed:

Meeting in the central belt/Edinburgh might make it appear just another arm of the Scottish Government... locating it away from central belt might help counter this. [SRP20]

The first meeting in Edinburgh was a bad idea: in terms of an alternative this should be up to participants. Meeting in different locations would be good. [SRP23]

No more meetings at 10am in Edinburgh! Perth would seem to be the most central. [SRP14]

It shouldn't be in Edinburgh, *obviously*; it makes it more possible for the event to be dismissed by potential participants. There was some grumbling about this at the May event. It could be in Perth, or Stirling. Or rural D&G or Borders, which don't get as much attention. [SRP21]

2.2.3.2.Frequency of Rural Parliament

The overwhelming majority of interviewees stated that they think the Rural Parliament should take place **every two years**, for a number of specific reasons.

Firstly, it needs to be every two years, due to **organisational and individual capacity**:

Every 2 years would seem sensible to me. If you're organising an annual conference, you've just finished one and it's time to start organising the next one. So, every 2 years reduces the organisational cost. [SRP09]

It shouldn't happen on any more than an annual basis. If it was more frequent, people would not be able to afford the time to attend each meeting. [SRP12]

Every 2 years is close enough to retain enthusiasm but not too close so as to create logistical problems. If the benefit is to be in terms of creating a clear route and opportunities to discuss problems, then every 2 years seems about right. [SRP10]

The Rural Parliament should meet biannually; it would be too expensive to meet more frequently. [SRP21]

Two years is ideal as this **gives time to report back on what has happened since the previous Rural Parliament**:

Meeting annually would be too often, biannually would be more realistic as you're trying to tackle big issues and otherwise it would be difficult to report achievements back, and this is what people will be looking for. [SRP16]

Every two to three years. This time period will also allow for the identification of the impact that the Rural Parliament has had, in order to secure ongoing engagement. [SRP14]

Interviewees highlighted that the Rural Parliament meetings should also be **linking with political cycles**:

The Rural Parliament should be aware of the timings of political cycles, for example to influence manifestos... a strategic approach to timings would be helpful. [SRP23]

It's important to tie in with political cycles to ensure maximum influence. [SRP14]

If we think that the Government is in power for 5 years, having 2 during each period seems right. One could be held closely following an election and one coming up to the next election to review how the Government have done, give opposition parties the chance to debate rural issues etc. [SRP18]

As already mentioned (above), interviewees recommend that there should be **additional meetings between the main Rural Parliament**. This would enable the **business of the Rural Parliament to continue** in between main meetings. A small number of interviewees advocate more frequent meetings for this purpose:

There should be 'lower level' regional meetings between Rural Parliament events – like the Dutch provincial Parliaments. These will serve as useful learning exercises for the main event, testing out some issues for discussion. [SRP01]

It may be that different types of meeting for different types of participant would be appropriate. [SRP23]

Meeting just every two years would not be effective. We also need to meet to scrutinise the actions of the Scottish Government between meetings. This is a process: it doesn't happen at discrete points but is ongoing. An option to facilitate dialogue could be via online community fora. [SRP17]

This depends on the size and topics, but I would suggest every quarter in Perth or Inverness. These quarterly meetings could be update meetings between larger meetings, or the Rural Parliament could meet every quarter. [SRP15]

I'd suggest that there's one big, big meeting annually, with smaller business-like meetings in-between on particular issues. It needs to be this frequent to ensure it's more than a photo opportunity. [SRP25]

Frequency of meetings depends on if anything happens in between. If it was a case of just getting the Scottish Government along to listen to discussions and leaving it to them to act on these, perhaps once every couple of years would be enough, but if it's going to be about having a different theme each meeting, and working groups in between the meetings, these need to be every year, with working groups reporting to the Rural Parliament. [SRP19]

2.2.4. Administration of the Rural Parliament

Interviewees identified the priority that needs to be given to establishing a secretariat with specific functions, to ensure the coherent and effective development of the Rural Parliament.

2.2.4.1. A new, resourced secretariat is needed

The overwhelming majority of interviewees stated that an **independent, resourced secretariat** is needed to underpin and deliver the Rural Parliament.

It is felt that the secretariat should be made up of **core staff**:

It's important to have a core, paid staff – maybe 2-3 people – initially to coordinate and bring in the reps from other networks. [SRP02]

The administration has to be cost-efficient, and there must be an existing organisation that could host this – you don't need a separate organisation, but it would need a dedicated staff member. The host organisation would need to be seen as being politically independent. [SRP14]

Someone needs to become the 'face' of the Rural Parliament. [SRP23]

Core staff for the Rural Parliament secretariat is felt to be necessary because there are **capacity issues** if the secretariat were to be made up of individuals seconded from a range of organisations, plus issues of **independence**:

Organisations do not have the capacity to take on this sharing role. It could be done on a secondment basis and pull in people from existing different organisations but it needs to be maintaining an overarching role. [SRP01]

Sharing administration across existing organisations will bring challenges – many are already struggling to 'do their day job'. A separate dedicated Secretariat would be best. [SRP22]

If the secretariat was provided across organisations it would be across some organisations and not all, which would be a danger. It would be the "big boys" such as SAC who would "inevitably be providing secretarial support". If it was the case, it would have implications for perceptions of independence and impartiality. [SRP19]

There is a variety of views as to the **make-up and leadership of the secretariat**, particularly in relation to the degree and type of involvement of the civil service:

Administration can't be done by the civil service. Otherwise the process would be seen to be too Scottish Government led. It must be led by civil society. The Scottish Government can't be writing up the notes etc. as their objectivity in the process is questionable. [SRP11]

The secretariat should not be provided by the civil service. These individuals need to be recruited separately and could perhaps be active community folk who understand the workings of the Scottish Government, legislation etc. [SRP02]

It could be the civil service but it would be better if this was done by a discrete body in a rural area. [SRP01]

Our European colleagues at the May 29th meeting emphasised the need for the independence of the Rural Parliament to be closely guarded so the Secretariat should not be the Scottish Government. [SRP10]

If the secretariat was outside the Scottish Government, it is likely it would assume more of a lobbying role. [SRP25]

An alternative view which was expressed, and is illustrated by the following quote, recommends that the secretariat *is* provided by the Scottish Government or Parliament:

To do this properly resources should not be a barrier and the Rural Parliament should be properly resourced. It needs a support structure below the Board which should be linked to the Scottish Government or Scottish Parliament. There are plenty of other examples of secretariats used, for example, for managing European funding, which are held by Governments but at “arm’s length”. [SRP04]

Irrespective of the make-up of the secretariat, it is generally agreed that **it should not become overly bureaucratic**:

It should be a contractual arrangement with staff on the secretariat, not permanent employees of the Rural Parliament, as that would be another bureaucracy in the making. [SRP26]

It should all be about providing a *front-line service*, not another elephant. [SRP05]

Given this, interviewees outlined **tasks for the Rural Parliament secretariat**:

A development officer and administrative capacity needs to be there: as a point of contact; to ensure correspondence is logged; to ensure reports are sent out; that a web presence is maintained and updated. [SRP13]

It will require a relatively small staff team to take forward the planning and practical arrangements, to make them happen; and to deal with things as they arrive. [SRP03]

The secretariat should be employed by the Board. It should consist of 2-3 people and its job is awareness-raising, communicating about the Rural Parliament, timetables, etc., deciding what the focus should be and which ideas/concepts will be discussed, etc. [SRP10]

If the Rural Parliament (as part of its preparation) is going to drive events across rural Scotland, then there is a need for funded development capacity. [SRP13]

We need to be creative here. There needs to be the fund-holding body, where fund-holding is their main (and possibly only) task, which is trusted by funders. Then there’s an independent secretariat which comprises at least a project leader with administrative support. Then there’s a delivery team for which we need to identify tasks and then divvy them up. The more we can distribute the tasks the more responsibility is shared, so the more

people become owners of the process. We need to be using networks and individuals, who are good at, say, organising conferences, or fundraising. So, the best person or organisation to do the job is selected and then that creates your team. [SRP06]

2.3. How do you think decision-making processes should take place, so that Scotland's Rural Parliament is inclusive and democratic?

Section Summary:

1. Decision-making and representation at the Rural Parliament:

- a. Can the Rural Parliament really be representative?
- b. Use existing networks to enhance representation
- c. Does decision-making need to take place primarily at the Rural Parliament?
- d. Voting or consensus?
- e. The necessity for transparency

2. Processes to enhance influence on Government:

- a. Producing papers or statements from the Rural Parliament
- b. Shaping things up before the first Rural Parliament

3. Keeping momentum:

- a. What needs doing?
- b. How should it be done?
- c. Who is going to do it?

2.3.1. Decision-making and representation at the Rural Parliament

Interviewees discussed the issue of whether the Rural Parliament can really be representative, and highlighted the importance of using existing networks to enhance inclusiveness. Decision-making at the Rural Parliament was seen as a critical point for further clarification, and views were expressed on whether voting or consensus should underpin the expressing of a "Rural Parliament view". Transparency in all processes was emphasised.

2.3.1.1. Can the Rural Parliament really be representative?

Over half the interviewees offered views on this topic, specifically around **what needs to be put in place to ensure, or at least enhance, representativeness.**

Interviewees have stated, as we have already seen, that **there is a need to ensure that individuals and communities are involved, and not just organisations:**

The drivers will (otherwise) be SCVO, NFUS, DTAS etc. – they will all want to be involved, they are the 'usual suspects'. There is a need to reach out at community level, by running local events, by piggy-backing on existing events; it's essential for it to be an inclusive process. [SRP13]

Interviewees further stressed the need for the Rural Parliament to be able to **encompass those who are already active**; some also feel that there should be a role for it to reach out to **those who are not normally involved:**

You can over-romanticise getting to every door, to every house or croft; the focus really needs to be on those who are already active at local level in their communities. The Rural Parliament's job is not to get those who aren't involved to become involved in their communities. More to involve the "unusual suspects" in the Rural Parliament, but who're already active in their local area. [SRP13]

The Rural Parliament needs to involve those doing things at local level, not those sitting complaining; these are the right people to have there. [SRP08]

I'd be keen that the Rural Parliament looks at engaging those who don't normally engage. The Rural Parliament must have robust debate involving people beyond the usual suspects. This is why we need to have people and organisations out on the ground engaging people in the process. Organisations will be critical "animateurs" in this engagement process. [SRP04]

Jo Public has no time to do Consultations by and large, so you end up with organisations producing 15-page documents that then do influence policy. So we need something new here that allows that individual and community voice to be articulated. [SRP05]

One way to enable that articulation is through **the use of technology**:

Perhaps technological solutions could be used alongside the event to enable those not present to express their views. [SRP22]

We need to make sure that the stakeholder group includes representation across the board, including those individuals from rural communities not affiliated to a group. To do this need to be supportive and inclusive to encourage those not otherwise involved. These less involved in other forms of action could be encouraged to participate via electronic (but not anonymous) means. [SRP15]

We need to create the opportunity for an online consultation. So, a combination of effort (offline and online) that organises a consultative process and awareness-raising at local level. [SRP13]

When considering whether the Rural Parliament can really be representative, an issue to emerge from interviewees is about **the need to ensure that no one voice, be that community or organisational, dominates the Rural Parliament**:

It is important to make sure that the Rural Parliament does not become dominated by one or two voices. Addressing this is connected to how we draw people into the Rural Parliament and the membership of the Rural Parliament – making sure that it is broad and not employer or professional based but more dominated by the community and voluntary sector. [SRP10]

It is a natural tendency that some individuals and organisations will seek or come to dominate the Rural Parliament, but safeguards should be built in to avoid this happening. How this can be achieved though is a key question. There is such a wide range of interests across rural Scotland but they don't all talk to one another and are often only interested in their community – getting balanced representation though will be a challenge. [SRP26]

We need to avoid a situation where some voices become dominant and take over the debate. There was a good spread of organisations present in Edinburgh (in May) and a great sense of anticipation but this is perhaps one key worry about the Rural Parliament. [SRP08]

You need an effective chair of the Rural Parliament to ensure all voices are heard. [SRP25]

2.3.1.2. Use existing networks to enhance representation

In order to broaden and secure participation and engagement in the Rural Parliament, and reach those who are either active in rural Scotland, or do not yet have a voice, interviewees recommended that **there is a need to use existing networks to reach out**. So, these responses are more about the **processes of ‘getting out and about’**, *into* rural communities.

