

Scottish Women's Convention response  
to the Scottish Government's  
Consultation on:

# Rural Delivery Plan: Vision, Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators



March 2025

## Premise

The Rural Delivery Plan has been produced by the Scottish Government, to improve outcomes for Scotland's rural communities. This Plan will act as a framework to consider a range of policy deliverables, bringing together siloed approaches into a single document. It covers a range of key areas, including transport, housing, social justice population, economic development, and health and social care. The Rural Delivery Plan will act as a separate document from that of the National Islands Plan, which specifically tackles the needs of island residents.

To ensure that proposals align with the needs and wants of rural Scotland, the Scottish Government have released the following consultation. Relevant submitted information will then be summarised, directly influencing the development of the Rural Delivery Plan.



## The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC)

The SWC is funded to engage with women across Scotland to ensure that their views are represented in policy and decision-making processes. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at Scottish, UK and international levels.

The SWC gathers information using different methods, including roadshows, thematic conferences, surveys, and both in-person and online roundtable events. This submission presents the views of a range of women, reflecting their opinions, ideas and lived experience. Working together with many other equalities organisations and community groups, we use our broad network to ensure that women from a range of backgrounds are heard and acknowledged. We are continually reviewing innovative ways of engaging with women and developing our trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice to support vital contributions from as many women as possible.

## **A Vision for Rural Scotland**

### **Do you agree with the proposed vision for rural Scotland?**

Partially.

Overall, the draft vision proposed for rural Scotland outlines admirable intent. We strongly support direct action to reverse the impact of increased centralisation and a loss of opportunity across rural communities. However, we would add an additional aspect - health. While the draft vision states “nurturing the wellbeing of current and future generations”, we ask that specific inclusion of health is made. Health is a regular feature of our interactions with rural women, with many highlighting that a loss of localised services and staff has worsened overall wellbeing. We would therefore recommend inclusion of this vital element within the draft vision.

## **Strategic Objectives for Rural Scotland**

### **Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for economy and digital connectivity?**

Partially.

The green economy will likely provide a bedrock for further economic growth across rural communities. With the significant opportunities in sectors such as energy across the highlands and islands, it is vital that the Scottish Government enable the sustainable development of such prospects. We would however urge caution, as the overreliance on an individual sector can create a precarious situation for inhabitants. A lack of effective diversification will likely hinder sustained economic growth.

Additionally, due to embedded gender stereotypes, women are less likely to enter employment and training related to the green economy. At the SWC, we have noted that these stereotypes remain a significant barrier to women's inclusion in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industries<sup>1</sup>. We strongly believe that significant work must be carried out to challenge these limiting factors, however, the likelihood of large numbers of women entering STEM elements of the green economy is reduced. This further evidences the need for a strong, varied economy, with alternative employment options provided to citizens.

- “I think at school they split you from quite early on, like it's girls subjects and boys. Something like metal work, that's for the boys...[girls] don't feel encouraged into that area.”
- “...lots of girls I know would be put off by the class being full of boys, like physics or something. I think there's one girl in the physics class, which is great, good for her, but it must be intimidating.”

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Women's Convention. (2023). STEMism: What Needs to Change to Keep Women in STEM? Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/stem-conference-report-2023.pdf>

- “I think on the STEM side, there are maybe some teachers who would say that we shouldn't take subjects because we'd be the only girl, we'd feel 'uncomfortable'.”

Moreover, many women we have spoken with have explained that it is increasingly difficult to retain young workers. They have stated that due to the poor work opportunities, alongside absent public service-provision, many leave to larger towns and cities. Some women explained that while young people were always expected to leave for periods of time, for example to attend university, they would return, bringing with them new skills. This is becoming less common, resulting in depopulation. When coupled with an increasing average age, rural communities are at risk of becoming unsustainable. Ultimately, communities require a sufficient number of working-age adults to maintain public services and recreation, otherwise there will be clear decline. This was noted by women on the Isle of Skye, who explained that the reduction in population had resulted in the closure of anchor services, such as schools and health centres<sup>2</sup>. It is for these reasons that digital connectivity must be ensured for rural communities, enabling remote working opportunities. We therefore strongly support the improving of digital connectivity for rural areas, believing that this can facilitate a variance of work options for women. This must be alongside an improvement in public services however, to encourage more young people to remain in rural areas.

