

Guidance on Sharing Information about Land Ownership and Management

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Introduction

This guide provides information on how to create and share a summary of information about land ownership and management to help communities understand key information about your landholding(s), including buildings. Our protocol on [Transparency of Land Ownership and Land Use Decision-Making](#) recommends that landowners prepare a summary of land use and management which should be made available online to the local community.

The information should be made available so that local people can find out who owns land and how to contact them, and understand how land and buildings are being used and managed in the area. Transparency encourages sharing of ideas and will ultimately facilitate better-informed decisions and build stronger relationships between interested parties.

We have previously published a [template](#) that sets out the basic kind of information that should be shared. This includes information about who owns the land and who manages the land. It also includes sections that summarise the main objectives of land management alongside key activities and priorities.

It is important that the level of information shared is proportionate to the impact of the landholding on the local community and environment and is relevant to those who may read it. This guide is therefore not expected to apply to all landholdings. An average-sized family farm of 0-3 full-time employees or a small estate that does not have a lot of impact on local communities or individuals might not have lots of information to share, but will still be expected to be transparent about ownership and main purposes of use. This guide explores how that balance can best be achieved.

There is no set way to create and share information about land ownership and management and this guide is therefore not prescriptive. It draws from different approaches already being taken and it forms part of a broader suite of practice materials, guides, and case studies that are [available on our website](#) for landowners and managers to use on a voluntary basis.

The guide, associated documents, and [case studies](#) are part of a living toolkit. They will be revised as practice develops. We very much welcome your feedback on your experiences of sharing information about land ownership and management and would like to hear about your experience as it is put into practice. You can contact the Scottish Land Commission Good Practice Programme at goodpractice@landcommission.gov.scot.

Why publish information on land ownership and management?

We recommend that all landholdings operating at scale should publish a summary of land ownership and management. Preparing this information creates an opportunity to connect the way land is owned and managed with local priorities. It also offers a chance to consider how land management aligns with LRRS principles and protocol expectations. Many landowners have seen the benefits that working towards the LRRS principles can bring and that being transparent about their ownership and management can have, both for their business and for delivering positive outcomes for communities.

Here are some of the benefits that transparency over land ownership and management can deliver:

For landowners –

- Supports a strong link between your strategic objectives and day-to-day work
- Helpful when prioritising key activities
- A useful management tool to provide direction and focus so everyone in the team knows what they are doing and can measure progress
- Provides a framework for regular review of your landholdings to make sure they are being used and managed in the most productive way
- Supports open communication – a point of access to information for people who want to find out more
- Opens up communication with different audiences
- Supports long-term planning and avoidance of surprises and contention with third parties
- Helps to provide clarity about what you aim to do and why and highlights what's being done/achieved
- Can make a valuable contribution to advocacy and policy work, by explaining the work you do and the benefits it brings in context.

For communities (of place or interest) –

- Helps them to understand what landowners and managers are doing and why
- Enables the mutual identification of areas of shared interest and opportunities to work together
- Provides an opportunity to identify where your estate or land can support local priorities or aspirations
- Can highlight opportunities for further engagement, for example through education or volunteering
- Can promote opportunities for people in the community to help deliver the plan, as employees, contractors or through local enterprise.

The land ownership and management case studies on our [website](#) provide examples of how landowners in different circumstances have gone beyond the minimum summary of land ownership and management, and developed broader management plans, and explain the benefits they have realised from doing this.

Land Rights and Responsibilities

The Scottish Government has published a statement of [Land Rights and Responsibilities](#) (LRRS). The statement sets out seven principles to achieve the vision of “a Scotland with a strong and dynamic relationship between its land and people, where all land contributes to a modern and successful country.”

All landowners should have regard to the LRRS principles and consider how the way they own and manage land aligns with these principles. This will help them to manage their land in a way that supports sustainable land use, economic and community development, contributes to the public interest, and provides opportunities for groups or individuals in local communities.

