



Vacant & Derelict Land Taskforce Recommendations

Background

The Vacant and Derelict Taskforce was created in 2018 by the Scottish Land Commission and SEPA to transform Scotland's approach to tackling the legacy of vacant and derelict land which has existed for more than 30 years.

Vacant and derelict land

The legacy of Scotland's industrial past means that almost a third of the Scottish population lives within 500 meters of a derelict site. In deprived communities that figure increases to 55%. The consequences of this for wellbeing are enormous. Each year around 5,000 more people die in Scotland than should be the case due to factors related to deprivation. Poor quality physical environment is an important driver and consequence of deprivation in some communities. The importance of this has been laid bare by the ongoing public health crisis. The pandemic has shown us that the quality of place, and safe and local environments that everyone can access, matters. This is now equally important to preventing a new legacy arising from the economic impacts of Covid-19.

These sites could be so much more – they could help us solve some of our biggest challenges. Bringing abandoned and unloved urban places back into productive use could help us tackle climate change, improve health and wellbeing, create more resilient communities and rebuild our economy in a way that helps everyone achieve their full potential.

The Taskforce has now made 13 recommendations designed to:

- Bring Scotland's legacy of derelict urban land back into productive use in ways that will support a fair and green recovery.
- Reform the policy environment to make sure that this never happens again.

The recommendations

Better use of data

- Reforming the national register of vacant and derelict land, including more information to help bring sites back into use through the planning system.
- Map the sites on the register to make it more interactive in a format that anyone can access.

Land as part of the circular economy

- Reform Scotland's regeneration strategy to focus on place-based regeneration and land reuse to empower communities and give the public sector a more active role in in development.
- Make derelict sites that have been unused for a long time as a top priority in the new National Planning Framework. Make fixing 'brownfield' sites a priority in the next national Infrastructure Investment Plan.
- Make it easier to buy land for reuse, with new laws for compulsory sales orders and review the current ways land is bought and sold by the public sector.

Supporting delivery through funding

- Increase funding to support local authorities to bring vacant and derelict land back into use and review the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund.
- Review Scottish Government funding to make sure areas that need it most are prioritised. Change how the public sector views investment that includes the benefits of wellbeing and not just the financial return.
- Develop new ways of funding improvements to vacant and derelict land including a new compensation mechanism so that unavoidable loss of biodiversity from building on green areas is made up for by improving derelict sites, a new fund to improve derelict sites by creating a publicly-owned development bank of land, and providing money for communities to redevelop small derelict sites that are causing harm in their local area.

Stopping the flow of vacant and derelict sites

- Corporate social responsibility objectives should include the understanding that it is unacceptable to let land become derelict or left vacant indefinitely. Public funding should only be given to responsible landowners.
- Plans should be made for public land and property that is lying empty to be brought back into use. Landowners should identify buildings and sites that they might not need in the future and put plans in place to avoid the sites falling into disuse. To help with this, existing support for public sector asset disposal needs to be expanded.
- The Government should use the tax system to encourage landowners to repurpose empty commercial property. This will help prevent a new legacy of vacant and derelict land as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tackling the legacy

- Scotland should set up a national programme of investing in green infrastructure, to bring derelict land and buildings back into use in an environmentally friendly way that will support jobs and skills development and help rebuild community resilience. The programme should focus on urban green spaces, regeneration led by communities, low carbon housing and renewable energy, and it should be planned and funded over several years to attract long term investment. Local authorities should take responsibility for coordinating.
- The Scottish Government should make a clear commitment to eradicating urban dereliction, put arrangements in place for keeping track of this goal and appoint a national coordinator to help achieve this.

The taskforce

The Vacant and Derelict Taskforce brought together senior representatives from around 30 businesses, public bodies and third sector organisations. Members include:

BT, Built Environment Exchange, Green Action Trust Trust, Chartered Banker Institute, Clyde Gateway, Clydeplan, Community Land Scotland, Construction Scotland Innovation Centre, Development Trust Association Scotland, East Ayrshire Council, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Glasgow City Council, Homes for Scotland, Institute of Directors, Leapmoor LLP, NatureScot, North Lanarkshire Council, Royal Scottish Geographical Society, Royal Town Planning Institute, Scotland's Towns Partnership, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Futures Trust, Scottish Government, Scottish Land Commission, Scottish Power, Scotland's Regeneration Forum, Social Bite, Stirling University and Sweco.

Useful links

[Overview and research](#)

[Case studies](#)

[Compulsory Sales Orders Proposal](#)

[Assessing the full economic benefits of the productive reuse of land](#)

[Impact of vacant and derelict land on communities](#)

For further information please contact:

Shona Glenn, Head of Policy and Research, Scottish Land Commission

 shona.glenn@landcommission.gov.scot

 01463 423300

www.landcommission.gov.scot/notsoprettyvacant

[#notsoprettyvacant](https://www.instagram.com/notsoprettyvacant)