- “[a business] found someone who would have been an excellent candidate, but when his wife researched healthcare in Wick, and our hospital, she refused to move here...it's so disappointing because that's affecting our numbers as well.”
- “We know that there's an issue with population here [rural area], because...people who have families, they're considering whether they move down South to have their babies, etc. because we have no maternity services. Mothers are told it's safer to go down South...We are an ageing population, and that's accelerating the ageing population because the young people are leaving.”

### **Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for population, education and skills?**

Partially.

We strongly support the clear commitment made surrounding childcare. Childcare is regularly raised as a key barrier to women's full economic participation, with the lack of providers placing increased onus on women to provide care within the home. Rural areas have witnessed a decline in provision as a direct result of a reduced level of employable individuals and changes to childcare at a state-level. While this can be witnessed across most of Scotland, rural communities have the additional challenge of poor connectivity and long travel times. Where local options are not available, women

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish Women's Convention. (2024). Isle of Skye and Kyle of Lochalsh. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/skye-and-kyle-report.pdf>

are forced to commute considerable distances to place their children into care or take on part-time employment, with both options negatively impacting household income.

Additionally, the proposed strategic objective outlines that any childcare should be accessible and of high quality, an admirable intent. We would however state that affordability remains a contentious term. Affordability has been increasingly used to describe public service provision, yet this term is highly subjective. Instead, we would recommend clear guidance for public bodies, to ensure that those on the lowest incomes are effectively catered for. Overall, however, a clear emphasis on childcare within the strategic objective for population, education and skills is welcomed.

With regards to education, the focus on improving skills is appreciated. While many of the women we spoke with had had children who had attended university, ultimately, those from rural communities are less likely to achieve SCQF Level 6 or above<sup>3</sup>. This can be attributed to many things, including poor access to Further and Higher education establishments compared with the Central Belt, which results in high living and travel costs. We strongly support the equitable provision of educational opportunity across Scotland and therefore support the proposed strategic objective. However, we would again emphasise the need for a varied employment market across rural Scotland. Without attractive jobs awaiting young people in rural areas, they are more likely to remain in the Central Belt after achieving educational success. The strong links between education, employment and population, must be clearly stated throughout the development of the Rural Delivery Plan.

### **Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for social justice?**

Partially.

The inclusion of social justice as a strategic objective is strongly supported by the SWC. Our work has continuously highlighted the poverty experienced by rural women, with the additional barriers experienced across remote communities contributing significantly to poor economic outcomes. As stated above, women residing rurally have poor access to quality job prospects, with the prevalence of seasonal work further impacting the employment market. Also, with the poor availability of local public services, women must travel significant distances to access vital support. During conversations with women based in incredibly rural locations, they have provided stories whereby pregnant women have travelled up to three hours to give birth. To avoid carrying out this journey during labour, women may opt to stay nearby larger hospitals, such as Raigmore in Inverness<sup>4</sup>. Stays may also be unavoidable in relation to other health conditions, with the delegation of appointment times not taking travel times into consideration. For example, if a woman is given an early appointment, she may need to stay nearby the

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government. (2024). Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 6. 2024 Edition. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2024/02/summary-statistics-attainment-initial-leaver-destinations-no-6-2024-edition/documents/summary-statistics-attainment-initial-leaver-destinations-no-6-2024-edition/summary-statistics-attainment-initial-leaver-destinations-no-6-2024-edition/govscot%3Adocument/summary-statistics-attainment-initial-leaver-destinations-no-6-2024-edition.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Women's Convention. (2024). The Impact of Poverty on Women. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/poverty-full-report-2024.pdf>

hospital or clinic the night before. This results in increased costs, placing a rural premium on healthcare access. There must therefore be a focus on the unique complications that arise from residing in remote and rural areas, taking a rural-lens to policy design.

- “...I mean we have to go to Inverness for most things, and the public transport is not particularly reliable, so if you get an early appointment, you have to go down the day before, but they don't take that into consideration”

Furthermore, the SWC carried out investigations in late 2024, to understand women's experiences of poverty in Scotland, alongside what impact this had on their daily lives. Our findings highlighted the continued structural issues which disadvantage women and girls, contributing to food insecurity, health inequalities and child poverty. We concluded with an ask from the Scottish Government to include women's poverty as a key driver of poverty more generally<sup>5</sup>. It can be said that women are more likely to experience poverty, and that this is closely linked with women's standing in society. As such we would recommend explicit mention of the feminisation poverty, to consider the intersectional element at play across rural Scotland.