The Scottish Land Commission has developed a [series of protocols](#) and [good practice tools and guidance](#) to support the delivery of these principles in practice. The protocols set out practical advice on how landowners, land managers and communities can work together to make better – and fairer – decisions about land use. They include reasonable expectations that all parties can follow on a voluntary basis to improve the transparency, accountability, and governance of land.

Publishing a summary of information about land ownership and management can help landowners to meet the LRRS principles by improving transparency of information. Principle 6 states:

“There should be transparency about the ownership, use and management of land, and this information should be publicly available, clear and contain relevant detail.”

Publishing information can also support the other principles by helping local communities, businesses and individuals understand the landholding and engage effectively with the landowner. Principle 7 states:

“There should be meaningful collaboration and community engagement in decisions about land.”

Several of the Commission’s tools and protocols are directly relevant to land management planning and available in the [Good Practice area](#) of the website. This guide should help you to ensure that you are meeting the relevant protocol expectations in a way that best aligns with your strategic and business objectives.

What to include

Many landowners will already have strategic plans and/or management plans, and many have published or shared these. If that is the case, then publishing a summary of land ownership and management can help bring these together and make the information more accessible and useful for others who are interested, including the local community. A summary should not override other strategic plans but align with them and bring key points of different plans that relate to the land-based aspects of the business together.

If these plans don't already exist or aren't public, then preparing a summary of land ownership and management is a good step to improving understanding about the landholding and providing clarity on your key priorities.

You are not expected to share sensitive or commercial information. The summary is a way to share and engage with communities on your high-level, land management objectives, priorities, and opportunities.

Your summary may be a very short, one-page communications statement or a more complex document, depending on the type and nature of your business or project and your local context. It is important that your summary is *proportionate* to the type and scale of your landholding; and to the *impact* that the way you propose to manage it has on local communities and on the land itself. It should be short enough to be accessible and easy to read but contain enough relevant detail to help people understand who owns the land and how it is being managed.

To support our [protocol on Transparency in Land Ownership](#), we have produced an [information template](#). This sets out the information that should be easily available to the public, and helps landowners and managers compile relevant information for sharing. That includes information about who owns the land and who manages the land. It also includes sections that summarise the main objectives of land management alongside key activities and priorities.

Our template can be adapted to suit different kinds of landholdings. We have included two completed examples in our toolkit, one rural and one urban, showing how they can be used and the kind of information that might be included. This is a starting point. You can add to both the headings and the details, where it is useful to do so.

Most, if not all, of the information you will need for your summary should already be available within your business. But if you have not prepared one before, you might need to spend some time pulling the information together and identifying gaps that need to be filled.

Taking the template as a starting point, here are some examples of the sort of information your land management summary should include:

1. About the estate/landholding

- Provide the name of the estate or landholding
- Include title numbers from the [Land Register](#) where you have them
- State who owns or manages the land and the status of the landownership (e.g. company, Trust, partnership, charity)
- You should also include here details of anyone other than the owner with significant influence or control over the land, in line with the information detailed in the [UK Register of Overseas Entities](#) or the Scottish Government [Register of Persons Holding a Controlled Interest in Land](#)
- Describe where the land is and how much is under your ownership and/or management, in hectares or acres
- Provide some details about the land held
 - This does not need to be long or detailed but should set out some context, such as where the land is geographically, the sort of land it is, the habitats it covers and how it is managed (for example agricultural, woodland, commercial forestry, moorland, commercial uses, local population, housing)
 - It is useful to include or append a simple map showing your land boundary and main types of use where this is available, or multiple maps for land parcels that are not attached to one another
 - Some organisations also like to provide a short history of the estate or landholding in this section.

2. Overall purpose of ownership

- Outline the main aim of managing the land. Why do you own it? What are your main priorities? This helps people to understand the reason you own the land and get a sense of the kinds of activities they can expect and the factors that may influence your decision-making.

