



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

**Commissioners Meeting**  
**7 May 2024, An Lòchran, Inverness**

**A G E N D A**

Item no	Item	Paper no	Action	Lead
	Welcome/Apologies			
	Declarations of Interest			
1.	Minutes of the previous meeting	1	For agreement	Chair
2.	Commissioner Updates		For information	Commissioners
3.	Land Reform Bill Update	Verbal Briefing	For information	Hamish Trench
4.	Land Reform Bill Draft submission to NZET committee – Call for views <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Draft Submission</li></ul>	2 Annex A	For agreement	Hamish Trench
5.	Vacant land and derelict land progress report – update on key findings.	3	For discussion	David Stewart
6.	Land governance workstream – research on international experience in natural resource governance – update on phrase 1 of research.	4	For information	James MacKessack-Leitch
7.	Quarterly Progress report – Q4 of 2023/24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Delivery</li><li>Finance</li><li>Risk</li><li>Communications</li><li>Casework Summary</li></ul>	5 Annex A Annex B Annex C Annex D Annex E	For discussion	Hamish Trench
8.	Medium term financial planning	6	For discussion	Hamish Trench
9.	Conference Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Conference Programme</li></ul>	7 Annex A	For information	Scarlett Macfarlane
10.	AOB			

12pm – 1.30pm Photo's – Room 0.03

1.30pm - 3.30pm – Rural land for Housing (Roundtable) meeting Room 0.01 & 0.02

Please note sandwiches will be provided from 12pm in room 0.01



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
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**Minute of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on 5 March 2024 at An Lòchran, Inverness.**

**Commissioners Present:** Michael Russell (Chair) Lorne MacLeod, Sally Reynolds, Deb Roberts (Land Commissioners) Bob McIntosh (Tenant Farming Commissioner)

**In Attendance:** Hamish Trench, Nikki Nagler, Emma Cooper, David Stewart, Claire Bremner, Caron Munro, Felicity Peall (Scottish Land Commission)

**Apologies:** Craig Mackenzie (Land Commissioner)

**Declarations of interest:** None

#### **1. Minutes of previous meeting 6 February 2024**

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate reflection of the discussion held. No amendments required.

#### **2. Commissioners Updates**

Commissioners provided an update on relevant activities representing the Commission since the last Board meeting, including the Rural Housing Scotland conference attended by Lorne in February. Michael and Deb indicated they would welcome the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Good Practice Advisory Group.

#### **3. Land Reform Bill**

Commissioners noted the Board's recent positive meeting with the Cabinet Secretary. Hamish confirmed that while the timing for the bill remains unknown, staff will draft initial communications for use when the bill is published, and key information will be circulated to the board when it is known.

<b>Action: 24030501</b>	<b>Nikki to prepare communications plan in anticipation of the land reform bill publication</b>
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#### **4. Audit and Risk Committee Chair Report**

Lorne introduced the paper and provided key points from the recent ARC meeting, noting that it was Craig and Deb's first ARC meeting. He also reported on a recent meeting of the Audit Chairs network which emphasised the challenging public finance climate and the expectation that public bodies will need to plan for continued constrained resource.

## 5. 24/25 Business Plan and Budget

Hamish presented the 24/25 Business Plan and budget noting it responds to the priorities agreed by the board at the last meeting as well as our strategic plan and programme of work. He noted the need for the Commission to retain a degree of flexibility in being able to respond to the land reform bill as and when it is published.

He noted that the 24/25 budget is in a different position from previous years, being fully committed for the financial year due to higher staffing and other operating costs as well as ongoing delivery commitments. He noted this provides greater certainty on spend than previous years, backed by the staff capacity to deliver, but means we have less flexibility in financial spend through the year.

The Board agreed the business plan sets out an appropriate focus for delivery. Commissioners sought more information about the plans for budget management given the higher costs and reduced flexibility.

The Board asked that further consideration be given to where savings can be made within the financial year in order to increase flexibility. The board also agreed that there should be no presumption that vacant posts are filled as and when a vacancy arises, given this is one of the identified levers to reduce fixed costs.

The Board agreed the annual business plan subject to minor text amendments and budget adjustments that reduce the over-programming.

<b>Action: 24030502</b>	Management team to finalise business plan for publication and identify where budget savings can be made.
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## 6. Communications – Brand Identity and Website review

The Board agreed to take this item next on the agenda given the link to the business plan and budget.

Scarlett introduced the paper, noting the risks of the current website provision and the lack of accessibility. She clarified the proposed work on brand identity is practical work to improve the usability of our current branding and does not involve rebranding work.

The Board raised concern about the potential level of spend being required in relation to value for money and to the overall budget constraints. Scarlett confirmed that the core work required is to replace our current bespoke web platform with one that no longer relies on a single provider. The Board agreed that the Commission should not currently spend resource on branding, other than the practical improvements Scarlett proposed such as ensuring we have access to necessary fonts without additional charges.

The Board acknowledged that a phased approach to website improvements is likely to be required with the overall purpose being to improve the resilience and accessibility of the website, and the impact of our work.

The Board agreed that in the context of the business plan budget overall, a maximum budget of £20,000 should be allocated within the financial year to the website review and asked staff to reconsider the approach to what is deliverable within this.

<b>Action: 24030503</b>	<b>Scarlett and Nikki to implement a revised approach to website improvements within the agreed budget</b>
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## 7. Land for Housing

David introduced his paper on Land for housing “scoping the next steps” for discussion. The Board welcomed the proposed approach, emphasising the opportunity for the Commission to provide leadership and a convening role to seek progress.

The Board considered the links between the urban and rural context, noting the underlying systemic issues are very similar. David noted that we are currently engaged in work to support Town Centre Living as well as reviewing progress on vacant and derelict land. The board agreed the need for a specific focus on rural housing land supply, given the challenge this currently poses to rural Scotland.

The Board agreed that appropriate research work is in hand and the priority should be to find ways to translate this work into practical action. The board discussed the opportunity for leadership by public land owners, for example through the functions of Forestry and Land Scotland and local authorities.

The Board agreed to hold a roundtable event on the day of the next Board meeting with key partners invited to identify practical actions that can be taken.

<b>Action: 24030504</b>	<b>Hamish and David to arrange for May a Roundtable meeting with the board and key stakeholders focused on action on rural housing land supply.</b>
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## **8. Natural Capital work and context**

The Board welcomed the overview given by Emma of our current work and the wider context of the Scottish Government policy and programme. The Board agreed our focus should continue to be on a) supporting implementation of community benefit and b) addressing the wider risks that natural capital value could reinforce the concentration of land ownership and benefit.

## **9. Cyber Security Briefing**

Claire provided a briefing on key issues for board members to be aware of including the importance of email security and an update on the recent phishing test campaign.

The Board welcomed the assurance given through current systems and the regular testing, noting the need for continued vigilance from all. The board sought assurance that the Commission has appropriate business continuity arrangements in place. Claire confirmed there is a Business Continuity Plan and Cyber Incident Plan in place with key roles and processes identified.

The Board asked that regular cyber security updates are provided through board meetings and that all members should undertake appropriate training as available.

<b>Action: 24030505</b>	<b>Arrange Cyber security training for the board of commissioners.</b>
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## **10. Freedom of Information Briefing**

Caron briefed the Board on our obligations regarding Freedom of Information requests, noting under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 that anyone can request information. Once a request has been received the Commission has 20 days to make a response.

Caron emphasised the need for appropriate record keeping noting that information in all forms or channels is within scope and must be provided when an FOI request is made.

## **11. AOB: Casework Update**

Emma briefed the Board on some recent casework updates and discussed the current outcomes to these. The board noted the level of casework associated with public bodies and the leadership role public land owners should be playing.