It’s important to use existing networks – people *do* meet, even in the smallest communities (for example Community Councils). An initial job is for the Rural Parliament to look at what is there (institutionally) and see whether, in “getting the tentacles out”, that would be sufficient in terms of ensuring representation. [SRP16]

Those in LEADER organisations can provide the names of local people who should be involved, such as local people involved in buyouts and other local community action. [SRP08]

LAGs have got a good spread of representation, with a good understanding of the local landscape. People on the board who are not self-interested but interested in what is best for their local area are important. [SRP12]

The Rural Parliament will be treading on the toes of Community Planning Partnerships; but you can’t do the Rural Parliament without involving CPPs and Local Authorities. [SRP05]

Specifically, interviewees stated that networks need to **reach out to – and through - their membership**, and “**deliver members” to the Rural Parliament**:

All of those local groups, including in the tourism sector which is missing from these discussions at the moment, need to be delivering multiple members to the Rural Parliament. We all need to go out and sell the idea on a much bigger scale. So, instead of one community energy company, or one village hall coming to the September 2013 Rural Parliament event, we need *dozens* of community energy companies, *dozens* of village halls, and *dozens* of community woodlands groups and community energy groups. [SRP09]

We need to work out *through* organisations, community councils, development trusts etc., encouraging them to participate. We have to do it in this outreach way. [SRP13]

Interviewees wanted to stress that this is not all about one-way communication, that is, telling communities about the Rural Parliament. Rather, they felt that **two-way communication with communities prior to the Rural Parliament event** is essential:

There needs to be a range of local events prior to September 2013; there is a need for a very hard-worked-at programme of events at local level so people can get an idea of what a

Rural Parliament can do for them, and for them to identify issues that matter for them. [SRP13]

The Rural Parliament needs to be reaching out to people operating at local level. Many at local level will currently be unaware of the Rural Parliament. They'll be suspicious of it when they do hear of it and wonder if it will be anything more than a talking-shop. So there needs to be a process of mobilisation of communities, through organisations that can reach into communities in a way that communities would trust. [SRP06]

2.3.1.3.Does decision-making need to take place primarily at the Rural Parliament?

Interviewees who raised this point feel that **the Rural Parliament is where decision-making should primarily take place**; that is, decision-making about what really matters to rural Scotland, and what issues should be put forward on behalf of the Rural Parliament.

However, there is also the view that the Rural Parliament's job is not about taking decisions as such, but about **debate, discussion, and expressing a view**:

Actually, the Rural Parliament may not make that many decisions itself. It is more about expressing an opinion, a voice, giving options and making a point. It is questionable as to how many decisions will actually be taken. [SRP02]

Rural Parliament needs to fight to make sure it's not about decisions, but about debate and discussion: about making, not taking, decisions. [SRP17]

The Rural Parliament is not a voting chamber so it is not about making decisions, by consensus, voting or any other means. [SRP18]

To enable this debate and potential for decisions to take place, interviewees highlighted established **approaches that could be used**:

You can use effective participatory approach techniques for large groups – there are many that are tried and tested, like using break-out groups, flip-chart recording, pair-wise ranking to get decisions etc. Also visual brainstorming and post-it clustering methods. And hypothesis chains to discuss why things happen and what will happen next. And “mind-mapping”. [SRP11]

2.3.1.4.Voting or consensus?

Almost three-quarters of interviewees expressed views concerning voting or consensus when discussing this theme of decision-making and representation. It is related to the previous point about whether and how the Rural Parliament could and should be handling debates and making decisions.

For some interviewees, **establishing which types of processes** (such as voting or consensus) are appropriate for the Rural Parliament **will take time**:

This really needs to be an evolving thing so that consensus is aimed for at the outset but over time it might be possible or desirable to move towards voting as we get a better understanding of the process. [SRP01]

Where consensus is required, the easiest thing would seem to be to lean toward the majority of people and vote. However, it would seem too early to project forward and think about how votes would be apportioned etc. Things seem more at the conceptual stage at the moment. [SRP16]

It may be that there are different types of member of the Rural Parliament. For example, some organisations would not want to have voting rights but would want to be present and participate. [SRP14]

Given that the exact processes need time to evolve, there were still views expressed as to what should nonetheless be **appropriate**:

It should operate by consensus, although this could be reached through a vote. [SRP08]

Decision making should be by consensus represented by votes. But the danger is that this depends on the representativeness of those taking part in the Rural Parliament. If this is not representative, the view won't be seen as representative either. [SRP19]

Consensus would be "nice" but very difficult to achieve. If not possible, then a vote will be needed. But this raises the question about how votes should be weighted. [SRP01]

The Rural Parliament has to operate by consensus rather than vote. [SRP22]

It absolutely should be consensus. Voting leads to splits and divisions which can be hard, and take time to, heal. It will be possible to get consensus amongst those who are active and interested. Voting would effectively be asking communities to vote against one another. [SRP02]

A consensus position is desirable and this gets round the difficulty of having to vote but will this mean that the statement is "toothless". [SRP26]

Consensus should first be sought, then perhaps electronic voting. [SRP15]

'Voting' gives an impression of democratic representation, which is not the case. Need to seek consensus. [SRP25]

It's not important to achieve consensus – no one pretends it's unanimous and unproblematic. It should seek to put forward a considered mood, voice or articulation on particular issues. Perhaps through voting. [SRP17]

Voting during the meeting on key issues could be done. This could mean that the Rural Parliament was able to state that the 'mandate of the Rural Parliament is x', however, I question what this would mean for the wider democratic process in Scotland: would it then circumvent committee consideration, for example? If yes, this is a major issue, but if the Rural Parliament doesn't have the capacity to influence change, what is the point of the Rural Parliament? [SRP12]

Either way, whether voting or consensus, **a structured process is considered essential:**

It's less to do with how you do it, but more about how it's led. [SRP16]

It becomes essential that there is a clear remit, a clear agenda for the meeting(s), and that that's adhered to. It may well end up being that an attempt to reach a consensus might not be possible, so votes might need to be taken. [SRP03]

There's nothing wrong with a show of hands – it's also very transparent and “human”. There is something quite reassuring about a show of hands, finding a majority or not. The hands would be counted and the Chair would then say that he/she believes a majority has been reached and the issue is then presented to Scottish Government with the assent of the Rural Parliament attendees. [SRP10]

I have in mind the party conference system where a vote is taken on particular issues. So, say, 10 issues are debated and then a vote taken on the top 5. But transparency is critical. The Rural Parliament must be worthwhile and have tangible outputs and outcomes. There must be clear evidence of a position at the Rural Parliament to ensure transparency – this will also make the voice stronger. [SRP04]

Such a system also requires **clarity on who is represented when a person votes**, as well as **the ‘weight’ that different votes carry:**

You'd need to resolve the issue of whether (for example) an NFUS vote has the same weight as the votes of representatives of say, Kinghorn. [SRP12]

The question is more about *who* is getting to vote: for example, should a membership organisation have a vote if it has already worked hard to ensure that its members are attending the Rural Parliament event itself? This risks the duplication of votes/views. [SRP23]

Interviewees suggested that it would be useful for the Rural Parliament to **examine other examples for guidance**; for example:

More needs to be known, and lessons learnt if appropriate, from the ways in which the Scottish Youth Parliament operates. [SRP12]

2.3.1.5. The necessity for transparency

There is agreement that process and outcomes of the Rural Parliament need to be **transparent:**

The Rural Parliament *absolutely* needs to be transparent. [SRP08]

To ensure a transparent decision-making process, the steering group needs to be representative, with no one sector etc. over-represented. [SRP14]

The Rural Parliament should be transparent. Using the “show of hands” system will help to ensure that it is transparent as the opinion of everyone will be visible. [SRP24]

The Rural Parliament should be transparent. In terms of responses to consultations for example, it is critical that people are not being asked too much too often, but equally everyone needs to have a chance to contribute. This will take time and effort. Equally you can't force the horse to drink when you take it to the pool... [SRP02]

Interviewees suggest **digital and online** means to assist in transparency of communication:

The event should be fully recorded and verified by those present. And use the website as a mechanism to publish a report of the event and invite comments. [SRP11]

The Rural Parliament needs to have a dedicated website – this could be tacked onto the Scottish Government website to save money. [SRP08]

In order for decision making to be transparent, communication is very important. The Rural Parliament will need to interact with all stakeholders using email and online means. People need to be kept informed: decision making requires information. [SRP15]

2.3.2. Processes to enhance influence on Government

We have just presented interviewees' perspectives on decision-making and representation processes that need to be in place for the Rural Parliament to be *inclusive*. We now present a *second* theme: processes that need to be in place **to ensure influence**, with interviewees raising issues of: **how to generate and establish shared views** (both before and at the events); and **ensure follow-up through shared actions**.

2.3.2.1. Producing papers or statements from the Rural Parliament

Over half the interviewees stated that there is a need for the Rural Parliament to have, within its processes, the means to **produce papers and statements**, in order **to enhance its influence**.