For many landowners, this section will link directly with your Strategic Plan or Business Plan. Some examples of statements from our case studies are provided below:

Our vision is: “A thriving and well-connected community with excellent local services and amenities, harnessing its natural assets to sustain a unique cultural and social environment.”
www.galsontrust.com

“We are committed to protecting and enhancing the natural, cultural and economic environment of the estate. Continued investment in the fabric of the business and an increasing focus on some of the wider National and Global influences (carbon crisis, net zero Scotland, community engagement, agro-forestry e.g.), are all shaping the future estate strategy.”
www.scone-estates.co.uk

3. Overview of management

This will be the main section of your summary. It should set out how the land is managed, including the main activities carried out on it (e.g. economic, social, environmental). This is where you should aim to summarise:

- **How different types/areas of land will be managed or developed**

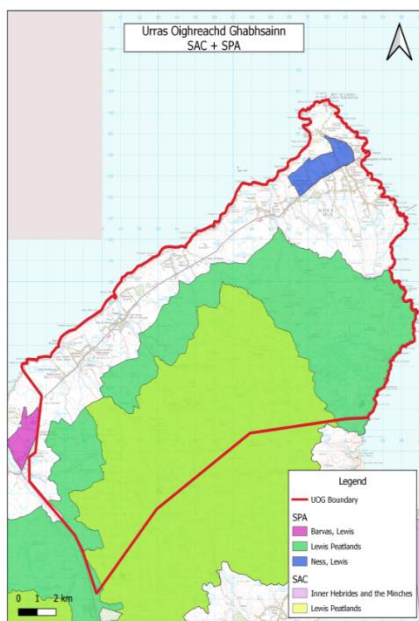
If you have a mixed activity estate or several different habitat zones, decide whether you can cover everything in one statement, or if it might be better to include a section for each type of land use.

Where the land is in geographically distinct parcels, decide whether you need a separate action plan and map for each site, especially if they include different habitats and/or impact on different geographic communities.

- **Any key stakeholders involved in managing the land who are not named elsewhere**

For example, you could list here any parts of your land that have a particular designation protected by a regulatory body. One such case could be [Sites of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)](#) which are designated by [NatureScot](#), who set out a site management statement detailing the management needed to conserve its protected natural features, and consents needed for certain operations.

Other statutory or non-statutory [designations](#) might apply to land used for [crofting](#) or for [heritage sites](#) of historic or cultural importance. You do not need to go into detail about these designations in your summary, but it would be appropriate to list what and where they are, if they apply to your land.



Other circumstances worth mentioning include whether any part of your landholding is being managed as part of a Woodland or Forest Management Plan, or being managed in line with the Woodland Carbon Code or Peatland Carbon Code.

Maps can be a great way to present complex information in an accessible and visual way, and can either be created in-house or through consultants.

Example: Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area of the Galson Estate

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- **Any significant changes you anticipate over the next few years**

This will vary depending on the type of land and your strategic priorities. A new development might be planned within the next five to ten years, for example, whereas a major rewilding strategy may look 200 years ahead. It would not be realistic to set out actions that far ahead (though it will be part of the strategic vision you include in your introduction, for example). However, you should still be able to identify the key interventions or activities you plan to take on the route to a longer-term goal within, say, a five-year period. We recommend that you limit your summary to a small number of top priorities unless your estate is very complex. If you have multiple strategic priorities, you might want to separate these out into short-, mid-, and long-term categories.