## **Human Rights Bill Scrutiny Bodies**

Hamish highlighted that Scottish Government has confirmed the intention that the Commission will be identified as a 'scrutiny body' within the proposed Human Rights Bill, which will bring some additional duties and further traction to embedding a human rights approach to land reform.

**Date of Next Meeting: 07 May 2024**

**Scottish Land Commission  
March 2024**



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
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**Commissioners' Meeting 7 May 2024  
An Lòchran, Inverness**

**PAPER 2**

**Land Reform Bill – Draft submission to NZET Committee Call for Views**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To consider the draft submission to the NZET Committee's call for views on the land reform bill
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Action required:</b>	For agreement

The Land Reform Bill was introduced to Parliament on 13<sup>th</sup> March and Parliament has designated the Net Zero, Energy and Transport (NZET) Committee as the lead committee.

The Committee has opened a Call for Views on the Bill, seeking responses to 31 questions, to be submitted by 21<sup>st</sup> May. This forms a key part of the Stage 1 consideration by Parliament, on the general principles of the Bill.

The Commission intends to submit a response to the Committee's Call for Views, drawing on our published research and our advice to Ministers. The Committee may in due course ask the Commission to give evidence to the Committee, based on our submission.

Annex A provides a draft submission for the Questions on Part 1 of the Bill for consideration. We also intend to respond to the questions on Part 2 (tenant farming), to be informed by engagement with the Tenant Farming Advisory Forum.

The board is asked to consider and agree our submission, key revisions or additions sought and arrangements for sign-off to enable submission by 21<sup>st</sup> May.

***Hamish Trench***  
***Chief Executive***



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### PAPER 3

#### Vacant and Derelict Land – Review of Progress

<b>Purpose:</b>	To inform the Board of key findings from research into progress of re-use of Vacant and Derelict Land and discuss next steps.
<b>Business Plan context:</b>	<b>5. Advising on policy and practice to support land development and regeneration:</b> Review progress to support momentum in tackling vacant and derelict land
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	June 2020; October 2023
<b>Action required:</b>	For discussion

#### 1. Introduction and Background

Our 23/24 Business Plan set out the intention to undertake a stock-take of action to support re-use of Vacant and Derelict Land undertaken since the 2020 publication of the Vacant and Derelict Land Task Force recommendations.

To do this we commissioned research to enable us to assess progress, highlight where further focus is required and maintain momentum in the re-use of vacant and derelict land.

#### 2. Scope of Research

The research, undertaken by Ryden:

- sets out the changes in the (supportive) policy environment;
- lists and analyses the funds and policies that support land re-use;
- provides updated data on land re-use and the extent of vacant land;
- reviews progress with different categories of re-use (e.g. housing, greenspace);
- reviews progress with re-use with previously set site typologies (including a review of progress with 60 previously identified sites);

- provides in-depth case studies where long vacant land has been re-used.

### 3. Key Findings

#### ***Positive Policy Environment***

The report finds that re-use of VDL is now more thoroughly embedded in land use strategy and policy, with changes since the Taskforce recommendations including:

##### NPF4

The new [National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4). NPF4 has two clear overriding objectives – to deliver net zero and to support biodiversity net gain. For urban development, this will require a change to our approach to the way we create new places with a focus on land re-use and the creation of higher density 20-minute neighbourhoods.

##### Infrastructure Investment Plan

The [IIP](#) sets out priorities for major capital investment for five years to 2026. It prioritises progress to net zero and sets out a use hierarchy which prioritises re-use over new build.

##### National Economic Transformation Strategy

The strategy sets out plans to move to a wellbeing economy. Key elements are the transition to net zero and reducing inequality. A focus on land re-use and the circular economy is an important part of the [strategy](#).

Future Policy Reforms:

##### Reform of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) and Introduction of Compulsory Sales Orders (CSOs)

The Scottish Government has committed to review and reform CPO legislation in the [Programme for Government](#), and to consider the proposal for Compulsory Sales Orders. CPOs and CSOs have the potential to enable re-use of vacant and derelict land and buildings.

#### ***Re-use of VDL***

Re-use of Vacant Land has increased since the Task Force report was published – when the review was published Scotland had just under 11,000 ha of land on the VDL Register. That figure has reduced to 9,237 ha. This is welcome progress, but it remains the case that half of Scotland's population lives within 1 kilometre of a vacant and derelict site.

The report finds the flow of new sites coming on to the register has also slowed.

Encouragingly the report finds that 20% of the most challenging long term vacant sites have been re-used, with the most likely re-use for residential development. Overall, housing accounts for 51% of sites re-used.

### ***Delivery of Task Force Recommendations***

*KLTR Ownerless Property Transfer Scheme:* in March this year the King's and Lord Treasurer's and Remembrancer launched its Ownerless Property Transfer Scheme (OPTS). The scheme offers to transfer ownerless properties to groups who demonstrate that they can bring properties back into a use in the public interest. The scheme is a direct result of work by the Scottish Land Commission and is a tool to increase community ownership and productive re-use of vacant land and buildings. SLC continues to support the work of the KLTR in this area, with Gemma Campbell representing the Commission on the OPTS Advisory Panel. Further details can be found on their website: <https://www.kltr.gov.uk/bona-vacantia/ownerless-property-transfer-scheme-opts>

*Launch of Vacant and Derelict Land Scotland Hub* - the first recommendation made by the VDL Task Force was for better use of data to enable re-use of vacant and derelict land, including digital, searchable information. The Scottish Government and the Improvement Service have developed an online searchable map of vacant and derelict land in response to this. It is expected to launch in the next month as the Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Information Hub.

*The Vacant and Derelict Land Improvement Programme* is a challenge fund that was introduced by the Scottish Government in response to the Task Force recommendations. The programme has supported many excellent land re-use projects since its introduction (as noted in the Ryden report). Unfortunately, both the VDLIP and the Regeneration Capital Grant (another fund that has supported land re-use) have been suspended this year due to the tight fiscal environment.

### **Areas needing further focus**

Given financial and market challenges the report suggests that sustaining the current rate of re-use would be a reasonable aim in the short-term.

The research notes that funding for VDL re-use has improved, but that a further shift to regional, patient capital rather than one-off competitive rounds would likely achieve further progress.

It highlights the lack of specific funding to support re-use by the private sector (compared to England which has a significant fund to support land re-use which is open to private developers).

It also notes the different needs of major area-based interventions and small infill sites, which will continue to need different resource and capacity support.

The report also identifies an opportunity for further work to embed the approach to taking wider economic, social and nature value into account in appraisal and finance decisions, building on the work the Commission published looking at full economic appraisal.

## **4. How We Use This Report**

We see three ways to use the research report:

- a) To inform recommendations for further action;
- b) To communicate and celebrate progress;
- c) To support the work of others and maintain a national focus on re-use of vacant and derelict land.

The Commission's role in relation to vacant and derelict land is one of providing leadership, research and a convening function to maintain a national focus on reusing these sites. Delivery is in the hands of others.

### ***Recommendations for further action***

We propose the Commission should draw from the Ryden report recommendations for key actions that would deliver further re-use. These would address key issues identified in the report including a shift to longer term strategic funding rather than short-term competitive funds, the role of financing with private developers, and the opportunity to further develop green infrastructure investment.

We propose to consider these areas further with key partners before seeking the board's agreement to further recommendations.

### ***Communicating and celebrating progress***

The research report highlights a significant reduction in the total amount of vacant and derelict land. Giving this recognition can help maintain and further develop momentum. The report also contains a wealth of data, statistics and case studies and we propose to explore the communications opportunities to use this more widely to engage people in the issues and the work of the Commission.

### ***Supporting others and maintaining a national focus***

The research can help inform and guide the work of many partners who have a delivery role. We will engage with key organisations to discuss the findings, implications and opportunities.