This is because, firstly, **the Rural Parliament must be a 'working' event**:

It's a work event, it's not just about socialising. We should gather to discuss and vote on things. There should be a work programme to be delivered. [SRP09]

The Rural Parliament has to produce an output: it can't just be a celebratory event. [SRP23]

The Rural Parliament needs to use a combination of thematic workshops with plenary sessions, and bringing in experts who bring high-quality challenge and facilitation, so we don't just have the usual conversations where we end up complaining... [SRP13]

Interviewees suggest **possible approaches** to this:

It would be interesting (but I'm not sure how effective) if the Rural Parliament was to produce short discussion documents (perhaps 4?) on important topics. These would have to be carefully thought about in terms of the right topics to address in order to get attention, but could be effective. The pieces could be structured in the form of a "school debate" with for and against discussed, perhaps starting off by saying, for example, "The Rural Parliament

believes that £10 billion per year should be spent on rural broadband...”. The issue would then be discussed at the Rural Parliament event and a show of hands given on the issue. So effectively the Rural Parliament is offering an opinion on an issue having debated both sides of the argument. [SRP24]

Can advice be taken from elsewhere, such as the Trades Union Congresses, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland? They should be able to help and advise. Do they have a speaker and then a period of reflection when attendees can give the speaker’s presentation/issues their blessing or not? [SRP10]

The Highlands and Islands Convention “puts papers to itself” – an individual will write a paper which is then discussed and agreed or not and then it is submitted... [SRP26]

There is a need for the Rural Parliament to **try to establish shared views** even though there is full recognition that such views will naturally come from a range of interests, perspectives and geographies:

It is likely that there will be a clash between commercial interests and communities, but it is possible to put forward a ‘Rural Parliament view’. A single document might be authored and then a response required from the Scottish Government and/or Scottish Parliament. [SRP16]

Getting a “Rural Parliament view” is possible but again it depends on having the right, proactive, knowledgeable people present. Extra people can also be brought in to add to this expertise. [SRP08]

It is possible to put forward a ‘Rural Parliament view’. Research to support this is key when articulating to Government: what’s an issue for one person or group might not be an issue for all. There’s a balance to be struck between local challenges and shared challenges across rural Scotland. [SRP20]

Views could also be brought in from **those not able to be present** at the Rural Parliament event itself:

The national Rural Parliament meeting could also be broadcast on the internet to allow those unable to attend to participate. [SRP25]

Interviewees feel strongly that, **after the production of papers, action is needed:**

The most that can be hoped for is that the Rural Parliament produces recommendations which are then presented to the Scottish Parliament, based on debate and reaching consensus on a representative view. [SRP22]

The outputs from the Rural Parliament would be “owned” by the Rural Parliament. Action then needs to be the responsibility of a management or steering group (possibly elected and/or refreshed at the Rural Parliament event), who are tasked to take forward that document. That document would then need to be taken forward in two ways: (i) back to the grass-roots, to check what’s been agreed, and to see if more details are required; and (ii) as

a challenge to MSPs and Councils, questioning what's been done, and getting views from MSPs, plus organising seminars with politicians to explore issues further. [SRP13]

Not only does this action need to take place; interviewees stated that **such action needs to have impact and be seen to have impact:**

It's important that people who devote time, money and effort to this do not feel they are ignored: they need to see the impacts of what has been done. [SRP23]

The question is around whether or not the Rural Parliament can agree a position and a statement and submit this into the Scottish Government machine. A key question is around the weight and effect that such a position statement would achieve – would this be more than an individual writing a letter to his or her MSP? Also, being able to reach consensus might necessarily mean that the statement is bland. [SRP26]

I believe that it *will* be possible to get a Rural Parliament view. Although the solution(s) to whatever challenge(s) are identified will not necessarily come from the Rural Parliament. The results must be dropped into national and regional policy making. [SRP04]

2.3.2.2. Shaping things up before the first Rural Parliament

In order to reach the point of being a working, influential, Rural Parliament, as envisioned above, interviewees emphasised the need for there to be **substantial outreach and preparation**, so that **people arrive with ideas and are ready to engage.**

Interviewees stated that **preparation is needed**, in order to **generate enthusiasm and ideas** for the **debates** which would then take place at the Rural Parliament:

It will be quite difficult with the first one (Rural Parliament September 2013). You have to start before the event, with a degree of policy-shaping beforehand, so that the 300 delegates don't turn up cold. There needs to be a circulation of ideas by email, with something emerging before the event, so that people get enthused. [SRP09]

After all the community mobilisation comes any decision-making, once the information from local level has first been gathered and then filtered. Then the steering group identifies those issues that seem to be important at grass-roots level. We need to set some targets for involvement at ground level, percentage of organisations etc. [SRP06]

The meeting could have 'pre-events', for example, to other organisations to see examples of renewable energy etc. This would make it more worthwhile for those coming from longer distances. These additional things are also important. [SRP21]

Care needs to be taken, however:

The processes leading to the topics to discuss will be less transparent. There will be organisations seeking to lobby, veto etc. at these earlier stages. [SRP24]

Given this, interviewees offered the following **suggestions**:

Each Rural Parliament will concentrate on a theme or themes so that individuals can propose themes to the Board and the Board then decides which one(s) to focus on at the Rural Parliament meeting. This will also help to avoid a situation where the Rural Parliament becomes dominated by one sector/idea. [SRP10]

The Winston Churchill Foundation offers Fellowships each year. There are 5 main themes for the Fellowships each year, with 4 decided in advance and the fifth left open until close to the deadline to give flexibility to accommodate hot issues – a similar approach could be taken with the Rural Parliament to allow it to be both strategic and forward looking and responsive and flexible to key issues at the time. [SRP10]

2.3.3.Keeping momentum going between Rural Parliament biannual events

Interviewees emphasised the need for communication and activity to take place between the national events, to maintain interest and inclusive engagement, and to keep delivering the work of the Rural Parliament.

2.3.3.1.What needs doing?

The majority of interviewees feel that the Rural Parliament is **more than just the event itself** and therefore **communication** has to take place **between the two-yearly events**:

It is important to maintain dialogue: the Rural Parliament should be seen as a culmination. People couldn't and shouldn't just roll up at the parliament with your thoughts at that point in time. It's hard to do this from the outset though; it's something that will come in time if it is seen as credible and successful. [SRP16]

One key function of this dialogue and communication is to **build connections across rural Scotland**:

Activity at rural local level is dispersed. The coverage isn't perfect across Scotland and the connective tissue isn't there. Groups tend to be issue-based (such as renewable energy) or employment-related (like, say, farmers). So, we're starting off with a reasonably messy platform with lots going on. In years 1-2, we need to get a good handle on what's out there, and who's doing what, and build this connectivity. And we need an organisational structure to build this connectivity. [SRP06]

The focus should be on supporting a village movement. The Rural Parliament should purely be a meeting of communities of place for their voice to be heard together. Democracy is not a question of what happens at the ballot box; votes are punctuations in democracy. Village Associations as in Sweden should be seriously looked at as an example. [SRP17]

There are all sorts of gatherings that take place every week. It's what goes *before* the Rural Parliament event that's more important, in terms of building a rural movement. [SRP07]

Another key function of this dialogue is to **help to establish key themes for the 2013 and subsequent Rural Parliaments:**

Opportunities to maintain dialogue between times might be to collectively agree on a loose agenda to steer thought and actions between the Rural Parliaments such as on a particular theme, issue or challenge. [SRP16]

There's a need for continuous development, continuing to get out there through events, and through piggy-backing on existing events, *post* September 2013. Building towards the following Rural Parliament: checking the progress of the 2013 "5 key points" and then developing the next 5 (or 10 or 15). Make this an agenda item for Trusts, Committees, Community Councils, so that they can be preparing for the Rural Parliaments. [SRP13]

It will be helpful if the theme(s), timing etc. for the next Rural Parliament event are announced 1-2 months after the previous Rural Parliament. So for example in Oct/Nov 2013, the Rural Parliament should call for ideas, themes etc. for the 2015 Rural Parliament, with a deadline of January 2014. Those to take forward are given a green light in March for submission by May 2014. So that the process is clear and has well established timescales to maintain momentum. [SRP10]

In advance of the first Rural Parliament, the steering group could organise five or six regional events to share information about what the Rural Parliament is and to generate interest. During these, key issues to be discussed in the first Rural Parliament could also be identified. You've got to structure it around things that people are really interested in. The Rural Parliament event itself can't be the starting point, there needs to be a year of thrashing out how it would work. [SRP21]

At the September 2013 event, people can't just turn up to see what this thing is all about. We need resources *now* to put into clarifying what the Rural Parliament is all about, and to have gone through 2 or 3 steps of making things clearer, so that the Rural Parliament September 2013 is about work, rather than about questioning its own existence. [SRP09]

It is felt that these **themes need to maintain some focus**, otherwise momentum could be lost:

The event needs to be focused on 1 or 2 issues and should not become too broad otherwise momentum and interest will be lost; so, focused on, for example, energy, transport, accessibility). [SRP08]

Smaller events in-between the Rural Parliaments which are themselves themed – say rural broadband – would allow national bodies to be called to account and also keep momentum going. [SRP21]

Interviewees recognise that some people will be more involved in the Rural Parliament than others, and the **new people will become involved at different stages**. Therefore, **to ensure inclusiveness, reduce confusion, and keep positive momentum going, communication is**

essential so that those new to the Rural Parliament know what has been discussed, and why and how those discussions have taken place:

There needs to be good information flows between Rural Parliament events especially because the representatives present at events will vary. [SRP01]

A quarterly email bulletin updating 'members' on the activities of the Rural Parliament would be useful. Occasional press releases on relevant topics would be good. There should not be a huge amount of stuff issued though as people's inboxes are already very full. [SRP24]

There is a need for something underneath the Rural Parliament, to maintain engagement in-between meetings, such as ways in which to feed-in issues and opinions, and hear about progress locally. [SRP20]

Interviewees also stated that the Rural Parliament needs to be **communicating about what it has achieved**, in order to keep momentum going:

There needs to be something clear coming out of the September 2013 Rural Parliament, with highlights being published. The success (if it is a success) needs to be well-publicised and made clear to people. You need to make people feel that they missed something if they weren't there. [SRP13]

The Rural Parliament has got to make a difference – something needs to come out of the event – a “rural treaty”? Something that articulates what will be done between the Rural Parliament meetings, and how, so if you're involved with a project you see it as something bigger. [SRP21]

2.3.3.2. How should it be done?

As noted by interviewees when considering the issue of geographical representation, there is a need for **meetings to be arranged to take place between the main meetings**. This would help to keep interest going:

There needs to be opportunity to discuss and address issues outwith the main Rural Parliament meetings, locally. [SRP20]

Organisational reps at the Rural Parliament meeting need to take responsibility for sharing information about the Rural Parliament to their members such as through promotion at their area meetings. [SRP11]

Regional and local events are potentially useful to keep momentum going. These can also feed into the national Rural Parliament process to ensure a balance of ideas and priorities are covered which are relevant to all of rural Scotland. [SRP10]

There is also the question of having regional events in between the national events. I suspect that having regional events will be useful but again there are already events happening on a regional or local basis and more events might simply serve to make things more complicated rather than adding value. On the other hand, a Rural Parliament might

bring more structure to what is already happening and occasional face-to-face events might be very useful on specific topics. [SRP26]

