



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Minutes of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on Tuesday 9th June 2020

Commissioners Present: Andrew Thin (Chair), Sally Reynolds, Lorne MacLeod, Megan MacInnes, David Adams (Land Commissioners), Bob McIntosh (Tenant Farming Commissioner)

In Attendance: Hamish Trench, Sarah Allen, Posy MacRae, Shona Glenn, Emma Cooper, James MacKessack-Leitch, David Stewart, Katherine Pollard, Caron Munro (Scottish Land Commission)

There were no declarations of interest.

Megan noted that she was interviewed for the Housing Land Supply research in paper 3 as she is a member of a community group involved in one of the case studies.

1. Minutes of previous meeting 12th May 2020

The Commissioners agreed the minute of the previous meeting as an accurate record of the discussion and all actions have been completed.

2. Vacant and Derelict Land

The Commissioners were given an update on the Vacant and Derelict Land workstream and the work that has been undertaken recently. They were advised that the team is currently consulting with Stakeholders on preparing recommendations to Government.

The Commissioners discussed the recommendations and advice to ministers and agreed that they must be tight, clear and unambiguous. It was agreed that the Commission needs to set out in the recommendations what the Commission should take forward in line with our remit and what we recommend others take forward.

It was noted that the Commission's work on vacant and derelict land has gained traction nationally and within the Scottish Government which is valuable for taking the next steps forward.

3. Housing Land Supply

The Commissioners were given an overview of the progress of this workstream. They were advised that the Commission has been working widely with stakeholders to build a common understanding of the issues and potential options. Commissioners welcomed the intention to bring this work together in a series of recommendations to Ministers early in 2021.

Commissioners challenged whether the work on rural housing land supply took sufficient consideration of land ownership as a barrier. It was noted that where this a constraint, it could be addressed by greater use of compulsory purchase powers by local authorities and by the Commission own proposals, if adopted in future legislation, for Statutory Land Rights and Responsibilities Reviews. Commissioners emphasised the need to ensure that publication of this work also links to the wider relevant land ownership work.

It was noted that this area of work should be closely linked to the economic recovery post Covid-19. The Commissioners discussed a wide range of issues such as a public land agency and they agreed that there is a need for a stronger public sector in this area. Commissioners emphasised that the recommendations should be clear and bold in stating the leadership and changes required, and address the issues that stakeholders expect, including for example in relation to land value capture.

The Commissioners agreed that the work to proceed as recommended in the paper.

4. Strategic Plan

The Commissioners were advised that the Commission needs to present the Strategic Plan to Ministers and publish in September 2020. It was agreed that greater emphasis be placed on the Programme of Work to set out workstreams, so that it can be updated as needed in line with changing priorities. Commissioners agreed that the strategic plan should set out the ways in which land reform helps drive economic recovery and renewal.

Commissioners raised the following points for consideration in development of the plan:

- Ensuring sufficient profile for climate change action;
- The relationship between land reform and planning reform;
- Ensuring the outcomes have specific enough indicators to be able to demonstrate impact;
- Setting out a clear, bold and relevant agenda that addresses Scotland's current priorities;
- Developing the Programme of Work in tandem with the strategic plan;
- Engaging stakeholders in the completion of both the strategic plan and programme of work.

The Commissioners agreed to proceed with development of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work for September and with the next steps proposed.

5. Update from ARC Chair and Review of Risk Register

The Chair of the ARC advised that the agreement with the co-opted member of the ARC is due to expire at the end of June. The Commissioners were asked if they are happy to extend her membership of the ARC for a further 12 months. The Commissioners agreed to this and noted the benefits of having a co-opted member.

The Commissioners were advised that the ARC met on 8th June and were presented with the draft annual report and accounts. The Chair of the ARC reported that the audit of the annual accounts and report is on track and the Commission has a positive relationship with Audit Scotland.

The Chair of the ARC noted that the Commission received the annual audit report and update from the Commission's internal auditors and noted a positive report and feedback from the auditors.

The Committee commended staff for being on track with both the annual report and cyber security and noted the importance of this, particularly during the current situation.

Action 20060901	Agenda item to be added at the end of the year for the Commissioners to receive an update on cyber resilience.
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Risk Register

The Commissioners were advised that the ARC reviewed the strategic risk register at their meeting on 8th June.

The Committee considered the wording of risk 3 as requested by Commissioners and have agreed the wording reflects the reliance on quality of researchers as well as quality. It was advised that over the next year the ARC will be scrutinising the three risks with the highest scores.

The highest scoring risks are all increasing due to the Covid-19 situation. It was agreed that the Commission's main concern was around staff wellbeing and the risks relating to this.

Commissioners asked for an update on the proposed review of organisational structure and were advised that, while this has been paused as the Commission adapted to new working arrangements, it will now be proceeding. Hamish advised that managers are continuing to review staff capacity on a weekly basis.

6. Any Other Business

August Board Meeting

It was noted that there is a current gap in the board meetings schedule with none scheduled in August. It was suggested that the board should hold an informal discussion in August.

Communications

It was noted that the Commission has consistently published high quality communications over the last couple of months and suggested that the Commission should consider how to maintain profile and engagement over the months ahead. Hamish noted that the Commission has a strong programme of online events planned as well as blogs, podcasts, and other communications. Posy advised that the Commission has been looking into how to hold public meetings online and have prepared a draft outline on how this will work in practice.

Action 20060902	Agenda item to be added to the July board meeting to discuss the communications and positioning of the Commission in relation to recovery.
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The Chair expressed his thanks to Emma for joining the Commission and making an effective start despite challenging circumstances.

Date of Next Meeting: 7th July 2020

**Scottish Land Commission
June 2020**