### ***Publication***

We are speaking with key partners prior to publication and will publish the report together with a briefing paper by the Commission and, if agreed, recommendations for action.

### ***Conclusion***

Three years on from the Taskforce recommendations this research shows significant progress in re-use of vacant and derelict land. There is positive change on the ground as well as changes in policy and practice that respond to the Taskforce's recommendations.

The Commission should use this report to share and communicate this progress and positive impact and to stimulate further focus and momentum on re-use of vacant and derelict land.

***David Stewart***

***Policy and Practice Lead***



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**PAPER 4**

**Natural Resource Governance Research**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To update Commissioners on progress with research on Natural Resource Governance
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Action required:</b>	For information

**Background and Progress to Date**

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) was commissioned by the Scottish Land Commission to undertake an analysis of mechanisms and governance approaches to securing public value from natural resources. The aim of this research is to build an understanding of how different approaches to natural resource management can deliver public and community value, with a focus on governance structures which can retain and generate this value.

The research is broken into two phases, of which Phase 1 is now complete. This phase of the research focussed on identifying the main issues in relation to retaining/obtaining public and community value through natural resource management, as well as shortlisting case studies for development in Phase 2.

The findings present a comprehensive literature review exploring three key research questions:

1. How have past/do current mechanisms for capturing natural resource value effect the flow of wealth within local economies?
2. How do ownership and governance structures influence the ways in which citizens broadly control the wealth invested in/generated by natural resource value?
3. How do ownership and governance structures influence the non-market value that can be derived from natural resources, and how can this influence local communities and wider society?

The Phase 1 report begins with a critical analysis of natural capital wealth flows using a community wealth building (CWB) lens. It then moves on to the literature review where it addresses the research questions through different models of ownership, different natural resource management and different scales of governance. It moves

on to demonstrate the different case studies selected and poses the Phase 2 research questions.

The literature review draws on evidence from onshore and offshore wind, oil and gas, and water governance, covering themes including: community ownership; shared ownership; tax; national resource companies; disturbance payments; public ownership and procurement; land ownership; and investor motivations.

In addition, the Phase 1 report outlines a longlist of fourteen prospective case studies for deeper exploration, which demonstrate different forms of value derived from approaches to natural resource management and natural capital. Six case studies for further exploration in Phase 2 have been identified and rationale has been given for their selection.

### **Next Steps**

The immediate output from Phase 1 will be a longlist of case studies document (currently in development with the Comms Team), due to be published ahead of Conference. A member of the CLES team will be a speaker on the afternoon panel discussion.

The Phase 2 work is underway, looking in more detail at the six shortlisted case studies, identifying common themes and insights to draw conclusions about overarching barriers and enablers to delivering public/community value from investment in, and use of, natural resource value, with a focus on investment/reinvestment and governance structures. This will form the basis for the critical analysis.

The critical analysis will draw together findings from Phase 1 and 2, to articulate principles for natural resource governance, lessons for Scotland, and if appropriate, recommendations for policy.

Phase 2 is due to be complete by mid-July, and we anticipate the final combined report will be published in the autumn.

### **Board Action**

Commissioners are asked to note the progress to date, and the intended next steps.

***James MacKessack-Leitch***  
***Policy & Practice Lead***



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**PAPER 5**

**Quarterly Progress Report**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To review quarterly progress for Qtr. 4
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	February 2024 Quarterly Progress Report
<b>Action required:</b>	For discussion

The quarterly progress reports maintain oversight of progress against the Business Plan through the year. This report covers the final quarter of the 23/24 Business Plan. The table below shows current status against the Strategic Plan KPIs.

KPI MEASUREMENT	2023/24 TARGET	Progress
<b>DELIVERY</b>		
% of planned outputs in annual business plans delivered	95%	Delivered/On track: 82%
		Delayed/Changed: 18%
		<b>See ANNEX A</b>
<b>STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS</b>		
Feedback as reported through perceptions audits	Maintain or increase perceived impact	Next audit due 2024
<b>STAFF SATISFACTION</b>		
% reported staff satisfaction in staff surveys	Increase	Nov 2023: 62% relatively or extremely satisfied
<b>FINANCE</b>		
End of year out-turn	Within 2% of total allocated budget	<b>See ANNEX B</b> – projected 4%

The report comprises four annexes:

- a) Delivery Progress:** Annex A sets out the RAG assessment and progress commentary for delivery against our 23/24 Business Plan. Highlights in Quarter 4 include:

- Delivery of significant commissioned research on vacant and derelict land, rural housing and natural resource governance and rural land market insights;
- Events and engagement supporting land rights and responsibilities leadership;
- Preparation for consideration of land reform bill.

**b) Finance Review:** Annex B provides a summary of our budget position at the year-end. Please note this is not a final out-turn position due to some final adjustments that are made through the annual reporting process.

**c) Audit and Risk:** The Strategic Risk Register is provided at Annex C.

**d) Communications:** Annex D provides a summary of communications activity over Quarter 4 and a look ahead.

## **Other Updates**

### **Staffing**

During Quarter 4 we welcomed Scarlett Macfarlane as Communications and Engagement Manager, Megan Donnelly as Finance Officer and Felicity Peall on a permanent basis as Corporate Services Assistant.

The externally funded post of Communities and Green Finance Project Lead in partnership with the Cairngorms National Park Authority is currently being recruited.

Claire Bremner (Finance and Business Systems Lead) will be leaving the Commission in August and we have begun recruitment for this post.

**Hamish Trench**  
**Chief Executive**

PAPER ANNEX A: Delivery Report					
*RAG Status:	Delivery on track	Delivery delayed or changed	Risk of non-delivery		
Theme	Priority	Activity	Planned Outputs	Progress Commentary	RAG
Reforming land rights	Providing advice and evidence to Scottish Government, Parliament and stakeholders on the proposed Land Reform Bill and other Bills where relevant	Provide evidence and advice to Scottish Government, Parliament and stakeholders to support development of the Land Reform Bill, as well as Agriculture, CWB and Human Rights Bills	Advice & evidence on land reform bill through parliamentary process	Research on learning from French experience of SAFER model published Nov; Summary of SLC research & recommendations published; Initial comms published on introduction of LR Bill.	
			Advice to inform the Community Wealth Building Bill (see Tenant Farming re Advice on Agric Bill)	Response to CWB Bill submitted. Work on Common Good rescheduled to 24/25	
			Human Rights Advisory Forum - regular meetings/advice	1 meeting held in Qtr 3 focused on recent legal updates and SLC work	
	Providing advice for policy and practice on diversifying the pattern of land ownership	Review and promote practical ways to diversify the ownership and governance of land holdings	Community Land Ownership Leadership Group re-established to coordinate leadership in developing community land ownership & governance	Meeting held in Qtr 4 focused on asset transfer; CLLG notified of bill and CRTB review by Minister – for 24/25 workplan. SLC supported development of Community Land Academic Network research portal.	
			Advice and guidance publications to support the sector to diversify ownership and governance	23/24 work complete Briefing paper on governance published; Guidance on disposals policy for land owners ready for publication; Stakeholder event on governance futures held Nov. Work progressing in 24/25 Business Plan	
			Work with land owners to support and test a range of practical approaches to	Land Governance Adviser in post Qtr 3 and project plan in place. Commissioned discussion paper on	