Regular regional meetings would also help to keep momentum. If they are successful then we might find that they start being set up on their own to discuss local issues and feed them into the national Rural Parliament process. But local events would also reveal the diversity across rural Scotland. Regional or local events would also help to ensure that actions happen in between meetings but it's critical to ensure that there is dialogue between national and regional events to keep Scottish Government attention. [SRP01]

Holding local or regional meetings will also be hugely valuable, perhaps in the alternate years. They will feed into the main event and will help to ensure that work doesn't just stop before or after the main event. The event is actually better described as the 'focus'. These regional events will be mini-Rural Parliaments and will provide a means of continuing the discussion and feedback into and out of the main event. [SRP02]

However, interviewees also questioned **the capacity and resourcing** required for such additional meetings:

Existing organisations can also play a role in continuing debate, such as through local and regional meetings, to feed views into the national event. This will increase the representativeness and effectiveness of the Rural Parliament but again organisations are already constrained and will need additional resources to do this. Without resources their role will have to be much more passive, reminding people about the event and what happened there. [SRP22]

Another route for maintaining momentum is felt to be **digital technology and media and using existing networks**:

Use social media, and whatever tools are going to be around by 2014. Make sure it's well covered in the media, on most local websites, so that people are immediately starting to talk about the next one. [SRP13]

To maintain engagement, the media needs to be engaged and information needs to be built up and disseminated. People should be consulted and engaged with in-between events through newsletters and events, awareness needs to slowly be built up. [SRP14]

A website needs to be set up soon and roadshow events and meetings organised (winter is a good time to do this in rural areas) so that word gets to the smaller places too. [SRP11]

This is where a website will be extremely helpful. It must include Discussion fora although this may not be enough as not everyone has web access. But it may be a critical way of encouraging more engagement at local level. [SRP11]

Use electronic communication and social media on an ongoing basis, plus have a website and use the existing Rural Gateway. These are already in place and should be used to keep things going. [SRP26]

We are not working from a clean sheet – there are existing networks and forums etc. in operation that can help to keep momentum going between events. [SRP26]

It's important to do this, as we don't want to spend time updating people on what's been happening over the preceding year at the beginning of an Rural Parliament meeting. [SRP17]

2.3.3.3. Who is going to do it?

Interviewees outlined that the **responsibility** for driving forward the necessary activities to keep momentum going **rests primarily with the Board or steering group**:

This is incumbent upon the leadership of the Rural Parliament, and depends on who is pulling this together how they make it happen. [SRP16]

The Steering Group will be vital in keeping momentum going – playing a stimulating, encouraging and prodding role between events. [SRP22]

The Steering Group needs to put papers to the Rural Parliament, for example on 6 priority areas. Someone needs to be responsible for promoting new and interesting and untested ideas without the clout of large organisations behind it. [SRP05]

Specific **themes of importance and interest** could also be the focus of particular **working groups**:

There should be “work streams” between Rural Parliament meetings, composed of civil servants, organisations and individuals with an interest in particular issues (such as rural broadband), which would meet more frequently to progress issues, or to meet to address issues in particular areas such as the South of Scotland or particular islands. [SRP25]

There should be themed working groups. For example, how do we tackle youth unemployment? How do we engage social enterprise with the private sector? Discussing running a small business in rural areas and what can be done to overcome the challenges. [SRP19]

However, there is a **need to clarify who is the ‘voice’ of the Rural Parliament between the two-yearly events**, when an issue comes up in national or regional debate for example:

A particular concern I have is about continuing the process between Rural Parliament events. How will the Rural Parliament express opinions between events? It can't be the Secretariat speaking on behalf of Rural Parliament members. [SRP01]

A number of interviewees hope that, by driving forward activities and engagement between Rural Parliament events, **a rural movement will be established and strengthened over time**, which will come to underpin the Rural Parliament events:

I hope that the Rural Parliament isn't a politically driven notion. I believe that it's a genuine move to create something that will be long-lasting. We will all be disappointed if the Rural Parliament turns out to be nothing more than one-off events and doesn't build something stronger and wider alongside. [SRP04]

The Scottish Government has a manifesto commitment to set up a Rural Parliament and a timescale to do this in but this timescale is very tight to successfully develop or support the development of a successful rural movement. This is not there now and it has to be allowed to happen. [SRP02]

I know that talk is of the inaugural Rural Parliament discussing the intention to set up a Rural Parliament and I understand that other events in 2013 (election and Commonwealth Games) mean that things are perhaps moving unnaturally fast. However, there are many existing active rural networks and a successful rural movement could be created from these. [SRP02]

2.4. What do you think the priority next steps should be?

Section Summary:

1. Priority next steps:

- a. Form a steering group
- b. Identify and articulate the wider purpose and mission of the Rural Parliament
- c. Identify and articulate policy issues
- d. Work with membership organisations to encourage involvement in the Rural Parliament

2. Name: should it be called the “Rural Parliament”?

- a. Majority: No, it should not be called a Rural Parliament
- b. Minority: Unsure about it being called a Rural Parliament
- c. Minority: Positive about it being called a Rural Parliament

2.4.1. Priority next steps

All interviewees were asked to identify two priorities for action between July 2012 and September 2013. The majority of interviewees stated the necessity to form a steering group as a matter of urgency, then to articulate the wider purpose of, and key policy issues for, the Rural Parliament. Interviewees also emphasised the importance of working with membership organisations to reach people in wider rural Scotland – both to communicate about the Rural Parliament, *and* to hear concerns, views and suggestions.

2.4.1.1. Form a steering group

For the majority of interviewees, **forming a steering group for the Rural Parliament is the priority**. There is not, at this stage, substantial concern that all aspects of this steering group must be absolutely decided now; rather, an **interim situation can be established** which would then be **formally re-visited at the inaugural event**:

We need an interim structure to take oversight of the development of this rural movement, not necessarily incorporated with Memo and Arts etc. If you fix all these aspects at the beginning, you'll be making mistakes cos you'll be guessing what the landscape is going to look like. [SRP07]

There's a need for getting a management group solidly in place that's got an agreed legitimacy, and that can therefore be left to plot the course to 2013, with a lightly-managed but clearly-focused approach, with evaluation systems in from the beginning etc. [SRP13]

You need a Steering Group meeting – how the first Group is formed in some ways doesn't matter as it will evolve. At the first event the Steering Group should state that it is not necessarily the Group carrying on with the process afterwards. [SRP11]

The steering group needs to be formed to keep momentum and prevent disengagement. [SRP20]

In terms of **who should make up the steering group**, responses reflected earlier feedback concerning ensuring **wide representation**:

You need to get the right person involved to lead the organisation of the September 2013 event – to get things going. It needs involvement of Scottish Government but needs a variety of people on the Steering Group. This person needs to be “enmeshed” in existing rural networks rather than a Scottish Government person – perhaps someone from DTAS or Scottish Community Alliance. Perhaps it could be a secondment. The Scottish Government event in May was too Scottish Government led/dominated. [SRP01]

The Secretariat should start to engage active, rural-based people, who are involved in existing networks, *onto* the Steering Group (such as representatives of Development Trusts, Housing Associations, Scottish Islands Federation etc.). They then need to start to spread the word through *their* networks and organisations. [SRP02]

A priority is consolidating the organising group and ensuring that it is not dominated by a clique of specific organisations. You need to improve its legitimacy and reduce its “*ad hoc*ness”. [SRP26]

As well as establishing a steering group, there is a need to **identify and articulate clear messages**, because then **motivation to be involved is likely to be higher** since people will be able to see where the Rural Parliament is going and why:

Establish a steering group that is visible, identify clearly what the Rural Parliament is, why it is needed, and how it will deliver (including funding), in order to get people on board and build credibility. The whole thing has come a bit “left field” – the mentality for most that attended the May event was that they’d heard a bit about it, but wanted to go along and see what it was all about. So, even those who attended were coming to this slightly cold. Therefore it’s key that we keep stoking the fire to “warm people up”. Most attendees are now waiting to hear what’s going to happen next, which is why these actions are the priority. [SRP16]

The steering group needs to get back in touch with those who attended the May event as soon as possible to keep them informed and engaged – we don’t want to lose that momentum. [SRP23]

We need to ensure we don’t lose momentum from the May meeting: get a steering group together and announce that it exists – raising the profile is important and along with this is raising aspirations of what *might* happen, seeking to engage the grassroots. [SRP21]

Another reason for a steering group being a priority is because September 2013 is only just over 12 months from the time of the interviews (July 2012) and even **organisationally**, there is **much to be done ahead of the inaugural event**:

Scottish Government should set up the Steering Group soon as September 2013 is not long away. A written invitation list should be produced by this Group and again this needs to be done quickly. [SRP08]

A priority is getting capacity in place to deliver the organisational aspects, the developmental and administrative tasks. These are essential because the Rural Parliament is a job to be done; it's not just an idea. [SRP13]

In addition to planning for the September 2013 event, interviewees stated that other essential elements **to be addressed by a steering group** are **governance, decision-making and funding** for this first 12 months:

Get the governance structure sorted, and work out who is going to take decisions. Get the administrative side of things sorted. [SRP06]

Agreeing the key questions that have not yet been answered around representativeness, decision-making and methods of influence. The Board or Steering Group perhaps needs to come up with clear positions on these questions which are then subject to ratification at the first Rural Parliament in 2013. Some thought definitely needs to be given to these questions beforehand. [SRP26]

Securing funding and setting up the secretariat – funding will be needed for the event and for the continuing process in between. [SRP26]

The Scottish Government should say what the budget is for the event. It then needs to ask who wants it or approach a Local Authority and ask them to host it – hosting the first Rural Parliament will be an honour. The Steering Group then needs to get together, including the local organiser and advisers, to set the date, themes etc. [SRP18]

2.4.2.2. Identify and articulate the wider purpose and mission of the Rural Parliament

Interviewees feel that **the purpose and mission of the Rural Parliament need to be clarified**, as *a priority*, so that any policy messages coming out of the Rural Parliament can be seen in this broader context of what the Rural Parliament is seeking to achieve:

Decide what it is! Then what it is seeking to achieve, who should be invited, when and where it will take place, how often it will take place. What it *is* needs to be decided soon then people can get their minds around it – this needs careful thought however. It's also critical to decide and be clear about how it relates to Scottish debate more generally. [SRP22]

The Secretariat needs to start to do work to clarify the intention of the Rural Parliament and should begin to think about responding to appropriate consultations to start to get people engaged. [SRP02]

Establish a set of principles, and build some ownership of these through having a vote on them at the Rural Parliament, to give them added legitimacy to outside players. These principles could include: don't duplicate; be collaborative; be international; be rooted in community; be sustainable; and be non-party-political. [SRP05]

2.4.2.3. Identify policy issues

Once a steering group has been established, and the purpose and mission have been articulated, a further parallel process which is seen as a priority is: **identifying policy issues** that the Rural Parliament will seek to address through debate.