### **Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for housing?**

No.

The omission of social housing from the proposed strategic objectives is discouraging. While we welcome the commitment from the Scottish Government - to encourage the building of affordable housing to be placed on the general market - we believe that social housing must also be made available. Social housing is a vital service across communities, providing citizens with their basic right to shelter. Women have regularly highlighted concern surrounding the reduced social housing stock as a result of the Right-to-Buy scheme of the 1980s. They have explained that while this enabled more people to become homeowners, the concurrent lack of building significantly reduced publicly owned homes.

Social housing can also act as an essential protection for those at risk of homelessness. It is estimated by Shelter Scotland that 110,000 households were on waiting lists for a social home in 2021 and 16,330 households were in temporary accommodation as of March 2024<sup>6</sup>. Women are often 'hidden' in homelessness figures, with the true extent remaining unclear. However, reasons behind this homelessness include the fleeing of abuse. Domestic abuse remains one of the key drivers of women's homelessness; in 2021 it was found that one in five women who go through domestic abuse experience homelessness at some point, compared to less than 1% of the wider population<sup>7</sup>. Rural women then face increased complications when attempting to flee abuse, such as access to refuges and support organisations, the impact of close-knit communities, and

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<sup>5</sup> Scottish Women's Convention. (2025). Roadshows. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/roadshows/>

<sup>6</sup> Shelter Scotland. (2024). Social Housing Explained. Available at: [https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/campaigning/social\\_housing\\_explained](https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/campaigning/social_housing_explained)

<sup>7</sup> Cyrenians. (2023). The Hidden Homelessness of Women. Available at: <https://cyrenians.scot/blog/403-the-hidden-homelessness-of-women>

geographical isolation. It is therefore vital that rural women are effectively supported to leave violence and abuse, with the increase of social housing assisting in this endeavour.

Additionally, we would raise the issue of housing costs, which have not been included in the proposed strategic objective. It has been found in England that women in the private rented sector spend 55% of their income on rent, while men spend 36%, showing a clear disparity in disposable income<sup>8</sup>. When discussing housing with women, they have been quick to point to the increased costs experienced across the country. This has included heating and electricity bills, alongside general increases to food costs and fuel. For women residing in rural communities, these costs are generally higher than the Scottish average, due to increased usage of heating sources, longer daily travel distances, and scarcity of resources<sup>9</sup>. During SWC Roadshow events, these high costs have remained key talking points, in particular the cost of fuel and food. Women have explained that these increased prices have negatively impacted household finances, pushing some to extreme measures in order to manage during the winter months. We would therefore recommend full commitment from the Scottish Government surrounding this observable rural premium. The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 outlines that by 2040 only 5% of Scottish households should be suffering from fuel poverty, however the most recent estimations place this figure at 34%<sup>10</sup>. If this target is to be met, rural communities must be focused upon, with the Rural Delivery Plan acting as a facilitator for change.

- “...fuel poverty is really high here [rural area]...all the villages around in the periphery’s, most of them have no gas connection...so fuel poverty is very impactful for these communities”
- “My sister can’t afford to live in her house, so she lives in a shed in her back garden and rents her house in the summer as a B&B type thing...There are lots of folk who can’t afford to heat their houses and just live in the one room.”
- “...actually, during the winter there I said to my daughter that she would be in [sleeping] with me, to try and cut fuel costs down and keep warm. It just cuts off heating to certain places of the house.”

## **Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for health and social care?**

No.