			diversifying governance and ownership	Woodland Crofts ready for publication; collaboration on small-scale land holdings to continue in 24/25 incl collaboration with Crofting Commission	
			Collaboration with Crown Estate Scotland to pilot Community Ownership Accelerator initiative to enable community land acquisition	Project Manager appointed by CES; Project formally started Qtr 3, project board in place. Phase 1 underway with legal advice, stakeholder engagement, process design.	
<b>Reforming land markets</b>	Providing advice for policy and practice on natural capital, the land market and a just transition	Keep under review the implications of emerging natural capital value in the land market	Rural land markets insight and analysis publications and long-term monitoring approach agreed with partners	2022 Land market insights report published Qtr 1; Land market data report published Nov. Partnership for next 3 years agreed with SRUC. Insights report for 2023 year received, work ongoing for data report in 24/25 business plan.	
		Advise on responsible approaches to securing community benefit from natural capital investment and value	Advice on community benefit in natural capital investment to inform SG market framework	Completed & ongoing 24/25. Co-lead on community benefits in SG PINC working group. Community benefits principle adopted by BSI UK Gov nature market standards work. Phase 1 of research on international experience in governance of natural resources completed Qtr 4. Phase 2 in 24/25 business plan.	
		Encourage adoption of good practice in delivering community benefit in	Completed & ongoing in 24/25. Recruiting for Communities &		

			natural capital projects by providing support, advice and publishing guidance	Green Finance Project Lead; funding for further posts in progress. Community Benefits Advisory Group well attended. Ongoing advice to landowners, communities and investors.	
	Providing advice for policy and practice on land development and regeneration	Review progress to support momentum in tackling vacant and derelict land	Stock-take of action on delivering the recommendations of the Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce	Scope agreed by board Oct; Research report completed Qtr 4 for publication/next steps in 24/25 business plan.	
		Support more effective approaches to land assembly for housing and development	Community of practice to support and develop negotiated approaches to land assembly & contribute to NPF4 Delivery Plan	Internal scoping of approach completed Qtr 1 & informed by stakeholder workshop Aug; Approach reshaped Qtr 4 following SG discussions. Stand-alone group considered not most effective route. To be taken forward through 24/25 business plan.	
			Advice to support Remote, Rural and Islands Housing Plan and rural repopulation pilots	Participation in SG Planning, Infrastructure & Place Advisory Group; advised SG on rural & Islands Action Plan; using published research to inform options; New rural housing research underway for reporting 24/25 Qtr 1. Board roundtable on housing scheduled 7 May.	
<b>Responsible land ownership and use</b>	Strengthening practical implementation of the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (LRRS)	Deliver an effective Good Practice Programme to support land owners, managers and communities to implement in practice the	Promote refreshed Good Practice Advice Service to support the practical implementation of LRRS	Put on hold to 24/25 due to evolving context with Land Reform Bill	
			Respond to casework enquiries and requests for advice on LRRS implementation	See Quarterly casework report	

		principles of the LRRS across urban and rural Scotland.	Develop further approaches to LRRS self-assessments, identifying opportunities to scale-up in 2024/25	Refreshed template being piloted; Leadership in good practice event in Q4 in LLTNP	
			Improve access to and uptake for internally created learning resources, tools and guides	Preparing changes to improve website information delayed to 24/25 due to staff vacancies	
			Deliver a programme of CPD training on LRRS for land agents	Reprioritised due to staff vacancies – scoping disc held Qtr 4, first event scheduled for 12 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	
			Work with Scottish Forestry and the forestry sector to improve approaches to community engagement and benefit	Supporting Confor with engagement training; new guidance from SF published on engagement.	
			Publish a report on casework and advice to inform future policy and practice	Completed.	
<b>Tenant Farming</b>	Tenant Farming Commissioner (TFC)	Support good relations between agricultural landlords and tenants	Codes of Practice and Guidance	New Guidance on Tree Planting developed	
			Casework enquiries and advice on implementation of Codes and Guidance	Ongoing casework	
			Mediation panel	No applications to date; review with mediators undertaken with refresh planned 24/25	
		Statutory appointment of valuers as per Relinquishment and Assignation legislation	Review of procedures and guidance, maintain valuers panel and valuer appointments made within statutory timescale	Advised SG on proposed amendments for clarity in legislation.	
		Seek relevant advice to the sector on matters of legal uncertainty through s38	Guidance publication following Land Court determination on resumption in limited duration tenancies	No further action needed	
		Provide advice to Scottish Government to support	Advice in relation to new housing standards in agricultural holdings and	TFAF meetings held Apr/May/June/Oct/Feb advising	

		enactment of 2016 Act and on the implications in the Agriculture Bill for the tenanted sector	relevant proposals in the Agriculture Bill	SG on development of proposed bill measures.	
		Undertake 5 year review of the findings and recommendations of the 2018 Review of the Operation of Agents	Re-survey and review of implementation against 2018 recommendations	Report complete and awaiting publication.	
		Stakeholder engagement	Tenant Farming Advisory Forum	Five TFAF meetings held plus additional consultation as needed.	

Strategic Plan Theme	Business Plan Priority	Staff Lead	Original Budget Allocation	Revised Budget Allocation	Q1 Actual	Q2 Actual	Q3 Actual	Q4 Profiled	Q4 actual	Variance	Explanation for variance	Total spend to date	Unprofiled against budget
<b>Commissioners</b>	Commissioners meetings	Hamish Trench	500	1200	705	167	716	300	435	135		2,024	-824
	Commissioners training and development	Hamish Trench	3000	3000	240	0	0	2700	978	-1722		1,218	1,782
	Commissioners travel and subsistence	Hamish Trench	11000	11000	3033	2849	2809	2967	4281	1314		12,972	-1,972
	Commissioners fees	Hamish Trench	59500	59500	14443	14443	14442	13733	14435	702		57,763	1,737
<b>Total</b>					<b>18421</b>	<b>17459</b>	<b>17967</b>	<b>19700</b>	<b>20129</b>	<b>429</b>		<b>73,977</b>	
<b>Staffing</b>	Staff payroll/on-costs	Hamish Trench	1072000	1000000	223122	205300	213345	322287	290768	-31519		932,536	67,464
	Recruitment	Hamish Trench	2500	3000	438	2189	1539	2422	2928	506		7,094	-4,094
	Staff travel and subsistence	Hamish Trench	22000	22000	4224	3416	6567	8500	11819	3319		26,027	-4,027
	Staff training and development	Nikki Nagler	25000	25000	8	2394	7607	9165	16157	6992		26,166	-1,166
<b>Total</b>				<b>227793</b>	<b>213299</b>	<b>229058</b>	<b>342374</b>	<b>321673</b>	<b>-20702</b>		<b>991,823</b>		
<b>Communications</b>	Communications campaigns	Nikki Nagler	15000	15000	94	93	96	5063	327	-4736		610	14,390
	Communications Support	Nikki Nagler	25000	25000	4142	5909	5910	5910	9495	3585		25,456	-456
	Design and Printing	Nikki Nagler	10000	20000	54	1888	8902	2000	3613	1613		14,256	5,744
	Digital	Nikki Nagler	8000	8000	0	80	0	7670	1990	-5680		2,070	5,930
	Events	Nikki Nagler	15000	15000	2228	160	80	120	6398	6278		8,866	6,134
	Communications monitoring and review	Nikki Nagler	8000	8000	1421	224	3179	2468	2391	-77		7,216	784
	Internal Communications	Nikki Nagler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
	<b>Total</b>				<b>7939</b>	<b>8153</b>	<b>18167</b>	<b>23231</b>	<b>24213</b>	<b>982</b>		<b>58,473</b>	
<b>Organisational Development</b>	Climate Action	Nikki Nagler	500	800	0	774	0	0	0	0		774	26
	External Meeting Costs	Nikki Nagler	1000	200	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	200
	HR Service	Nikki Nagler	15000	15050	262	3523	3844	10500	7986	-2514		15,615	-565
	Health, Safety, Environment & Quality	Nikki Nagler	3000	2000	259	0	240	2200	2146	-54		2,645	-645
	Insurance and bank charges	Nikki Nagler	1000	1000	75	75	728	75	75	0		953	47
	IT Service	Nikki Nagler	75000	75000	23586	8203	28483	10500	29603	19103		89,876	-14,876
	Legal Advice	Nikki Nagler	15000	20000	2400	6384	2400	3600	4800	1200		15,984	4,016
	Office Accommodation	Nikki Nagler	20000	20000	0	18000	0	0	0	0		18,000	2,000
	Office Supplies	Nikki Nagler	1000	1000	198	44	1310	153	666	513		908	92
	Organisational Financial Performance	Nikki Nagler	48000	56000	4990	3604	1310	45850	43505	-2345		53,408	2,592
	Research Capacity Building	Nikki Nagler	1000	1000	1000	0	11200	13400	2200			14,400	-13,400
	Subscriptions and memberships	Nikki Nagler	2500	2500	1740	90	260	90	130	40		2,220	280
	<b>Total</b>				<b>33510</b>	<b>41652</b>	<b>37310</b>	<b>84168</b>	<b>102311</b>	<b>18143</b>		<b>214,784</b>	<b>-214,784</b>
	<b>Tenant Farming</b>	Mediation	Hamish Trench	3000	3600	3600	0	0	0	0	0		3,600
Review of agents		Hamish Trench	12000	12000	0	215	8640	8580	-60			8,795	3,205
<b>Total</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>3600</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>8640</b>	<b>8580</b>	<b>-60</b>		<b>12,395</b>	<b>-12,395</b>	
<b>Responsible Land Ownership and Use</b>	Strengthening practical implementation of Land Rights and Responsibilities	Emma Cooper	5000	5000	0	0	126	9000	2538	-6463		2,664	2,337
	<b>Total</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>9000</b>	<b>2538</b>	<b>-6463</b>		<b>2,664</b>	<b>-2,664</b>
<b>Reforming land rights</b>	Advice & Research to support Land Reform bill	Hamish Trench	15000	9000	0	0	8790	0	0	0		8,790	210
	Diversifying the pattern of land ownership	Hamish Trench	34109	51109	0	0	0	40345	31907	-8438		31,907	19,202
<b>Total</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8790</b>	<b>40345</b>	<b>31907</b>	<b>-8438</b>		<b>40,697</b>	<b>-40,697</b>	
<b>Reforming land markets</b>	Land Development & Regeneration	Hamish Trench	5000	33000	894	8376	46064	43273	-2791			52,542	-19,542
	Natural Capital, land market & a just transition	Hamish Trench	25000	45000	603	0	0	38816	43686	4870		44,289	711
<b>Total</b>				<b>603</b>	<b>894</b>	<b>8376</b>	<b>84880</b>	<b>86959</b>	<b>2079</b>		<b>96,831</b>	<b>-96,831</b>	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>			<b>1,558,609</b>	<b>1,568,959</b>	<b>288,266</b>	<b>285,058</b>	<b>320,009</b>	<b>612,338</b>	<b>598,310</b>	<b>-14,029</b>		<b>1,491,643</b>	<b>77,316</b>