Identifying policy issues is **key to building towards the inaugural Rural Parliament event**:

Once you've identified a "coalition of the willing", then start working on policy issues that will be the meat of the first Rural Parliament event, so, things that will become policy areas to be discussed or motions to be voted on. This will mean that, as an outcome of the September 2013 event, we will have a voted mandate for a motion that argues, for example, for 3 changes to housing policy. [SRP09]

The theme needs to be decided for the first Rural Parliament – keep it simple – it might be better if first one is about 'a Rural Parliament' rather than topic-based. Within that, there might be important issues, but it'll be important to see what is of interest to attendees. [SRP01]

In deciding these policy issues, it will also be necessary for the steering group or Board to be **clear on what types of policy issues might need to be covered**, particularly where some of them might be more 'fuzzy':

There's a need for more clarity on how to define rural and how small towns fit into this (or not). Can small towns be discussed at the Rural Parliament? What issues qualify for discussion and which don't as a result of definitions? Small towns are closely inter-related with their hinterlands and vice versa but they have both rural and urban characteristics. For example, would a discussion on the state of high streets in Scotland's small towns not be permitted if they are not defined as rural (because they have more than 3,000 population)? It's important to have the definition but also we need to have some flexibility to allow issues which affect rural areas to be discussed at the Rural Parliament. [SRP10]

In addition to identifying policy areas, it is a priority, even in its early days, for the Rural Parliament to **demonstrate how effective it is**. To do this, it will need to **select 'quick wins'**:

It *must* demonstrate what difference a Rural Parliament will make. Identify, for the first Rural Parliament, how it will make a difference, using say, two case studies. "These things would have happened quicker with a Rural Parliament" or "These things wouldn't have happened without a Rural Parliament". These are the two key tests of any organisation. [SRP05]

Identify broad parameters of what the initial issues will be and how they will be discussed and taken forward. Then have a first sitting, and identify how far these are the right ones. Need some "quick results"- where people will be able to see action, otherwise it will be seen as "just another meeting circle". [SRP15]

Another key element, in terms of delivering 'quick wins', is demonstrating where the Rural Parliament's policy work might fit with **the wider policy process**. For example:

We need to go to Scottish Government and identify how the Rural Parliament will work alongside the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill... because there's no mention of the Rural Parliament in the consultation document. [SRP21]

2.4.2.4. Work with membership organisations to encourage involvement in the Rural Parliament

When examining processes to enhance decision-making in the Rural Parliament (see Section 2.3), interviewees emphasised the importance of working through membership organisations to reach out to rural communities. This same theme re-emerges here, when identifying priority next steps for the Rural Parliament. So, out of the many things that could be done in the next 12 months, half the interviewees feel that **reaching out is a priority**.

Specifically, interviewees state that the steering group needs to take decisions, and put into operation, **the process of working with membership organisations over the next 12-13 months** ahead of the inaugural national Rural Parliament event, in order to: reach grass-roots; establish legitimacy for the Rural Parliament; and identify what is needed at local level.

Firstly then, working through membership organisations is necessary in order **to reach the 'grass-roots'**:

Without investing in intermediary groups to animate their membership, I don't see any way you can do the Rural Parliament. Everyone is busily pursuing their own work programmes and agendas, and the Rural Parliament is at best peripheral. [SRP07]

In the first 6 months, you need to support the groups who have contact with voluntary sector groups to do some in-depth audience-building; not just drumming up numbers, but answering all these basic questions about what a Rural Parliament is about. Otherwise they won't get it and won't want to be part of it. [SRP09]

Secondly, in terms of **establishing the legitimacy of a Rural Parliament**, interviewees stated that **there is still some work to be done out in rural communities in Scotland** – rather than assuming that all rural communities will immediately want this national movement:

There needs to be a wider consultation about whether communities would *like* a Rural Parliament, at local level. Do they want a 'one stop' for rural issues? What took place at the end of May was a first step, but involved a selected group: this discussion needs to be undertaken in rural areas and with those in rural communities themselves. [SRP20]

You need to produce outputs on the basis of the May event, and establish a mandate for a Rural Parliament amongst rural communities. [SRP14]

Not a lot of people in rural Scotland are aware of the Rural Parliament. It needs to engage individuals themselves, for example by asking them to vote on whether they feel a Rural Parliament is necessary... Need to encourage the masses to be involved. Need to go beyond the launch event to engage the wider rural population. [SRP12]

The key is to place priority on this communications strategy and increase understanding and involvement from the ground level. Create a brand and work on getting that recognised. This needs to be done from *now*, not from 3-4 months before September 2013. The event then becomes the culmination of that long process of animation. [SRP04]

Thirdly, in terms of establishing legitimacy, a priority is the need **to get a better understanding of what is happening, and what is needed, at local level** – across rural Scotland – and **what the Rural Parliament could then offer**:

A decent piece of research is needed with people on the ground about what they think. I would be more reassured if there was a report that engaged with 100 people in rural Scotland, to be able to say that rural people have reacted positively and it's not just a Scottish Government initiative. [SRP23]

Map, define, ask: Someone needs to establish a definition of what constitutes a community trust or village organisation... Once these are identified, they then need to be asked whether they consider themselves a movement, and whether they want an organisation to articulate their views. I anticipate they will say yes, and that overcoming geographic isolation to allow interaction might be an important factor. They would have to see the value, and you can't force this on people. [SRP17]

We need to know what the picture looks like of rural community movements in Scotland, and knowing this will help determine how it can go forward. The agenda for the Rural Parliament will then emerge. [SRP03]

They need to stimulate local and regional debate. If the event is a celebration, a real buzz could be created around, say, getting people to apply for 4 performing slots or 4 speaking slots on selected subjects. There is lots of despondency around at the moment and the Rural Parliament could play a really important role in stimulating and re-inspiring people. [SRP22]

2.4.2.Name: should it be called the “Rural Parliament”?

This question was asked within the part of the interview that focused on priorities for action. The **majority of interviewees state that they do not wish it to be called a Rural Parliament**, for a range of reasons. A small minority are either happy with the name 'Rural Parliament' or remain unsure.

2.4.2.1. No, it should not be called a Rural Parliament

Firstly, for many interviewees, **the term ‘Rural Parliament’ is misleading in a broad, indefinable sense**:

Rural Parliament has got a strange connotation to it; it gives it a connotation that it doesn't need at the moment. [SRP07]

“Technically” it's a good term, “emotionally” it's not. [SRP16]

Using Rural Parliament means that every time it is used you have got to get around people's immediate reaction – almost making an apology each time the term is used. [SRP26]

I don't like the 'Parliament' component of the name – it "ties you too much to government", [SRP15]

Secondly, the term 'Rural Parliament' is **misleading due to very specific, concrete reasons**:

"Parliament" suggest some sort of representative democracy which is not really what we're talking about here. [SRP09]

Rural Parliament gives the impression of decision-making powers, but it doesn't have these. [SRP20]

Referring to this as a Parliament is a "misnomer" as there is no local democratic structure – the term suggests something that this is not. It isn't, and shouldn't be, a parallel Parliament. [SRP22]

From the name Rural Parliament, people can assume it's made up of politicians or aspiring politicians, and has some law-making power. [SRP03]

A Parliament means that decisions will be taken but the Rural Parliament is more of an influencing type organisation. [SRP02]

I have real concerns about the name; it implies that it will be electing people and having legislation. If you call it a Rural Parliament you can't manage expectations, and the Rural Parliament will be a hostage to fortune from the beginning. [SRP05]

On-the-ground work is going to be very important in engaging rural communities: I would caution against anything that makes it look like you should stand for election - a lot of people would be put off. [SRP23]

Alternative suggestions, all with reservations, were proposed by interviewees:

A Rural General Assembly might be a good name; but then people might think it's related to the Church of Scotland's General Assembly, so that might confuse things. A Congress... that's more akin, the TUC is a closer model to what the Rural Parliament is trying to achieve. [SRP09]

Whilst acknowledging the "baggage" of the term and what has gone before, 'Rural Forum' sounds like a good alternative. [SRP16]

Parliament is the wrong word. A Rural Assembly would be a better term. [SRP20]

If people don't want it to be called a Rural Parliament, then Scottish Rural Assembly would be good, because that is still a body that can make decisions, but without parliamentary connotations. [SRP03]

It should be called the "Scottish Rural Communities Forum". The European examples all have villages involved – these are not as important in Scotland as elsewhere but here communities are more important and this would be reflected in the name. [SRP02]

You need a term which identifies what we are but also what we're not. Or, something similar to Sweden's 'All Sweden shall live!' movement. [SRP14]

It should not be called a Rural Parliament as it is not a Parliament. It will not be making decisions and therefore it is not a Parliament and it would be silly to call it that. An Assembly is suitably anodyne. A gathering sounds too much like a social event. A congress sounds too much like the communist party. The problem is that all of the possible terms are value-laden. [SRP24]

It doesn't cause difficulties elsewhere in Europe, but here as soon as you say 'Parliament' you think of parties, voting and politics, which it's absolutely not. I'd suggest "Gathering". [SRP21]

Scottish and Rural should definitely be in the name. You could use a Gaelic word(s) but again this could be seen to be limiting. [SRP26]

Congress or Gathering would be suitable alternatives. Or Tryst – a Scottish word for meeting. [SRP18]

Tryst – a Scottish word with agricultural/rural connotations – means a get-together. [SRP26]

In contrast, some interviewees concluded that **of more significance is what the Rural Parliament does rather than what it is called:**

"Gathering" or "Forum" might be better – but the real question is about what the Rural Parliament will do rather than its name. [SRP22]

Once it's established, the name's importance will recede as it gains its own reputation etc. [SRP13]

Rural Parliament is only acceptable as a name if it is seen to deliver. It comes with baggage. There is a danger that it will be just one more expensive talking shop. [SRP19]

2.4.2.2. Unsure about it being called a Rural Parliament

A small minority are unsure about the term 'Rural Parliament', because they feel **it causes confusion** as to how it is organised and run, and **how it relates to the national Parliament** in Holyrood:

To be called a Parliament the Rural Parliament needs to have a strong democracy within it. It should be run by consensus or by election if necessary. Therefore technically the Rural Parliament *is* a Parliament but using the word Parliament does lead to confusion with the national Scottish Parliament. [SRP11]

A small number of interviewees suggest there is a need to **ask people in rural communities** what they feel it should be called, before a decision is made:

Parliament conveys the wrong idea. “Rural Voice” sounds less hierarchical. However ‘Rural Parliament’ needs to be tested as we don’t know what those in rural areas think. [SRP23]

Finally, if the name ‘Rural Parliament’ **causes confusion**, then it probably should not be used:

I like the name Rural Parliament but I don’t see it as a Parliament in the true sense of the word. It can be used as long as people know what it is and what it does. If it’s *called* a Rural Parliament it is then hard for people to understand that it is *not* a Parliament. [SRP18]

2.4.2.3. Positive about it being called a Rural Parliament

A small minority of interviewees feel that the name ‘Rural Parliament’ **describes exactly the purpose and functioning of the national rural representation**:

A Scottish Rural Parliament or A Rural Parliament for Scotland is absolutely the correct name. This says it all. [SRP08]

Scottish Rural Parliament is better than A Rural Parliament for Scotland as the latter sounds like someone is giving it to us. Scottish Rural Parliament is just what it says. [SRP01]

Parliament really means a gathering and that is exactly what the Rural Parliament will be – where people come to speak, talk and make decisions and that is how the event should be publicised. Using the term means that it will be understood globally and that’s useful. [SRP11]

There is also the awareness that the term ‘**Rural Parliament**’ **is used in other European countries** and so will allow for **easier cross-identification**:

Using ‘Scottish Rural Parliament’ means that Scotland fits within the other European models. [SRP11]

In a European context, they’ve stuck to Rural Parliament because it gives it some “umph”; it places it on a slightly more important level than “gathering”. [SRP06]

The only other name that I’ve considered is Gathering but overall I feel that Rural Parliament is best. It’s used across Europe and there’s no reason why it shouldn’t also be used in Scotland. [SRP10]

2.5. Where do you think funding should come from for Scotland's Rural Parliament?

Section Summary:

1. **Pump-priming phase up to September 2013:**
 - a. Primarily Scottish Government funding
2. **After September 2013:**
 - a. Scottish Government funding plus other sources
3. **Identifying funding from other (non-Governmental) sources**
4. **Funding concerns:**
 - a. Funding for the Rural Parliament will divert much-needed funds from elsewhere
 - b. Money will buy influence in the Rural Parliament

2.5.1. There is a pump-priming phase, during which funding is needed primarily from Scottish Government

Almost half of the interviewees defined the **next 13 months** (August 2012-September 2013) as the interim, 'pump-priming' phase, with many indicating that **Scottish Government should be providing most, if not all, of the funding during this period.**

One part of the reasoning for this is that the **impetus for establishing a Rural Parliament has come from Scottish Government**, and therefore there is some onus on the Government to fund these first steps:

It has to be reasonable Scottish Government funding, at least initially. The concept of having one didn't come out of a rural movement – if that had been the case there could have been contact made with, say, the Carnegie UK Trust to gather funding and then to go to Scottish Government. But this was a Scottish Government commitment so it's different. [SRP01]

Initially, up to 2013, in this start-up phase, funding has to come from Scottish Government. They have shown willing, plus they have a vested interest in it, given that it's a Manifesto commitment. [SRP13]

I have some concerns after the Rural Gathering which started off as 2 days and then became 1 due to concerns about the cost of the event, press attention on the Scottish Government budget being spent on a ceilidh, entertainment etc. That shouldn't happen

again – a key part of this is socialising. People need to be brave about that part of it – a key question is whether someone is prepared to take that decision or not. [SRP18]

Further, it is felt that such funding will give **stability** and **allow the focus to be on event-preparation and outreach**, rather than securing funding:

We need to rely on Government till then, in helping to support a secretariat, and basic functions, next steps. The funding has to come from Government. [SRP09]

Funding should start off at least from the Scottish Government. In the general scheme of things this does not represent a lot of money. It needs proper Scottish Government coordination and backing... It will be no good if it starts off with piecemeal backing and coordination as it will never go anywhere. [SRP04]

It's important that funding is in place to pay for the critical infrastructure that is required from the start. [SRP04]

There is also the view that the **'pump-priming' phase should last *beyond* the first Rural Parliament**:

I assume that Scottish Government would be kick-starting the Rural Parliament financially. I would anticipate a 3-year package of support from the Scottish Government which would then taper off. Staffing will cost money, and we don't want them to have to spend 75% of their time chasing money. [SRP14]

However, there is also a view that such funding, even in the pump-priming phase, **should not come exclusively from Scottish Government**:

I'm not personally convinced that *only* Scottish Government funding is the best idea, in terms of independence and enhancing future capacity. I think it's much more healthy if we also did some searching for outside funding. There could also be criticism of Scottish Government for funding something so expensive when so many areas are needing funds. [SRP06]

The Scottish Government has to be in there as they are pushing this – Richard Lochhead clearly wants this. But the funding should not come from them exclusively as it may look like another arm's length Government organisation. [SRP26]

Interviewees hope that such **funding would be fairly 'flexible'** since the exact 'shape' of the next 13 months cannot be precisely determined in August 2012:

The funding needs to come from Government for this pump-priming phase; and it needs to be in "loose cash", not overly-tied to this or that specific outcome. [SRP07]

It has to be the Scottish Government as they have made the commitment, at least initially, but it has to come with no strings attached. [SRP10]

2.5.2. Funding after September 2013

There is a spectrum of views from over half the interviewees, with some stating that funding should come primarily from Scottish Government, to those who advocate multiple sources.

Firstly, there is **the argument that core funding must come from Scottish Government**, since **core funding supports activities which may not necessarily be attractive to other funders**. Funding can then be sought for other Rural Parliament-related activities:

The core or bulk of funding needs to come from Scottish Government. Otherwise we will find it difficult to secure core funding from other sources. This is because, if it's to be a genuinely independent voice for rural communities, it is very difficult then to guarantee outcomes – the funder looks for these outcomes, so it can be difficult to square the circle, particularly if things emerge in ways the funder doesn't want. So, the Rural Parliament will need Scottish Government Support for its core activities, not least to give it stability going forward. [SRP03]

I don't believe that it's possible for the Rural Parliament to sustain itself financially. Funding needs to be secure otherwise the Rural Parliament will be *ad hoc* and momentum will be lost. [SRP04]

With this Scottish Government funding, however, there needs to be **clarity about what such funding will achieve**, particularly in these straitened times:

Funding has to come from central government. If this is the case, we need to be clear about what the outcomes will be if money is spent on this, rather than on rural Primary Schools, for example. [SRP25]

Interviewees stated that **funding from other, non-Governmental sources will enhance the independence of the Rural Parliament**:

The function of the Rural Parliament is to strengthen the Scottish Government significantly in its operation therefore it should be heavily Scottish Government supported. However it must also retain some element of independence. [SRP02]

I draw parallels with my own funding issues: 50% of funding comes from members, which means that the Scottish Government can't close us down, and it also maintains our independence. Being 100% Scottish Government funded means that they can be closed down: therefore we need a long-term approach to grant aid funding (which would require a culture change) or seek funding from other sources, including members, trust funds, private funding. [SRP17]

Some funding needs to come from Scottish Government but not all. It needs to be less than 50% funding from Scottish Government, with the challenge then to get funding from the EU or from other others. If you don't have this core of funding, you'll constantly be looking for funds. And having existing funds means it's possible then to lever-in funds. [SRP05]

It has to be a "mixed bag" of funding: if it all comes from Scottish Government it's going to be very difficult to convince people it's anything more than a Scottish Government initiative. It would appear too top down. This mixed bag would also demonstrate buy-in from multiple actors including trusts and foundations. [SRP23]

2.5.3. Identifying funding from other (non-Governmental) sources for the Rural Parliament

Over two-third of interviewees emphasised the **need to identify this range of funding sources**. There are concerns, and ideas, about **how you persuade others to put funds into the Rural Parliament**:

I'm not sure how you could make the Rural Parliament financially self-sustaining, they're not good financial propositions: how do you persuade people to part with money (particularly private enterprises) in order to keep a democratic process alive? [SRP16]

The Rural Parliament's mission will determine how much it attracts investors. [SRP03]

The Rural Parliament could be 'sold' as a mechanism by which it generates growth and wealth, and generates entrepreneurship in rural communities. [SRP05]

Plus interviewees know well that there are **difficulties** in this current climate **in securing funds**:

Private and third sector funding should be considered but it is unlikely to be forthcoming in the current climate. [SRP08]

They also recognise that there are **constraints in the community sector organisations themselves**:

If participants from organisations could pay their own travel costs that would be a help but this is not possible for community groups. [SRP08]

There is not enough positive attitude out there for the Rural Parliament for organisations to provide funding and (voluntary) resources. Rural people are already volunteering lots and often funding things themselves. It was noticeable at the 29 May event that people weren't stepping forward to volunteer to organise or run the event. [SRP01]

There may be one or two third sector organisations that would be able to support it but it's questionable as to how far smaller existing networks would be able to contribute and in turn how much impact they would have on it and what they would get out of it. [SRP24]

Despite these concerns and reservations, interviewees identified **possible funding routes and sources**:

Funding could also be drawn from philanthropic trusts, which would also fund research into issues (to support the articulation of issues). Funding from private sector could be sought: those that operate in rural (or coastal) areas, for example the oil industry. [SRP20]

It may be possible to seek private sector funding, for example, wind farm developers would be an obvious target as a growing sector. [SRP22]

I'd suggest talking to the Lottery on an ongoing basis – the Lottery gets a significant amount of funding from rural Scotland per head of population. Other organisations to approach for funding include Carnegie, Plunkett, Tudor Trust and Rowntree – all organisations which

have involvement with groups who are disadvantaged or less involved or rural groups specifically. [SRP02]

In terms of funding we should talk to charitable trusts and organisations with an interest in civil society, like Carnegie and maybe others, and organisations involved in popular democracy, grassroots voices, alternative democratic structures. [SRP26]

Interviewees also identified the existing **National Rural Network**, as well as **the next SRDP**, as a potential source of funds:

There ought to be some equivalent built into the next SRPD. It's probably a fundamental requirement from 2014 onwards; a statutory obligation. If it is, then some of the costs should be funded through that. [SRP09]

Funding could also come through the National Rural Network post 2014; there are obvious commonalities between a Rural Parliament and a National Rural Network. [SRP13]

There must *surely* be some discussions around how the new round of CAP and LEADER money will contribute to this as part of reform discussions. A big wedge should go to the Rural Parliament from this money. [SRP21]

Interviewees identified the possibility of **seeking sponsorship for the event** as distinct from the wider preparation or follow-up activities of the Rural Parliament:

If a Rural Parliament event venue is owned by a Council, then they may give reduced rates on the basis that you are bringing 300 people to, say Inverness, for 3 days. Commercial sponsorship is also an option. [SRP09]

It might also be possible to get some private sector sponsorship (such as Barclays) if it's a big event with publicity potential. [SRP01]

The Private sector (such as the RBS Community Wing) could provide one-off sponsorship for national or regional events, but they're unlikely to provide ongoing funding. [SRP02]

You could seek private or corporate sponsorship for a two-day event, where there is celebration and showcasing. The outcomes of the event aren't guaranteed, but it's impressive that so many rural communities are gathered together. This may be attractive for some funders. [SRP03]

The private sector could be asked to sponsor something in the event (such as whisky, ceilidh or dinner) but not necessarily the whole thing. Thinking in terms of purely commercial interest, the rural population base isn't large so some companies will not be interested in being associated with such an event but others might, like food companies, whisky companies. [SRP26]

Sponsorship and other sources of funding should also be sought **to help support those who could not otherwise take part in the Rural Parliament**:

People should not be excluded because they cannot afford to pay for themselves to attend. Some support is likely to be necessary to enable grassroots representatives to attend. People should have the opportunity to put forward the case for needing support but others will need to be able to make some contribution to their attendance (e.g. £100). [SRP11]

There must be funding available to ensure that people can get to and from the Rural Parliament event – their transport and accommodation must be covered. This is necessary to ensure that the Rural Parliament is inclusive and fair to all. The equality issue is significant – Scottish Government officials get paid to attend meetings and get their travel paid – community reps are lucky if they get their travel paid. [SRP02]

There's no reason for representatives of larger organisations not to pay to attend. [SRP23]

If the Rural Parliament is run on a shoestring then it will be dominated by those who can afford to travel and attend. And these will be the pre-existing powerful groups. If there is a budget to enable others to attend then it will be less likely to be dominated by powerful existing organisations. [SRP24]

People must not be out of pocket by engaging in the Rural Parliament. We need to do this right, from the start, so that there are no barriers for anyone to participate. [SRP04]

2.5.4.Funding concerns

There are two major concerns in relation to funding for the Scottish Parliament: (i) that such funding diverts Scottish Government funds from other much-needed pots; and (ii) that money will buy influence in the Rural Parliament.