The health and social care sectors are arguably the most valued by women the SWC interact with. Conversations encompass access, quality of care, price, misogyny, and

<sup>8</sup> Engender. (2020). A Woman's Place: Gender, Housing and Homelessness in Scotland. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/A-WOMANS-PLACE---GENDER-HOUSING-AND-HOMELESSNESS-IN-SCOTLAND.pdf#:~:text=This%20report%20sets%20out%20the%20international%20context%20on,legislative%20and%20policy%20landscapes%20in%20Scotland%20are%20gendered>

<sup>9</sup> Scottish Government. (2021). Poverty in Rural Scotland: Evidence Review. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/poverty-rural-scotland-review-evidence/pages/6/>

<sup>10</sup> The Scottish Fuel Advisory Panel. (2023). Key Facts. Available at: <https://fuelpovertypanel.scot/key-facts/>



much more. Therefore, we would argue that the proposed strategic objective does not fully cover the variable aspects of significant intervention needed from the Scottish Government. It can be said that the short statement made holds the key aim of improved health and social care, however multiple additional elements must be stated.

Firstly, we would highlight access to quality care as being imperative to the improving of rural health and social care. With regards to healthcare, rural women have recounted difficult stories relating to childbirth. During our Roadshow events, women explained that babies had been born in cars, laybys and ambulances, while mothers travelled to hospitals. This issue was of major concern for women residing in the North of Scotland, with Raigmore Hospital in Inverness becoming the default for maternity care. There has been a resultant increase in elected caesarean sections (c-sections) and scheduled inductions, enabling women to 'time' their labour around hospital capacity<sup>11</sup>. Women we spoke with viewed this maternity process negatively, stating that despite many staff providing good quality care, the additional considerations to access this care, contributed to negative birthing experiences and general trauma<sup>2</sup>. Also, women with gynaecological conditions, such as endometriosis, explained that due to the reduction of localised service-provision, they often had to travel considerable distances to access healthcare. It can be argued, that similarly to points raised above surrounding a rural premium, women in remote Scotland face a rural healthcare premium, worsening outcomes and risking lives.

- "Women are worried that their labour will move quickly and they wouldn't make it to Raigmore [Hospital] on time. Some say they have suffered post-traumatic stress in relation to this."
- "We are hearing more and more about scheduled inductions and c-sections, so they can time these things. We're finding women have less choice, they're pushing elective c-sections and inductions."
- "I mean you're getting a c-section regardless as that's the space and the time they have so it's happening whether that's what you want or not."
- "...a friend of ours, they booked her into Raigmore and induced her and she was three days in agony...She has severe trauma from the experience and cannot step foot back into Raigmore now."

In relation to social care, access was also raised as an issue. Some women explained that their local communities lacked care staff to provide in-house care for the elderly and disabled. These areas do not commonly have a nearby care centre, resulting in community members having to be rehomed in unfamiliar environments. This is considerably distressing for friends, family, and the individual themselves, causing poor mental wellbeing. Familiarity can assist in increasing the quality of life experienced by an individual, as can regular contact with loved ones. Also, local authority budgets cuts have reduced the number of community-based options available for the elderly and

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<sup>11</sup> Scottish Women's Convention. (2024). Wick. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/wick-report.pdf>



disabled. Years of austerity at a UK Government level have trickled down into Scotland's populations, causing the closure of socially valuable facilities. This has an ultimate impact on women, as they are more likely to take on the care burden within their families and wider community settings. Therefore, through the lack of comprehensive social care options for rural areas, an increased number of people are being disregarded.

- "...my nana, she had MS and so was bedbound...the first place they could put her in was ages away, like an hour and a half, my papa was so far away from her, and it's not a great road. Plus, we were all far away from her, but it was the only place that had a bed for her."
- "...I work in the health service, and when I worked at the hospital in the old folks' ward, for about three years, you could notice that bed blocking, they were fit for discharge but there was no care out in the community for them."
- "I think there is a need for more care in the community and particularly social care. I have experience of this with my grandmother who died a few years back. Care was very limited and the cost was very high."

To rectify the above issues, we would recommend the inclusion of the term 'localised'. As stated, access is generally viewed as the key issue facing women when attempting to receive health and social care in rural Scotland. From speaking with women, we can conclude that they want to see a return of locally based services, ranging from improved obstetrics and gynaecological options in community hospitals to primary care, such as dentists. Through a localised model, a focus can be placed on preventative, community-based care, combining the expertise in both health and social care settings. The importance of community-orientated services in the prevention and management of health conditions is clear. This has been recommended by Public Health Scotland, with their focus on population projections highlighting the need for a healthier society – Scotland's population is expected to reduce significantly by 2043 but the level of illness is expected to increase by 21%<sup>12</sup>. There must be an emphasis on embedding localised service-provision for health and social care services to improve the health and wellbeing of rural communities.