GIA:	1,559,000
Total Spend	1,491,643
Unprofiled against GIA	67,357
Underspend	4.30%

Risk ID	Risk Description	GROSS RISK			Controls in Place	Control Effectiveness	NET RISK			Risk Movement	Risk Appetite	Action Taken/Planned	Target Risk	Target Review Date	Risk Owner
		Untreated Impact	Untreated Likelihood	Untreated Risk Score			Current Impact	Current Likelihood	Current Risk Score						
<b>VISION: Fair inclusive and productive system of ownership management and use of land that delivers greater benefit for all the people of Scotland</b>															
<b>RISK CATEGORY: DELIVERY</b>															
1	Catastrophic loss of systems resulting in the Commission not being able to operate as an organisation	5	4	20	Business continuity plan in place, cloud based IT system accessible outside of the office environment, cyber essentials plus accreditation, improved cyber security for log in to the network.	Effective	5	1	5		Averse	Cyber incident response plan approved by ARC. Achieved Cyber Essentials Plus for 2023. Multi factor authentication implemented for network access, updated antivirus software aligned to SG recommendations, cloud network tested. Cyber security requirements embedded in tender for IT service. Potential increase in cyber threats due to current political environment. IT re-tender completed	5	Sep-24	Head of Communications and Corporate services
2	Ability to react quickly in matching resources to changes in priorities	3	3	8	Maintain team approach to delivery enabling staff to draw on capacity and expertise across the team as required; Quarterly progress reporting to Board	Effective	3	3	9		Cautious	Improved cross-team working and quarterly planning with delivery tracker monitoring. 23/24 Business plan refreshed resourcing to current priorities. Staff posts reviewed as vacancies arise in order to remain agile and refresh focus where necessary. Changes in corporate team structure to improve resilience. Tight 23/24 budget limits ability to react to new asks/opportunities.	4	Feb-24	CEO
<b>RISK CATEGORY: REPUTATIONAL</b>															
3	Changes in Board appointments or failure to recruit timeously result in disruption to effective governance or lack of clarity in strategic direction	4	3	12	Recruitment to start 12 months ahead (SG responsibility). Plan succession timescales; ensure effective Strategic Plan in place Sept 23; Board induction processes refreshed and in place.	Partial	3	5	15		Minimalist	2023 appointments concluded, in place with induction arrangements and successful transition. 2024 recruitment process begun by SG with timeline agreed.	4	Dec-23	CEO
4	Emerging issues result in reactive policy making, and relationship management.	5	4	20	Proactive horizon scanning to anticipate future issues, work closely with stakeholders and put internal processes and measures in place for handling.	Partial	3	4	12		Minimalist	Working closely with stakeholders and sponsor team to identify potential issues in advance and take action. Clear case handling and internal communications procedures. Land Reform Bill publication provides more clarity of direction.	3	Mar-24	CEO
5	Inconsistent or incoherent narrative relating to our body of work leading to inaccurate discussions around the wider land reform agenda	4	3	12	Develop strong narrative between role of land in economic recovery and delivering wellbeing economy, climate action, and reducing inequalities. Implement strategic communications plan, including maintaining strong digital and media presence; regular performance monitoring	Effective	2	1	2		Minimalist	Comms planning & improved team quarterly planning providing more joined up approach. Strategic plan and programme of work launched. Summary of research and recommendations published.	2	Sep-24	Head of Communications and Corporate services
6	Effective management of strong relationships with key stakeholders in policy development and also identify opportunities for collaboration, maximising the potential of relationships with a broad range of stakeholders.	5	4	20	All relevant stakeholders are identified and a clear engagement strategy put in place, Commission presence at key stakeholder events, regular liaison meetings with stakeholders and periodic review of stakeholder analysis	Effective	2	2	4		Open	Wide stakeholder engagement through policy development and communications. Ongoing and increasing LRR engagement. Structured engagement in Good Practice, Human Rights, Tenant Farming, Natural Capital & Strategic Plan. Relations and dynamics are changing with the LR bill and being taken into consideration.	4	Mar-24	CEO
7	Manage relationship across Scottish Government so that Commission's work is understood and recommendations are well received.	5	4	20	Ensure regular engagement between the Commission Chair and the Land Reform Minister, and between the Tenant Farming Commissioner and the C&S Sec for Rural Affairs. Ensure regular engagement between the CEO and the SG Sponsor and Policy Teams.	Effective	2	2	4		Open	Regular sponsorship & land reform team liaison in place. Engagement in other formal SG structures eg NSET Programme, EELG, Planning Advisory Group. Meeting with sponsor team and board held in September 23 and with C&S Sec Feb 24.	4	Sep-24	CEO
<b>RISK CATEGORY: COMPLIANCE</b>															
8	Failure to have in place or adhere to statutory or non-statutory corporate governance policies or procedures.	4	4	16	Ensure internal control system in place; Work to the production timetable for completion of all documents, and disseminate widely to ensure maximum awareness.	Effective	2	1	2		Minimalist	Using checklist of assurance controls; Draft annual accounts and report completed on planned timeline. Internal governance refreshers delivered. New external auditors in place and 22/23 audit completed with clean audit report. Internal audit programme agreed.	1	Mar-24	CEO
9	The Commission fails to deliver to its allocated budget, resulting in reputational, administrative and governance failures.	5	4	20	Corporate and Business plan set appropriate budget allocations. Work to specified monitoring cycles, reporting requirements, and guidelines set out in the SPFM. Ensure correct adherence to authorisation procedures and delegated limits. Close monitoring of spend and profiled spend.	Effective	2	2	4		Averse	Internal Scheme of delegation in place. Quarterly board monitoring in place. Monthly profiling to manage spend evenly through the financial year and to be kept under review. Peer review on budget management from NatureScot Mar 23 to support resilience improvements. Improvements to budget management & reporting identified Apr 23. New Finance officer role in place with reporting responsibilities transferred.	1	Mar-24	CEO
<b>RISK CATEGORY: STAFFING</b>															
10	Staff turnover or absence due to illness etc resulting in loss of capacity for critical elements of business systems and delivery	5	4	20	Ensure good internal communication and provision of desk instructions for business critical functions. Resilience planning to ensure backup capability within staff team. Continuously seek to improve the working environment by monitoring and improving staff satisfaction and absence levels.	Partial	3	4	12		Cautious	Internal policies prepared and series of desk instructions for critical tasks prepared. Continued review of HR policies & staff engagement. Careful monitoring of priorities and capacity by MT and regular staff communication in place. Staff survey action plan in place. Ongoing absence monitoring in place. Resilience improvements in corporate and comms team implemented. Recruitment for replacement Finance & Business Systems post increase risk over transition.	4	Sep-24	Head of Communications and Corporate services
11	Change in work priorities, competing expectations or insufficient prioritisation impacts on staff wellbeing	5	4	20	Open and transparent - hold regular staff meetings, keep all staff informed of big picture direction, changes in priorities/focus. Overview through management team. Strong internal comms and leadership from managers to ensure wellbeing of staff and manage move to new ways of working.	Effective	2	4	8		Cautious	Improved monthly staff meeting format in place. Improved quarterly resource planning through Management Team. Monthly conversations, effective line management. Capacity reviewed through teams. Regular pulse staff surveys and action plan. Training and development plan in place. Business Plan prioritisation matched to resource capacity.	3	Sep-24	CEO
12	Disruption to delivery and business systems as a result of some staff moving to more permanent options of home working	4	3	12	Preparing new policies, ways of working and adapting internal processes to ensure staff remain well connected across teams and the organisation. Organisational policy that no member of staff should be disadvantaged due to where they work.	Partial	1	1	1		Cautious	Home working policy outlines expectations for home working and monthly all staff team meetings to take place face to face. Office has hot desking and flexible working patterns in place. Closely monitoring and reviewing working practices, and adapting where needed. Office move completed with staff encouraged to meet face to face, routine of monthly in person all staff meetings.	1	Sep-24	Head of Communications and Corporate services