4. Alignment with other plans

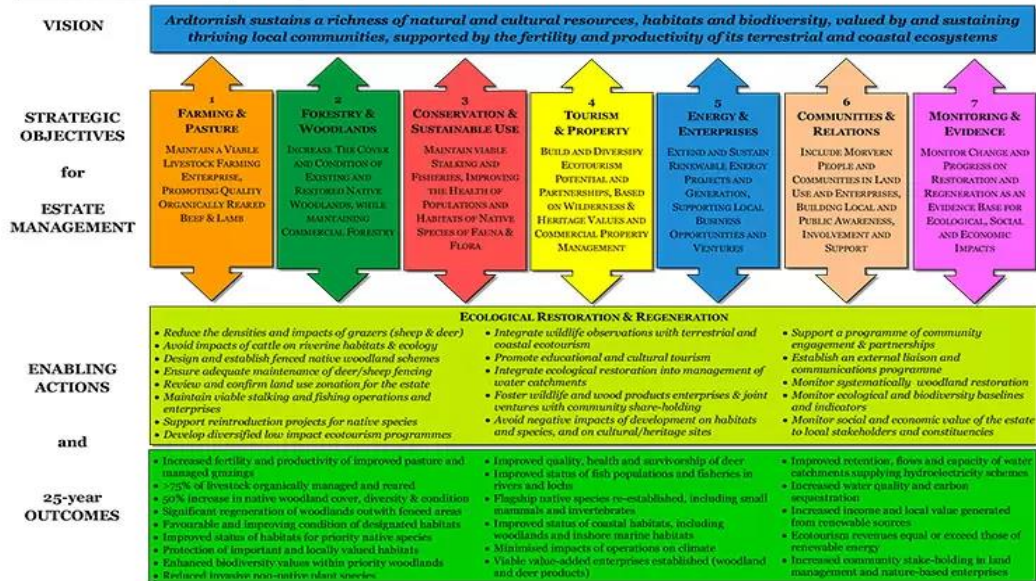
If you have not covered it in other sections, you may wish to set out here how your management approach aligns with or helps to support your own strategic objectives and delivers other local or national strategic plans.

These might include (but not be limited to):

- Local Place plans
- Community Action Plans
- Local Development Plans
- Regional Land Use Plans
- Scotland's Forestry Strategy
- National Climate Change Plan
- Forest/Woodland Management Plans
- The National Outcomes Framework.



LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2018-2043
Strategy & Framework at a Glance



Example: Strategic vision links to land management planning, Ardtornish Estate

5. Contact details

Provide main contact details for the owners, managers, or agents of the land, including any local contacts. These should include registered address, email, and phone number, and links to a website if you have one. You do not need to provide private or personal contact details, as long as you have general contact details that allow members of the public to reach someone who can provide information or makes decisions relating to the landholding.

Balancing priorities

Getting the balance right between external policy and regulations, core objectives, community input and financial sustainability can be challenging. Every organisation or estate will approach this differently, depending on their structure, strategic priorities, and available funding.

As with any plan, there will be some things that you *have* to consider. These include (but may not be limited to):

- Legal obligations
- Health and safety requirements on site
- Conditions of any designated status (e.g. SSSI status) or codes (e.g. Peatland Code)
- Conditions of grant or other funding.

Once these have been met, the organisations we spoke to in our case studies found that having clear strategic goals for their organisation or business then helped to set a clear framework for their land management priorities.

Every organisation will, of course, need to take account of the resources they expect to have available during the period of the summary, whether from charitable income or commercial funding streams. Your income and available staffing resources might affect the pace at which you develop actions within your summary and will need to be reviewed or revised if circumstances change.

Our [Protocol on Good Stewardship of Land](#) sets out several areas that you should also consider, such as maintaining land and buildings in a manner supportive of sustainable development, contributing to health, culture and environment, and participating in community engagement. You will need to decide how best to apply these in the context of your own landholding, your strategic objectives, and the resources you have available. Looking at them together should help you identify which aspects of your land management will have the biggest impacts – positive or negative – on the environment and on neighbouring communities, and to subsequently identify what can be changed, in what order, and in what timescale. Considering these questions collectively in your management and planning can help deliver the best improvements.

Engagement and collaboration

Engagement helps landowners, communities, and other stakeholders develop positive relationships, and to work together for the benefit of local areas.

A summary of land ownership and management information will provide a means to connect to wider economic, community and place planning at local and regional levels (for example, through community action plans, place plans, health and social care strategies, local development plans and [regional land use partnerships](#), as they are developed).

