



Minute of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on Thursday 5th March at An Lochran, Inverness

- **Commissioners present:** Michael Russell (Chair), Calum MacLeod, Craig Mackenzie, Lucy Beattie, Deb Roberts
- **In attendance:** Hamish Trench, Nikki Nagler, Kathie Pollard, Sarah Madden, Gemma Campbell, James MacKessack-Leitch, Julie Rostan
- **Apologies:** Rob Black, Tenant Farming Commissioner
- **Declarations of interest:** None

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 February 2026 were agreed as true and accurate.

2. Commissioners Updates

At the start of the meeting Calum MacLeod notified the board of his intention to stand down from his role as a Land Commissioner due to changes in his other time commitments. He confirmed he has written to the Cabinet Secretary giving notice and will step down from the board on 31st May. The Chair and colleagues thanked Calum for his significant contribution to the board, noting that Calum will remain active as a board member in the meantime including the May meeting. He also noted that sponsor team will take forward arrangements for a new appointment to the board and we will keep the board informed of the expected timeline, however a period with a vacancy is to be expected.

Commissioners provided other updates on recent activities on behalf of the Commission since the last meeting. Craig shared recent experience on natural capital investment in England for information. Hamish noted that Rob has recently met with the Tenant Farming Commissioner for England.

The Chair reminded Commissioners of the pre-election period which begins on 26th March and the guidance that has been circulated.

3. Report from Chair of ARC

Craig provided a summary of the recent Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 12th February.

4. 2026/27 Business Plan and budget

Hamish introduced the business plan and associated budget for agreement. He highlighted adjustments from the previous discussion on the draft and emphasised the degree of flexibility that will be needed in-year in relation to a new government, timetable for Land Reform Act 2025 implementation and potential in-year project funding.

Commissioners agreed the delivery priorities set out in the business plan and sought more information on the likely sequencing of Land Reform Act implementation. Commissioners noted that board consideration of the future Land and Communities Commissioner role will need to be built into the 26/27 year.

Commissioners welcomed the continued control on corporate operating costs and sought more information on the allocation of research budget in relation to tenant farming. Hamish confirmed the research budget shown is the full allocation the Commission has available and decisions will need to be made on the priorities in-year. The board also noted the potential for project specific funds in-year that is not yet confirmed. The board agreed the 26/27 budget.

5. Stakeholder event on ScotLand Futures and strategic plan

Commissioners reflected on the stakeholder event held in Perth on 25th February. The board felt the event was a positive and well-run afternoon which provided valuable perspectives. Commissioners noted some of the common themes emerging, the challenges raised and issues that the Commission will need to consider in developing its strategic plan.

The board noted common feedback on the role stakeholders see the Commission having in articulating the case for reforms and the desired outcomes, in convening and connecting a wide range of perspectives, in providing evidence, analysis and examples of what good looks like.

The board reflected on a strong desire among stakeholders for a focus on practical implementation of reforms and improvements including a shared focus across the sector on land data.

Hamish confirmed the next step in strategic plan development will be a board/staff workshop in May.

6. Update on Community Ownership Advice

Kathie provided an update on this ongoing work drawing on the Community Land Leadership Group, progress in case study interviews and the SEFARI fellowship. She confirmed the intention remains to draw together this advice post-election and this will come to a board meeting for consideration. Commissioners welcomed the ongoing work and noted progress.

7. Update on Model Lease project

James gave an update on project planning for the model lease work. The project plan has been agreed and it is now waiting on confirmation from Scottish Government of the project specific funding before we can proceed. Commissioners welcomed the update and noted the value of this work in engaging with a wide range of stakeholders about a tenure model that could have a wide range of application. Commissioners support the approach being taken and asked to be updated when funding is confirmed.

Action 260205.01	James to circulate an update when funding confirmed.
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8. Land Reform Act implementation

Hamish introduced the paper which is the first of a regular update at each board meeting on progress in 2025 Act implementation. He highlighted the three relevant strategic risks that the board has identified as a basis against which to identify key issues for board consideration.

He provided an update following a meeting with the Act implementation team in February which discussed key considerations and implications for the Commission. He noted that Ministers have not yet confirmed an implementation timetable, and this will likely be set out post-election. However, the Commission is using some assumptions to plan its own work for the year ahead.

Commissioners discussed the expected sequencing of measures for implementation and sought more information about the timescales for internal consideration of key issues within the Commission. Commissioners asked for more information about implementation of Land Management Plans in particular, noting the wide stakeholder support and opportunity for Scottish Government to build on the momentum. Sarah and Hamish outlined the current work planned. It was agreed to schedule a board discussion on the approach and principles for Land Management Plans prior to expected engagement by Scottish Government.

The board agreed the format of report is helpful, noting the importance of oversight in relation to risks and resourcing as the year goes on.

9. AOB

Nikki confirmed dates for the post board meeting staff briefing, to be done by Michael and Craig this time. Commissioners also agreed to hold an online call on 31st March for a presentation on the findings of the stakeholder perceptions audit.

Hamish noted for awareness the marketing of Tulchan Estate and the specific implications of the sale of company shares rather than the land.

Date of next meeting:

Thursday 14th May

An Lochran, Inverness