# COMMUNICATIONS QUARTERLY REPORT

## Q4: JANUARY 2024 - MARCH 2024



This quarterly report covers the communications output during the period of 1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024. Within this report you will find analytics for the Commission’s primary communications channels, including social, website, and press coverage for this period.

We have also highlighted our performance measured against the KPIs set out in the Strategic Plan and provided insight into overall performance for each channel during this quarter.

An overview of planned communications outputs for Q1 can be found below.

If you would like any further detail, or to discuss the information in this report, please contact Scarlett Macfarlane - [scarlett.macfarlane@landcommission.gov.scot](mailto:scarlett.macfarlane@landcommission.gov.scot).

Month	Event/Activity
April	Conference registration opens
April	TCL Blog and op-ed
April	<b>Design projects</b> CLES report Conference materials Rural Land Markets Insights Report and Briefing Paper
April	Communities & Green Finance Project Lead recruitment
April	Bòrd na Gàidhlig annual reporting
May	Staff and Commissioners photography
May	Conference prep
May	<b>Design projects</b> Small scale briefing paper VDL progress review report and briefing paper
May	SLE Conference
June	SLC Conference
June	Royal Highland Show
June	<b>Design projects</b> Land for Rural Housing report

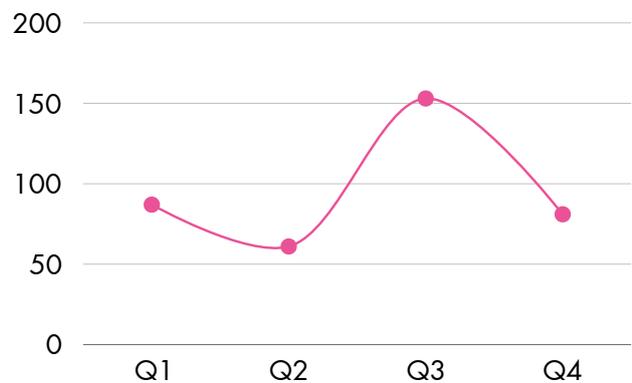
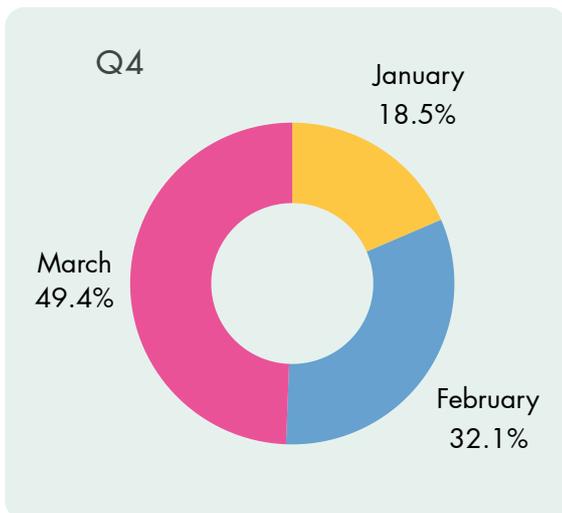
## PRESS COVERAGE

We worked with our PR agency in Q4 to achieve 81 press placements. The majority of press interest was around the introduction of the Land Reform Bill and we had cut through in a number of national publications with our response. Most of the coverage was achieved in sector specific publications and makes the case for focusing our efforts on op-eds when discussing the Land Reform Bill.

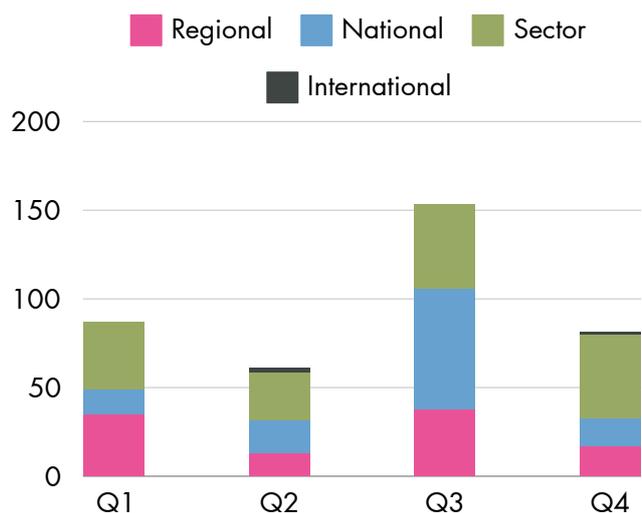
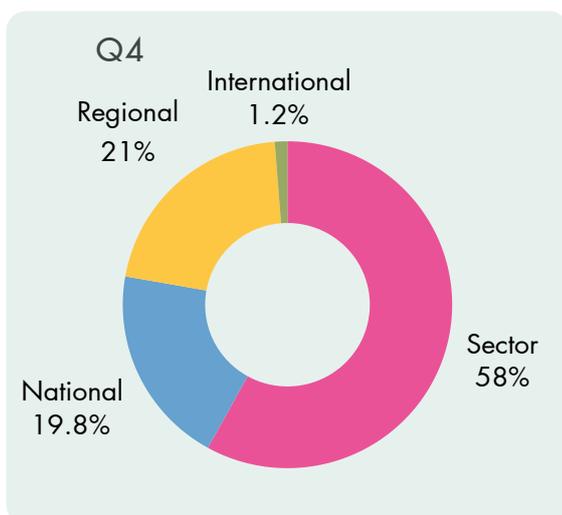
We have also been working hard to raise our voice on the topic of housing and this is reflected in an increase of coverage on this topic. More activity on this topic is planned in Q1 and we hope to build on the momentum of the Town Centre Living roadshow to continue to raise visibility around our work on housing and development.