Working with local communities and other organisations can take time. But the long-term benefits are likely to make this a positive investment. It provides the opportunity to share (non-commercially sensitive) information and data, and to identify and define shared objectives and priorities. This can help to prioritise your activities, share resources, and inform better decision-making. Communities and landowners often have access to different knowledge, support, and resources; pooling these can help achieve mutual aspirations.

Input and feedback from your local community can help to identify new ideas and opportunities for mutual benefit, and also ensure that projects or actions taken forward are stronger and more sustainable with community support. [Early engagement](#) can also help to identify issues of potential concern or conflict for communities, so that plans can be discussed and addressed at an early stage and before resources are spent on developing detailed plans.

Standards for community engagement practices are set out in the Scottish Government guidance on [Engaging Communities in Decisions Relating to Land](#) and the [National](#)

[Standards for Community Engagement](#). Our own [practice guide](#), [route map](#) and [planning matrix](#) will help you to develop a short plan and to identify proportionate engagement activities that are based on the potential impact of an activity or decision.

Land may also be managed in partnership with another organisation, such as a community group or Trust, such as in the following examples from the Case Studies on our website:

- At [Loch Arkaig](#) and at [Doune Ponds](#), woodlands are managed jointly under different ownership or in partnership arrangements set out in formal agreements.
- A Landscape Partnership such as at [Cumbernauld](#) may also include a number of private, statutory and community organisations, delivering a land management plan together.

Monitoring and review

Your summary should be reviewed on a regular basis to make sure the information in it is still up to date, and so that you can amend your summary to adapt it to changing circumstances or priorities.

How often you do this will depend very much on the type of landholding you manage and how complex your operations are. Many organisations conduct a review of strategic and management objectives at least every five years, and if doing so, this would be a good time to update your summary. If significant changes will affect the ownership or management of your estate, you should update the summary more often.

How you monitor your summary will depend on the actions that you have identified as being relevant for your own landholding. Our case studies include a few examples of different approaches that are being taken.

Sharing your summary

Having put the work into developing and updating your summary, sharing and/or situating your summary somewhere that it can be easily found is key to connecting your summary to its intended audiences. This can be done online on your website, in a manner that is simple and accessible, and can be supported by diagrams and maps where appropriate. Other options, such as publishing a brief notice on social media, in local newsletters, or to relevant previous and current contacts, can also help in connecting your summary to its intended audiences.

Other practical considerations

If you have never developed a summary of land ownership and management before, it might take some time to pull together all the information you need. For a one-page summary based on our [Transparency Template](#), this may only take a few hours, especially if you already have the information available.

Large landholdings and more complex estates with different priorities and desired outcomes might produce a longer summary, including an action plan to identify priority actions over

the plan period. Our case study participants have all approached this in different ways. All are still relatively short documents – generally just a few pages, including maps and photographs and a short action plan.

You will need to decide on the best person in your organisation to develop the summary, and set some time aside for doing so. Not all case study participants were directly involved in land management themselves. More important for preparing the summary is a thorough understanding of your business – why you own the land, what your main priorities for it are, and how land management connects to your other business priorities. Someone with a strategic overview might therefore be best placed to develop a draft summary, although they might also need input from other colleagues or experts on particular aspects of it.

Our case studies for [Ardtornish](#) and [Galson](#) provide useful insights into how very different estates have approached the practical process of putting together their first plans. They all started by taking time to gather information, to speak to as many experts as possible, and to engage with local communities.

Other case studies, such as the Woodland Trust's site at Loch Arkaig, look at sites managed by national conservation charities. These tend to have a clear process for their [plans](#), based on nationally agreed objectives applied in a local context.

One approach that can work well for larger businesses is to employ professional agents or engagement specialists to support directly employed staff, who can then bring in additional planning expertise and support.

Whatever approach you take to creating and sharing a summary, it is important that it is accessible and easily understood by ordinary members of the public. Technical details such as monitoring data can be kept in separate appendices, with links to other plans where they are relevant. It should be a short, easy-to-read summary, available for anyone who wants a quick overview.

