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The SNP has failed to support the rural economy and has instead made swingeing cuts to the Scottish rural affairs in the 2019-20 budget delivered to the Scottish Parliament this week.

Despite claims that the SNP government will invest in the rural economy, the budget shows that they will actually cut business development by 13.3 per cent; agri-environment measures by 7.3 per cent; and LEADER by 10.9 per cent.

In addition, the SNP has failed to commit to supporting farmers working in less favoured areas and instead they have reduced funding for Less Favoured Area Support Scheme by £14 million in real terms.

Lastly, the SNP budget fails to enable new entrants into farming. Level 4 of the budget reiterates that new entrants schemes are closed to applications as they have committed the full SRDP allocation. However, the SNP have failed to commit any funding for a similar scheme.

The digital connectivity budget has also been cut to £32.9 million, despite the SNP commitment to spend £600 million to deliver superfast broadband by 2021. There is an urgent need to provide broadband to, and connect, rural communities, so this is yet another setback for those communities.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that this SNP budget fails to support the long term future of rural communities and is instead a “kick in the teeth”.

Donald Cameron, Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary said:

“This SNP budget absolutely fails to address the issues faced by rural communities and businesses across Scotland.

“Indeed, the cuts to rural business development are counter-productive in the extreme and will erode the sustainability of rural communities.

“Critically, the failure to invest in new entrants to farming programmes or broadband poses significant short term challenges for farms.

“The SNP claim that rural Scotland is a priority, yet with everything they do, they show that, to them, rural Scotland is dispensable.

"Farmers, tourism businesses, and the communities that are built around them are all poorer for this budget.

"This is nothing less than a kick in the teeth for rural Scotland."