Some interviewees are concerned that **money for the Rural Parliament will come from other sources currently used by voluntary groups and other rural sectors:**

I don't want to see money top-sliced from existing pots from the voluntary sector, when competition between voluntary organisations themselves is so fierce. [SRP20]

I don't want to see money diverted from SRDP funds. [SRP12]

The second issue is a **fear that organisations may seek to, or actually, gain influence by putting in funds to the Rural Parliament:**

If the Rural Parliament was sustainable this would make it more independent but I'm not sure how this could actually be achieved without some form of private sector sponsorship and thus an expectation of feeding into the agenda, etc. [SRP10]

If there are some ethically motivated social enterprises or private sector enterprises in Scotland who could contribute, that would be good, perhaps funding a ceilidh or a dinner. But it should not become "The RBS Scottish Rural Assembly". [SRP24]

I would feel uncomfortable if agro-chemical companies were involved or, for example, Scottish and Southern, as these will be keen to push a particular agenda. [SRP26]

Private finances are possible, however there is a risk of not appearing independent. The funding would need to come from funds which were specifically for the betterment of rural Scotland, which the Rural Parliament could decide how to use. [SRP15]

Therefore **care needs to be taken:**

If organisations put in money this should not automatically guarantee them extra influence. [SRP11]

We need to be very careful that people who put in funds don't feel entitled to say "This is my money so you need to do things my way"; it *has* to be "lost" money. [SRP05]

Any organisation has to be aware of importance of being *very, very wary* of greenwashing when taking private funds. Private sector organisations have to genuinely agree with values of the organisation. Principles have to be involved around power. [SRP17]

Private sector funding might come from CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) streams; however this would risk giving away perceived independence if the event were to be branded; therefore having more than one private sector funder would help address this. [SRP23]

Section 3: Key pointers from review of European Rural Parliaments

Introduction

In the previous section, we put forward the findings from the interviews with 26 stakeholders in Scotland. We now explore the findings for similar themes which were explored through interviews with stakeholders in other European Rural Parliaments. This will help us, in Section 4, to see the extent to which comments, concerns and ideas from stakeholders in Scotland reflect those in other European Rural Parliaments.

In January 2012, SAC's Rural Policy Centre published its report which examined Rural Parliaments in six other European countries, through desk research and through phone interviews⁹. This report was produced to inform the Rural Parliament group meeting in February 2012.

The following elements are distilled from that report, **focusing specifically on the “next steps” aspects**, that is, moving from early stages through to meetings of the Rural Parliaments. This is particularly useful since these Rural Parliaments have been established for many years, so can give some guidance on particular developmental aspects which can be borne in mind in Scotland.

Making and keeping the Rural Parliament as representative as possible

When discussing the representativeness of the Rural Parliament, European interviewees stressed that it is important to remain clear about the purpose of the Rural Parliament, to ensure that a clear focus is maintained when there are competing rural voices. It is largely accepted that the Rural Parliament cannot be fully representative, and that those involved are most likely to be engaged in other forms of social action (i.e. the Rural Parliament is not meant to encompass all action either). Whilst being “open to all” (that is, to all people living in rural areas), some deliberate targeting does take place, to get people from specific geographical locations, organisations, and tiers of government and/or organisations. This is particularly the case in Finland and the Netherlands, whose Rural Parliaments are starting to see more professional, paid people taking part rather than individuals from villages or volunteers from groups. So, specific targeting at village, municipality and regional levels is taking place to guard against the “professionalisation” of the Rural Parliaments. Estonia has taken a much more structured approach since the beginning, with county-level organisations being allocated a certain number of places each, which have to be filled in a specified, balanced way. Whatever the approach, the consensus is that it is critical to involve people from as many levels as possible in Rural Parliament preparation, from as early a stage as possible.

⁹ To download this report, visit:

<http://www.sac.ac.uk/ruralpolicycentre/pubs/thrivingcommunitiespublications/ruralparliaments/>

Influencing policy: making direct links

There was consensus across the European interviews that the Rural Parliament is critical in making *direct* links between people and politicians. To do this most effectively, involving politicians in the Rural Parliament is critical for making those links into specific areas of policy, as well as following up with politicians on key issues raised at the Rural Parliament. Interviewees argued that, without the Rural Parliament, they would not have those direct links, which are targeted at both national *and* regional/local authority policy levels. They are also focused on specific issues and produce specific recommendations, which are felt to make the Rural Parliament more effective than simply having general rural discussions. In addition, between Rural Parliament events, those involved make sure that they respond to Government Consultations, to maintain influence and visibility.

Influencing policy: producing outputs from the Rural Parliament events

As well as being influential through the involvement of politicians at and after the Rural Parliament event itself, European interviewees emphasised the importance of producing written outputs which can then be taken forward. In doing this, the Rural Parliament does not seek to present one single “rural voice”, but they do produce single documents that distil from debates taking place at the Rural Parliament and which are often voted on at the Rural Parliament. Both the plenary and the small groups produce statements and recommendations for politicians, and resolutions are taken forward with the national Parliament. In some instances, the task of distilling the key points for the summaries or statements is undertaken by a small subgroup; and in many countries, a small booklet is produced after the event. Specifically in Estonia, they task themselves with producing three types of statements from their Rural Parliament: (i) What can we do? (ii) What can be done in cooperation with local authorities? (iii) What does the central Government or Parliament need to do? They also have a voting system to select their priorities to take to Government.

Organisation of the Rural Parliament event

Organisation of the Rural Parliaments is typically by a range of stakeholders rather than a single stakeholder. Processes and staffing are different in each country; for example, in Sweden, an Executive Committee (10 people) as well as a project group (a further 10 people) are involved in preparations, with the Executive Committee deciding on themes. In the Dutch Rural Parliament, there is an Advisory Committee (3 people) and a Working Group (3 people), with the Working Group managing the event and deciding on themes. In Finland, the division of tasks tends to be quite informal, and involves a collaborative effort between the Village Action Movement and regional stakeholders where the event is taking place. In Hungary, there are no permanent Rural Parliament staff; instead, member organisations work together to prepare the event.

Format of the Rural Parliament event

The Rural Parliaments typically last two days, with one overnight stay, the exception being the Dutch Rural Parliament which lasts one day. Although there are focused themes, there can also be diverse topics, and a range of activities, including: plenary sessions (where politicians may also make presentations); smaller seminars and workshops; field visits (removed from Finnish Rural Parliament because of low participation levels); cultural activities; informal networking opportunities; and open space sessions. The workshops tend to be “hosted” by people with expertise in a

particular theme e.g. housing. In some Rural Parliaments, at lunchtime, 5-7-minute appointments can be made with politicians for people to speak directly to them.

Levels and types of government involvement in, and support of, the Rural Parliament

Across all Rural Parliaments, Government involvement and commitment is important, with Government being central to the setting-up of Rural Parliaments in Sweden and Estonia. The key message from the European interviews is that such support must be given in partnership with others, rather than the Rural Parliament being led by Government. As the Rural Parliaments continue, the levels of national and regional government involvement vary, as does the level of involvement by non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Finance

Across all Rural Parliaments, finance is drawn from multiple sources – public, private (banks and businesses), NGOs, third sector bodies, as well as LEADER, and in the case of Slovakia, participant fees. All European interviewees state that negotiating and maintaining funding is challenging, particularly to maintain neutrality whilst accepting funding from organisations with particular interests. The costs for Rural Parliament events vary considerably from country to country. For Sweden, at the top end of the scale, the average cost is EUR 700,000 (£555,000); funding comes from the organisation itself (All Sweden Shall Live), banks, development agencies, and government. Next, the Dutch Rural Parliament's 2011 cost was EUR 160,000 (£127,000); half the funding comes from a bank and half from the Ministry of Agriculture. In Estonia, the Rural Parliament cost is EUR65,000 (£51,500); funding sources include European Commission, European Parliament, Ministry of Agriculture, Charities, local governments, county associations, and local entrepreneurs (where the Rural Parliament takes place); local government also plays a role in hosting receptions etc. Slovakia's Rural Parliament cost is in the region of EUR20,000-30,000 (£15,866-£23,800) plus volunteer input; sources of funding include: grants, subsidies, project funding, sponsorship, donations, participant fees, and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Finally, in Finland, the Swedish Village Service contributes EUR3000 (£2,355), but there is a shortfall, made up by donations, private and public money at local level, and tourism income; a newsletter is financed by advertising.

In the following Section, we bring together the findings from stakeholders in Scotland, and consider how they reflect those from the Rural Parliaments in Europe.

Section 4: Next steps for a Rural Parliament in Scotland

Introduction

This report has the aim of focusing on **next steps and priority actions for a Rural Parliament in Scotland**. The 26 stakeholder interviews give some clear messages, and some specific questions to be considered. Given that these views will form the basis of discussions at the August 21st meeting, it is useful to pause briefly and examine the extent to which the views expressed in the telephone interviews resonate with those from the May 29th event (workshops and post-event online survey) and with the European Rural Parliament interviews. On the basis of this reflection, this section then concludes with a list of **next steps** for discussion at the next Rural Parliament meeting on 21st August 2012.

Reflections on findings from the 26 stakeholder interviews, in the light of 'next steps' findings from the May 29th event and the European Rural Parliament research

Firstly, there is an **overall consistency of 'next steps' findings between the May 29th event workshops and those from the stakeholder interviews**. Event participants, as well as stakeholder interviewees, identified the need for a core group to be formed, and an independent secretariat, and the need to tie in to - and work through and with - existing structures and networks. The **May 29th workshop report** also identified the need for **local-level meetings and influence**, as well as this taking place at national level. This also comes through in the interview data, with sub-meetings being recommended, as well as the need for thought to be given as to how to make the Rural Parliament relevant and influential at multiple levels. Telephone interviewees stated **the need to explore the mandate for a Rural Parliament at local community level**, so this is clearly something that needs to be undertaken, based on the evidence from these two sources.