Useful links and information

The **case studies** on our website explore a number of different approaches being taken by private and charitable estates and organisations, and the lessons learned from them. These include:

- [Ardtornish Estate](#)
- [Buccleuch Estates](#)
- [Crown Estate Scotland](#)
- [Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn \(Galson Estate Trust\)](#)
- [JAHAMA Highland Estates \(JHE\)](#)
- [Scone Estates](#)
- [Woodland Trust – Loch Arkaig Pine Forest.](#)

Several of our other case studies illustrate the importance and practical aspects of community engagement in land management planning. These include:

- [Applecross Community Land Use Plan](#)
- [Cumbernauld Living Landscape Partnership](#)
- [Doune Ponds Community Woodland](#)
- [Eigg, Timber Eiggxport](#)
- [RSPB Insh Marshes](#)
- [West Harris Trust.](#)

We add to our case studies on a regular basis, and you can browse the whole [portfolio here](#). If you have experience or know of examples that would be useful to share, please let us know.

Membership organisations, including all the members of our [Good Practice Advisory Group](#), also regularly produce case studies, practice guidance, information, and briefing papers relevant to specific land-based sectors. They can often also provide or signpost members to professional and practical advice, including other members who are often willing to share their experience.

There may also be local or regional networks that you can engage with to share knowledge and ideas. For example, the Woodland Trust at Loch Arkaig and Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (Galson Estate Trust) network with neighbouring landowners to collaborate on shared objectives.

Practice examples

Here are a few examples of different approaches being taken by our case study participants:

- The [Galson Estate Trust](#) in Lewis is developing a shortlist of intended outputs for each of their key themes – Flora and Fauna, People, and Heritage. More details will be included in a short appendix for each outcome, which provide a short summary of the current position, links to other policies or strategies, and any actions being taken or explored further within the plan period.
- The [Woodland Trust Loch Arkaig](#) woodland site has a plan framework that covers planted and semi-natural ancient woodlands and open ground habitats. It also links specifically to the Arkaig Community Woodland partnership, and to connecting people with woodlands.
- [Ardtornish Estate](#) is developing a *Land Resource Management Strategy* with enabling actions aligned to their strategic objectives for estate management. They aim to rebuild the ecology of the area, whilst being mindful of their responsibilities to support employment and a thriving community.
- [Scone Estates](#) are developing a Masterplan that will link up the different business activities across their estates. This has followed extensive work over the last few years to review all activities and develop forward planning, focusing especially on where their land assets could be used differently and where there are opportunities to talk to communities.
- [Buccleuch Estates](#) have a public land management statement that summarises the purpose of their land management. They have developed a vision with guiding principles that guides their decision-making consistently across all their estates. Their mechanisms for weighing up relative priorities within that framework employs land-use strategy groups, working across the business, and through their community engagement strategy.
- [JAHAMA Highland Estates](#) are developing an approach that integrates the environmental, economic, recreational and community aspects of their businesses, including land management. An outline project programme is being developed from extensive and ongoing engagement.
- [Crown Estate Scotland](#) is engaging with local communities and key stakeholders to co-develop long-term plans with five-year action plans. Their framework document and corporate plan oblige the estate to maintain and enhance their assets and value. But alongside this is a clear duty to achieve sustainable development and manage the estate in a way that delivers for communities.

Other good practice resources from the Scottish Land Commission

We have produced various **Good Practice Resources**, which we update and add to on a regular basis, and which might be helpful in developing your summary of land ownership and management. They include:

- Transparency – Estate Information [Template](#)
- [Practice Guide](#) for Developing an Engagement Plan
- Engagement Plan [Route Map](#)
- Community Engagement – [Useful resources](#)
- Engagement Planning [Template](#)
- [Information Map](#) for Landowners
- Good Stewardship – [Supporting Information](#) and Links
- [Community Wealth Building and Land](#) – a practice guide for public bodies that own, manage and influence the use of land in Scotland.