### **Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for transport?**

No.

The proposed strategic objective for transport lacks sufficient ambition, to effectively enhance the lives of women in rural Scotland. While we acknowledge the need for improved access, this must be brought about through significant structural changes to the Scottish transport system. While discussing public transport with women in Scotland, buses remain a key consideration for many, with women stating that there are too few vehicles and routes. This was accounted to the privatisation of bus systems, with local authorities having little control of routes and prices, ultimately reducing the

<sup>12</sup> Public Health Scotland. (2024). Public Health Approach to Prevention. Available at: <https://publichealthscotland.scot/about-us/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/public-health-approach-to-prevention/what-is-prevention/>

quality of service for passengers<sup>13</sup>. Systems seen in London were highlighted, with women positively viewing the one-ticket system. Through an integrated ticket, it was suggested that costs could be reduced, while also providing ease for users. In rural areas, while multiple public transport forms are unlikely to be used by the majority, the need for local authority led franchising is clear. Franchising powers would enable local authorities to provide bus routes where needed, rather than those viewed as most profitable, while also controlling prices.

- “Plus, actually transport is something that isn’t well-catered for here; we need a better bus service. The bus is haphazard and there aren’t enough, we need more public transport, if we had more, then I would have used that today.”
- “I don’t believe you can get a bus on a Sunday from the ferry terminal, I’ve had to give people lifts and things. There are no buses that whole day, which people don’t realise”
- “I would love a 40-minute bus service! I live [rurally] and we get buses on a Tuesday and a Thursday. That’s it.”

The price of public transport was raised by women. As stated, the privatisation of transport forms like buses and ferries, has resulted in high costs for users. For those with no access to private transport options, they will likely be reliant on public transport to access vital services. We have identified that rural women are more likely to travel significant distances to use health and social care services. Under current systems, the cost to commute to Central Belt hospitals via bus or train is detrimental to rural women’s financial status.

- “A lady that I know, she’s up North somewhere, and she’s in her 80s, and they put her down to Glasgow for a hip replacement. They sent her down in a taxi and then she was sent back up the same day. Plus, she had to pay it and then claim it back.”
- “A more frequent service [would be good]...so that people don’t feel the need to take the car...and better pricing so it is more cost effective to take the bus or train than to drive.”

As such we would recommend commitments from the Scottish Government to embed reduced public transport options for rural communities. This could be facilitated by the amended Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, which enabled Scottish local authorities to regulate privately-owned transport companies through franchising. Similar powers have been effectively utilised in England, including Greater Manchester, Liverpool and West and South Yorkshire. Therefore, we propose that the strategic objective for transport be revised.

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<sup>13</sup> Scottish Women's Convention. (2024). How Can We Make Transport Work for Women and Families in Scotland? Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/report.pdf>

## **Key Performance Indicators**

**For economy and digital connectivity, do the key performance indicators adequately measure what success should look like in this area?**

Partially.

The indicators listed cover many of the aspects required to be measured relating to economy and digital connectivity. We would however recommend gathering pay level data as an addition. Currently, the majority of this data is gathered by the UK Government, and while we acknowledge the additional challenges this may present, it is vital that an improved understanding of average pay levels is gained. The Scottish Government do gather gross median weekly earnings for full time employees, comparing this to the UK average<sup>14</sup>. However, this data is gathered annually; we would therefore recommend a similar process to be carried out by local authorities and collated for rural areas.

**For social justice, do the key performance indicators adequately measure what success should look like in this area?**

Partially.

We acknowledge that many of the listed measurements will provide an effective understanding of social justice levels in rural Scotland. However, we would urge caution surrounding the usage of relative poverty and relative child poverty in rural regions. Relative poverty measures are based on Scottish average household costs, yet those in rural areas are more likely to have a higher-than-average monthly spend<sup>15</sup>. This is as a result of increased heating and fuel use, generally high prices for essential goods, and, as evidenced above, additional costs to access public services. Therefore, we are reluctant to approve of the use of relative poverty to understand the levels of deprivation in rural areas. Instead, additional methodologies should be identified, which effectively consider the experiences of rural communities.