Our current KPI sets an expectation to achieve a 5% increase in media coverage year on year. However, as our work is dependent on supporting activity the Commission is able to deliver, this is not always possible and we saw a 15% decrease in coverage. For 24/25 we are reviewing our communications KPIs to ensure a more useful set of measures that will allow us to track cut through and engagement with our work.

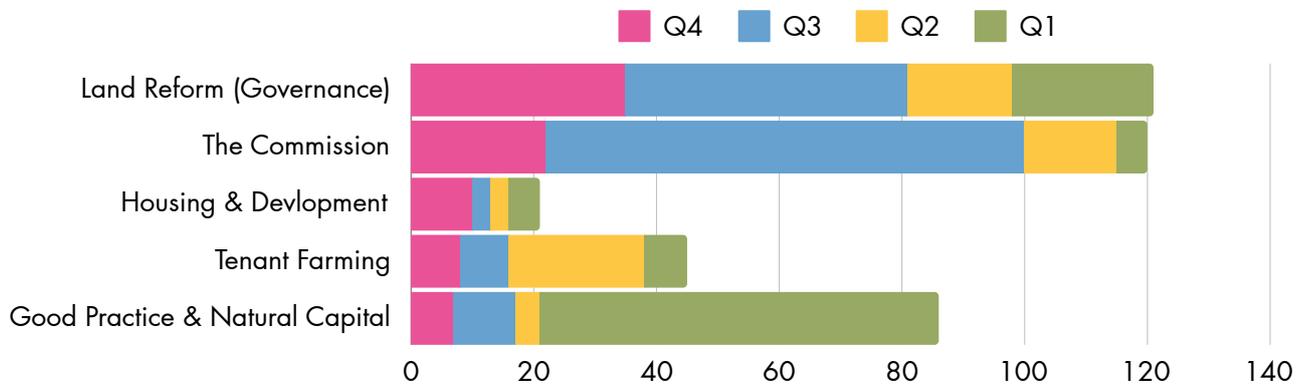
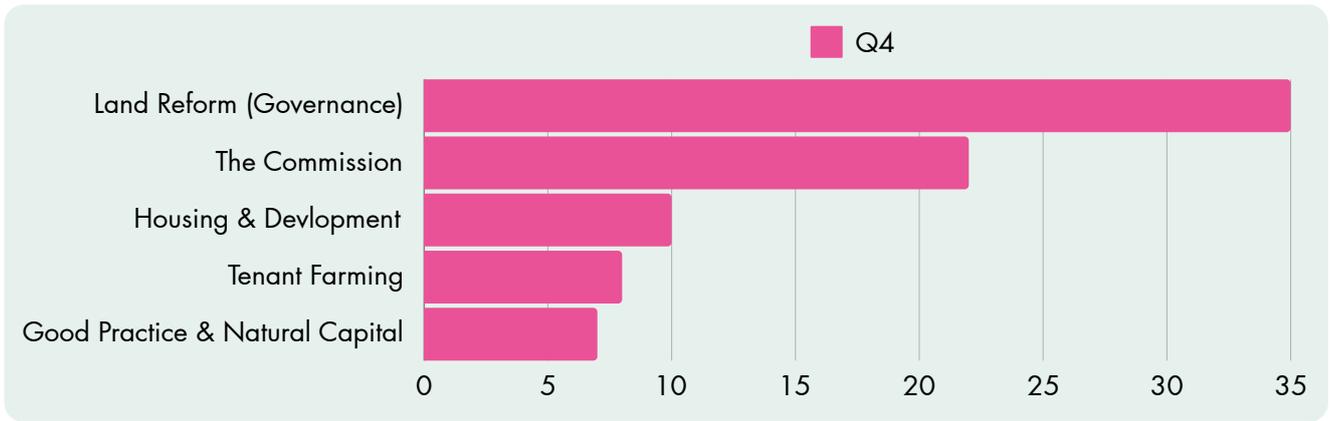
### DATES OF COVERAGE



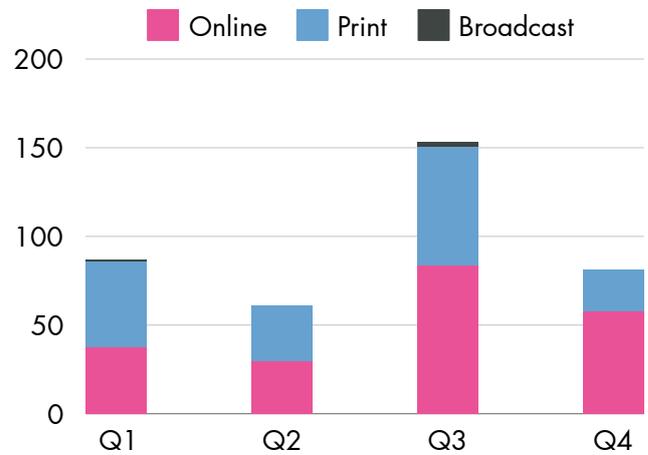
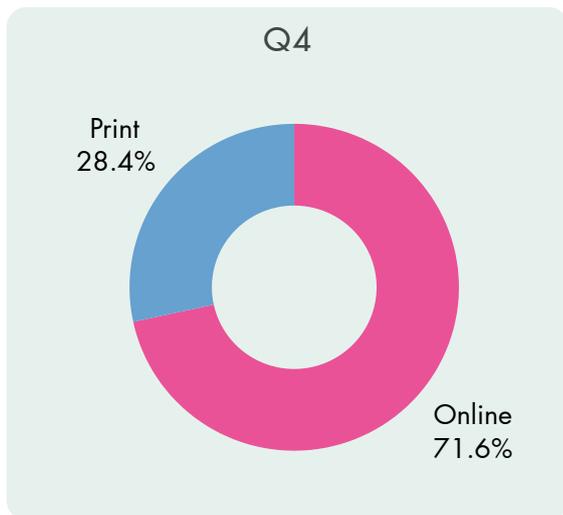
### REGION OF COVERAGE



## PRIORITY AREA COVERAGE



## CHANNEL OF COVERAGE



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Q4 has seen some milestone moments for the Commission's social media presence. Highlights have included reaching 3K followers on LinkedIn, an increase of 85% growth compared to 22/23. On Instagram we reached a higher proportion of non-followers than followers with our content, a signal that our content is beginning to reach new audiences.

**70%** OF OUR  
CONTENT  
ON INSTAGRAM IN Q4  
WAS VIEWED BY NON-  
FOLLOWER ACCOUNTS



Engagement on Instagram also improved with our highest quarterly performance of the year. Likewise, on X, formerly known as Twitter, we achieved our highest quarterly increase in followers.

Across the year, we met 44% of our social media KPIs.