Secondly, there is **consistency between the findings from the post-event online survey of May 29th participants, and the 26 stakeholder interviews**. Both sets of respondents argued that representation must include grass-roots voices across Scotland, and that it should include the private sector (this latter point being picked up particularly strongly in the stakeholder interviews). A new structure or 'space' is advocated, adding to what already exists, with clarity of purpose; plus the need to establish and strengthen a rural movement as well as deliver a rural event: all of these themes occur in the online survey and phone interviews. The types of reservations over the name 'Rural Parliament' are also consistent across both.

Thirdly, there is **consistency between stakeholder interviewee views expressed in Scotland, and lessons and guidance being advocated by European Rural Parliament representatives**. The need for the Rural Parliament to be deliberately as representative as possible, to make direct policy links and produce policy outputs are all voiced both in the telephone interviews and in the

European context. Interviewees' views that the event itself should be every two years, focused on themes and producing outputs, are again consistent with European counterparts. Mixed sources of finance are also advocated in both Scottish and European Rural Parliament settings. Given that a Rural Parliament in Scotland has not yet been formed, processes around the organisation of events, and levels and types of Government involvement, have yet to be established and worked through. Multi-stakeholder involvement, including Government, would seem, nonetheless, to be coming through from the 26 stakeholder interviews, and is thus consistent with European Rural Parliament processes.

Next steps: for discussion at the August 21st 2012 Rural Parliament workshop

1. There is **broad agreement for a national rural representation**. However, **many questions and concerns exist** and these need to be **addressed** in these early stages, particularly at local level where the mandate for a Rural Parliament has not yet been established.
2. An **alternative name** needs to be decided upon, given the majority view that 'Rural Parliament' is not suitable.
3. The **wider purpose and mission** needs to be identified and articulated.
4. A **neutral space** needs to be created, taking full account of existing organisations and networks, whilst creating a **new space for coherent dialogue, debate and policy influence**.
5. An **independent, interim secretariat and board** need to be established, to serve until a more formalised and ratified arrangement can be put in place at the inaugural Rural Parliament in 2013.
6. **Preparation should begin for the September 2013 event**, to be hosted in a rural area. This is not only preparation of **logistics**, but also in terms of **policy themes** and preparatory work on **identifying and articulating key issues and associated outputs**.
7. A **process of mobilisation and animation** is required to broaden participation, both from institutions and at local level. Work should begin with membership organisations, to establish **two-way communication**, so that ideas and concerns can be heard, as well as key messages and updates communicated.
8. **Influential links and relationships with Government need to be established and nurtured**, at high levels in Government.
9. **Funding sources** need to be identified and/or confirmed, for the Rural Parliament event itself, and for the wider influencing role of the national rural representation.

Appendix 1: Participants of the February 2012 meeting

The following people took part in the first meeting to discuss the Rural Parliament, in February 2012:

Name	Affiliation
Jamie Adam	Community Energy Scotland
Jane Atterton	SAC's Rural Policy Centre
Rob Gowans	Scottish Youth Parliament
Ewan Green	COSLA
Vanessa Halhead	Rural Parliament Adviser
Angela Hallam	Scottish Government
Angus Hardie	Scottish Community Alliance
Jon Hollingdale	Community Woodlands Association
John Hutchison	Community Land Scotland
Graham Kay	Scottish Government
Norman MacAskill	SCVO
Billy McKenzie	Scottish Government
Alasdair Mckinlay	Scottish Government
Julian Pace	Scottish Enterprise
Alistair Prior	Scottish Government
Pip Tabor	Southern Uplands Partnership
Sarah Skerratt	SAC: Rural Society Research & Rural Policy Centre
Jennifer Wallace	Carnegie UK Trust
Alex Walker	Development Trusts Association Scotland
Scott Walker	NFUS
Vincent Waters	Association of Scottish Community Councils
John Watt	ex-Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Mike Woolvin	SAC's Rural Policy Centre

Appendix 2: Working group who organised May 29th Rural Parliament seminar

At the February meeting, the following people self-selected to take forward the planning and organisation of the May 29th national seminar on a Rural Parliament for Scotland.

Name	Affiliation
Rob Gowans	Scottish Youth Parliament
Vanessa Halhead	Rural Parliament Adviser
Angus Hardie	Scottish Community Alliance
Jon Hollingdale	Community Woodlands Association
Graham Kay	Scottish Government
Norman MacAskill	SCVO
Alistair Prior	Scottish Government
Willie Roe (Chair of May 29 th Event)	Independent Consultant
Sarah Skerratt	SAC: Rural Society Research & Rural Policy Centre
Jennifer Wallace	Carnegie UK Trust

Appendix 3: Interview topics for stakeholder telephone interviews

Introduction to this Appendix:

This is a **semi-structured interview format**, where broad themes, rather than specific questionnaire-type questions, are used. This is a deliberate choice, since it allows the interviewer (and interviewees) to explore the “why” aspects of the questions more, and to allow for uncertainties to come through, rather than forcing the interviewee to respond only to a list of pre-designed options.

Interview

Key points to communicate at the beginning:

1. You may remember from the email invitation for this interview that the Rural Parliament steering group agreed that **there is now a mandate to take forward plans to develop an inaugural Rural Parliament for Scotland in September 2013**.
2. In order to move towards this, Scottish Government has asked us to **identify next steps and key priorities** between now and September 2013. A key part of this is **listening to stakeholders** to identify their concerns and practical ideas.
3. These interviews are **CONFIDENTIAL**. So, everything you say will be treated in confidence, and in the report the survey findings will be grouped together, so people reading it won't be able to know that it's you who has said something.
4. We will be reporting back to Scottish Government in **August**, and **what you think will feed directly into the Rural Parliament's next steps**.

There are 5 short sections to this interview, and **we want you to be as frank and open as you want to be about each of them**. We're going to look at:

1. What you think the **mission, or main job**, of Scotland's Rural Parliament should be.
2. How you think the Rural Parliament should be **structured** so that it is effective and influential;
3. How you think **decision-making processes** should take place, so that the Rural Parliament is inclusive and democratic;
4. What you think the **priority next steps** should be, and **when** these should happen between now and September 2013; and
5. Where you think **funding** should come from.

There will also be an opportunity at the end **for you to say things that haven't been covered** in these 5 sections.

Section 1: What do you think the mission, or main job, of Scotland's Rural Parliament should be?

Possible prompts:

- Focus here on what **new things** a Rural Parliament should bring; how should it **add to what already exists in rural Scotland?**
- Examples might include (but *only prompt* if there is *complete silence!*):
 - To create a single rural voice.
 - To give rural a voice.
 - Influence national policy.
 - Act as a forum for discussion and debate.
 - A networking opportunity.
 - Empower people in rural Scotland.
 - Celebrate what rural Scotland has to offer.
- How should it add to what is already happening in rural Scotland, and not duplicate that?

Section 2: How do you think Scotland's Rural Parliament should be structured so that it is effective and influential?

Possible prompts:

- We're focusing here on how it should be **structured** and **organised**.
- **REPRESENTATION:**
 - How can **grass-roots** groups as well as **larger organisations** be included in a practical way?
 - Does the **private sector** need to be involved? If yes, how?
 - Should there be a **Board or Steering Group**? How should that be structured? Who should be on it and why?
 - Should **people be voted on** the Board or Steering Group? Why/why not?
 - Should Board leadership **rotate** between different individuals and groups? How do you make sure that happens?
- **MEETINGS:**
 - **How often** do you think the Rural Parliament should meet? (May want to state that other European Rural Parliaments meet every 2 years, if they have no idea).
 - **Where** should the Rural Parliament meet and why?
 - One of the aims is to get people involved from **local, regional and national levels** from across rural Scotland. How do you think the Rural Parliament could be structured or organised to help achieve this?
- **INFLUENCE:**
 - How should the Rural Parliament be structured so as to try **to influence the main Scottish Parliament**? What would be effective? What would *not* be effective? Why?
 - Should the Rural Parliament be **strategic**, or focus on "**fire-fighting**" on particular issues (e.g. rural schools, rural broadband) – or both?
 - Should the Rural Parliament produce **papers or recommendations** to Government? What structures need to be in place to do this?
- **ADMINISTRATION:**
 - What sort of **administrative structures** should the Rural Parliament have in place? For example, should a **separate secretariat** be set up, or should it be shared across organisations?

Section 3: How do you think decision-making processes should take place, so that Scotland's Rural Parliament is inclusive and democratic?

Possible prompts:

- **We're focusing here on processes.**
- **INFLUENCE ON GOVERNMENT:**
 - How should the Rural Parliament put an issue to the Government, such as rural broadband? How can a "**Rural Parliament view**" be pulled together and then put to Government?
- **DECISION-MAKING:**
 - What processes need to be put in place to make sure **decision-making is transparent**?
 - Do you think the Rural Parliament should operate **by consensus or by votes**?
 - If there are votes on particular issues, should it be one vote per organisation, or one vote per person, or votes according to size of organisation?
- **REPRESENTATION:**
 - What processes should be put in place to make sure that **individual and community voices** are heard as well as **larger organisations**?
 - How would you address concerns about one or two voices or organisations **dominating** the Rural Parliament?
- **KEEPING THE MOMENTUM GOING:**
 - If Scotland's Rural Parliament meets every two years, what happens in between? **How is interest maintained**? How do people keep the dialogue and debate going?
 - Should the Rural Parliament **event** be the main focus or should the focus be on **building a "rural movement"**? If the focus is on building a rural movement, what specific processes need to be put in place to make sure this happens?

Section 4: What do you think the priority next steps should be, and when should these happen between now and September 2013?

Possible prompts:

- **We're focusing here on identifying priorities: what **MUST** be done **FIRST**, and then what **could** be done **second**; (so, essential and optional).**
 - Examples might include: get a steering group or Executive Body together.
 - Tease out examples to do with: structures, processes and influence.
- If they had to choose **2 things** to be done first, what would these be and why?
- **CHOOSING A NAME:**
 - Should it be called a Rural "Parliament"? Why/Why not?
 - What else should it be called? Why would this be better?
 - (Examples names include Assembly, Gathering, Congress).

Section 5: Where do you think funding should come from for Scotland's Rural Parliament?

Possible prompts:

- Most people will say “the Government”. We need to explore this **AND we need to ask where else the money will come from** because (i) this is meant to be independent of Government, and (ii) there is less and less money available from the public purse due to the economic situation.
- So, consider **public, private and third sector funding** (as in other European Rural Parliaments).
- Do you think the Rural Parliament should **sustain itself financially**? Why/why not? If yes, how?

Section 6: Do you have anything further you'd like to add to help in shaping Scotland's Rural Parliament?

Many thanks for your help. We will be presenting the report in August, and will make sure that a summary of the report is sent to you.