



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Briefing Note: Large scale and concentrated land ownership in Scotland

The Scottish Land Commission is publishing an Investigation into the issues associated with large scale and concentrated land ownership in Scotland on 20.03.2019, accompanied by Recommendations to Scottish Ministers.

Representing the most substantial nationwide investigation conducted into the impacts of scale and concentration of land ownership in Scotland, the [report](#) is based on robust evidence about rural land ownership. Previous research has tended to focus on relatively small numbers of in-depth case studies.

The response to the Land Commission's call for evidence was significant. 407 people, from land owners and land managers to community representatives and residents submitted evidence. The main findings of the evidence report are that:

- Most of the advantages associated with Scotland's current pattern of land ownership can be associated with potential economies of scale
- Most of the disadvantages identified relate to concentration of social, economic and decision-making power, not simply the scale of landholdings
- In some parts of Scotland, concentrated land ownership is an impediment to economic development and is causing significant and long-term harm to the communities affected
- The pattern of market and social power in concentrated land ownership, has parallels with monopoly power in wider economic policy
- There are issues to address beyond ownership, specifically a lack of effective participation in land use change decisions
- These problems are not associated exclusively with any particular type of land owner – the evidence reveals issues across land owned by private owners, public bodies, NGOs and communities
- There is little or no method of redress for communities or individuals, where there are adverse economic or social impacts arising from concentrated ownership

Recommendations

Informed directly by the evidence, the Commission has made initial [recommendations](#) to address the adverse impacts identified, and to introduce systemic change to stimulate a more diverse and dynamic pattern of land ownership. The recommendations include statutory change, further policy investigation and action that can be taken now through leadership within the land ownership sector.

The recommendations include:

- Introducing a Public Interest Test for significant land transfers/acquisitions
- Requiring land holdings over a certain scale to engage on, and publish, a management plan
- Legislating for a new Land Rights and Responsibilities review process, to take effect where there is evidence of adverse impact
- Taking into account the effects of concentrated ownership in the implementation of the forthcoming Community Right to Buy Land to Further Sustainable Development
- Reviewing and investigating policy options to encourage a more diverse pattern of private ownership and investment
- Creating more robust mechanisms to ensure local democratic influence on and benefit from, land use change
- Optimising opportunities, through land owners reviewing the operation and governance of their land holdings, using the Land Rights and Responsibilities framework
- Implementing – in the immediate future – a programme of land rights and responsibilities good practice

These proposals seek to address the risks of concentrated land ownership in ways that are considered normal in other developed countries and sectors of the economy. The Commission will also go on to investigate options to stimulate a more diverse private sector of land ownership and investment, including looking at the potential role of land value tax and wider tax and fiscal policy.

Next steps

The Commission will now engage widely with stakeholders and the public on the findings of the evidence, the immediate recommendations and their wider implications for landowners and managers, communities and others, through a campaign of awareness raising, events and public meetings culminating in a land reform conference in October 2019.

For further information please contact the Scottish Land Commission

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