Additionally, we believe that it would be valuable to understand the number of women utilising Social Security Scotland (SSS) services. SSS remains a relatively new service, and as such, statistics are currently in development, however, we believe it would be remiss of the Scottish Government to omit this data. Understanding the number of women in receipt of social security within rural areas, enables an improved record of poverty and deprivation. It would also assist the Scottish Government to gain information surrounding the usage of SSS in rural communities, enabling comparisons to be made between rural and urban Scotland.

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Government. (2025). Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: 2024. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings-2024/pages/employee-earnings/>

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Government. (2021). Poverty in Rural Scotland: Evidence Review. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/poverty-rural-scotland-review-evidence/pages/6/>

## **For health and social care, do the key performance indicators adequately measure what success should look like in this area?**

Partially.

With regards to healthcare, we propose that an additional indicator be collected – travel time to healthcare facilities. According to the Scottish Household Survey in 2019, only 60.3% felt that access for hospital outpatients was ‘very or fairly convenient’, the lowest score of all services surveyed<sup>16</sup>. This triggered multiple commitments to be made which aim to improve transport to health and social care by the Scottish Government<sup>17</sup>. Multiple measurable outcomes were outlined and we would recommend consideration of these commitments in conjunction with the Rural Delivery Plan to understand women’s ability to access healthcare.

Additionally, we do not believe that of the proposed indicators, social care has been adequately considered. Of those listed, healthcare is the clear focus, and while this is significant for most rural women, social care must be included to a higher degree. The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 lists many indicators which aim to effectively evaluate health and social care systems in Scotland<sup>18</sup>. This includes measures which aim to understand the level of autonomy and safety service-users feel in relation to their care and figures relating to hospital discharges for the elderly and disabled. Gathering a comprehensive picture of social care access and use within rural communities is vital in improving service levels. As stated above, rural women struggle to access social care services for themselves and family members, worsening outcomes. Women have outlined the value in collecting quality data in relation to social issues, with the need to evidence the experiences of citizens highlighted as being key.

## **For transport, do the key performance indicators adequately measure what success should look like in this area?**

Partially.

Many of the listed indicators are valuable when assessing transport infrastructure in rural regions, however we believe that the inclusion of bike access is unnecessary. We understand that the Scottish Government have made continued commitments to increase the number of individuals who use active transport options and fully accept the need for this in tackling climate change. It can be argued however, that rural areas are not best situated to effectively embed cycling into daily routines. Due to the isolation of many in these regions and dangerous roads, cycling is not an effective option. During SWC Roadshows to rural areas, we have enquired about cycling use, with women generally responding negatively. They have accepted that cycling may be of value for children and young people residing in small towns and villages, when travelling to

<sup>16</sup> Transport Scotland. (2021). Transport to Health. Available at: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/accessible-transport/vision-and-priorities-for-2021-2022/transport-to-health/>

<sup>17</sup> Scottish Government. (2024). Transport to Health: Delivery Plan. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transport-health-delivery-plan/pages/2/>

<sup>18</sup> Scottish Government. (2015). Health and Social Care Integration: Core Indicators. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-social-care-integration-core-suite-indicators/pages/3/>

school. However, with the growing number of village school closures across rural areas, many girls are expected to travel significant distances to access education, either via bus or car. We do believe it is valuable for young people to learn how to ride bikes safely, encouraging future generations to make use of active transport. Overall, however we do not support the inclusion of the bike access as an indicator.

- “The more rural areas, you absolutely need a car, you’re sharing a road with tractors, imagine riding your bike in your suit for a meeting – it’s just not going to work.”
- “I used to cycle regularly when I lived in a place with cycle routes through the town...I haven’t touched my bike where I currently live as I don’t feel safe on the roads.”

## Conclusion

Having listened to women, our three key recommendations on this topic are:

- Include the concept of local service-provision across strategic objectives.
- Commit to the development of social housing stock as part of the housing strategic objective.
- Empower local authorities to utilise franchising powers, to improve public transport systems.

The SWC is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's Consultation on the **Rural Delivery Plan: Vision, Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators**. As an organisation, we will continue to work with women from across Scotland to gather voices and experiences relating to this topic and its effects on women's equality.

For further information or to share your views, please contact:

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