- ✓ Increase followers by 4% month on month on X
- ✓ Increase followers by 20%, build up presence and use for commentary on sector specific matters on LinkedIn
- ✓ increase followers by 10% on Instagram
- ✓ 6 opinion pieces published
- ✗ Increase monthly engagement by 2% on X
- ✗ Increase followers by 4% month on month on Facebook
- ✗ Increase engagement by 5% on Facebook
- ✗ Increase engagement by 5% on Facebook
- ✗ Increase engagement by 5% on Instagram

## EMAIL MARKETING

Due to resourcing within the team our level of email marketing activity was reduced in 23/24. Now back to capacity, we have been able to reinvigorate this channel and are starting to see meaningful results. Recently, we resubscribed to Mailchimp to send a save the date for the upcoming conference to our subscribers. This resulted in 687 visits to our website and meant the conference events page appeared among our top 3 most visited pages (see website analytics report for more detailed performance metrics). The email achieved an open rate of 55% and we have onboard a further 45 subscribers in March, 62% of which were from a social post to sign up for conference updates, which is far in excess of a good email opening rate which sits at around 17-28%,

## WEBSITE

A detailed Q4 website performance report has been developed in Google Looker Studio and will be circulated monthly in addition to the quarterly analytics reports (attached).

The website received 23,964 visits in Q4, down 6.1% compared to Q3. Q3 was a particularly active period for the website due to interest around the Rural Land Markets report and Board appointments contributing to the relative drop in traffic.

There were 13,111 new users to the site in Q4 and 9,847 returning users with the majority of traffic accessing our site from desktop devices. Social media accounted for 1.6K visits, with X being the primary acquisition channel.

The Land Reform Bill page received over 1K hits and the work with us page 816, an encouraging stat as we push to recruit the role of Communities & Green Finance Project Lead.

We met the KPI set of achieving >2,200 site visits per month throughout the year.

## WHAT NEXT?

Based on the performance of the communications output in 23/24 there are a number of changes that are planned, they include:

- Development of new KPIs in line with the Strategic Plan reflecting a shift in focus to tracking:
  - Engagement on posts
  - Amplification of content (reposts/shares)
  - Accessibility of content (more short form video)
  - Prioritisation of LinkedIn
- Reinvigorating our email newsletter:
  - News round ups to be sent bi-monthly
  - Contact list being cleaned to allow for segmentation
  - Email a key driver of traffic to our website
- Improved tracking of website performance:
  - New analytics report has been developed and will be circulated monthly to senior management
  - Analysis of website traffic to be used to inform social content

# GOOD PRACTICE CASEWORK 2023-24



Between April 2023 and March 2024 we handled 82 unique good practice enquiries and cases, an average of 20 per quarter.

## CONTACT FROM:

Individual	31
Community organisation	17
Intermediary	8
Public Body	6
Private Landowner	5
Community Council	4
Investor	4
Proactive	2
Business	2
Academic	1
Charity	1
Various	1

## ISSUES RAISED

Community Engagement	27
Good Stewardship	13
Diversification of Ownership & Tenure	12
Vacant and Derelict Land	10
Transparency	8
Common Good	4
Negotiated Transfer to Communities	4
Natural Capital	2
Legislative Routes to Ownership	2

The most raised subject, as in previous years, was community engagement. Contacts about community engagement included landowners, managers and investors asking for advice and support, and communities raising issues about lack of or poor quality engagement.



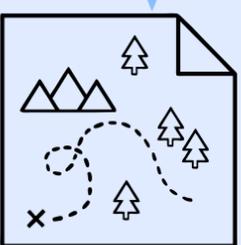
## TYPE OF OWNERSHIP

Private Landowner	34
Public body	16
Not specified	14
Various	11
Community Landowner	2
Charity	2
Community	1
Trust	1
Private company	1



## LOCATION

We received contact from 18 local authority areas.



Highlands and Islands	23
Scotland Wide	18
Perth and Kinross	6
Aberdeenshire	6
Dumfries and Galloway	5
Argyll and Bute	4
Glasgow City	3
Scottish Borders	3

## RESPONSES



**Information provided or meeting(s) held - 48**



**Ongoing - 19**



**Signposted - 14**

**1 contact was not taken forward**





SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

## Commissioners Meeting 07 May 2024

### PAPER 6

#### Medium Term Financial Strategy

<b>Purpose:</b>	To consider budget scenarios and implications for medium term financial strategy
<b>Business Plan context:</b>	Medium term financial strategy
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> February Paper 7: Medium Term Financial Strategy
<b>Action required:</b>	Discussion

#### Background

This paper looks at scenarios for our budget over five years ahead. It updates scenarios previously considered by the board in February 2023.

The context of public finances means that the Commission should plan ahead to consider the implications of reductions or increases in grant-in-aid, as well as a possible 'flat cash' settlement – ie no change to grant-in-aid meaning real-terms reductions. We should review what these scenarios would mean when matched with rising costs and consider the implications for our financial planning.

This paper takes a central planning scenario of flat grant-in-aid and rising costs, together with scenarios of 2% reduction and 2% increase in grant-in-aid. We have taken into account other possible scenarios but consider these the most plausible basis for financial planning.

#### Scenarios

All scenarios include the following core assumptions:

- Staffing costs assume that current fixed term posts are not continued beyond their end date;
- Permanent staff posts remain as current;
- Continuation of no compulsory redundancies policy;
- No significant changes in functions/operating model.

## Potential implications of the Land Reform Bill

The Bill introduced to Parliament proposes significant new functions for an additional Land and Communities Commissioner, a role that would be added to the board of the Commission and which the Commission would be responsible for supporting in implementing their functions. The Bill also proposes additional functions for the Tenant Farming Commissioner, including bringing small landholdings within the scope of the TFC.

If enacted as set out, these new functions will bring a significant additional resource requirement that is over and above what the Commission currently delivers. The Commission would not be able to absorb these functions within its existing staffing and budget.

The financial memorandum accompanying the bill states that the Commission will require additional resources to deliver the proposed functions. It indicates that additional resource would be phased in over a five year period as the measures in the bill are implemented. In total it estimates that resource in the region of £570,000 pa would be required at the point of full implementation for the proposed measures.

At this stage there remains considerable uncertainty about the exact nature of the functions that will be agreed by parliament and the timescale on which they will be implemented. The scenarios considered here are therefore based on the Commission's current functions as a baseline. The Commission will be seeking early discussions with our sponsor team so that our funding takes into account and anticipates the preparatory work as well as the implementation requirements of new functions as the bill progresses.

The three scenarios considered are:

### 1. *Central Planning Scenario:*

- Flat grant-in-aid remains at £1.6M for 5 years (annual real terms reduction)
- Staff costs rise 5% year-on-year
- Other fixed costs rise 3% year-on-year

	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
<b>Grant-in-Aid</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>
Staff costs (permanent)	1,065,288	1,118,552	1,174,480	1,233,204	1,294,864	1,359,607
Staff costs (fixed term)	86942	65133	0	0	0	0
Commissioner costs	62000	63,240	64,504	65,794	67,109	68,452
Corporate fixed costs	194000	199820	205,814	211,989	218,348	224,899
<b>Total fixed costs</b>	<b>1,408,230</b>	<b>1,446,745</b>	<b>1,444,798</b>	<b>1,510,987</b>	<b>1,580,321</b>	<b>1,652,958</b>
<b>Available programme spend</b>	<b>191,770</b>	<b>153,255</b>	<b>155,202</b>	<b>89,013</b>	<b>19,679</b>	<b>(52,958)</b>

**2. 2% Reduction Scenario:**

- 2% year-on-year reductions in grant-in-aid
- Staff costs rise 5% year-on-year
- Other fixed costs rise 3% year-on-year

	<b>24/25</b>	<b>25/26</b>	<b>26/27</b>	<b>27/28</b>	<b>28/29</b>	<b>29/30</b>
<b>Grant-in-Aid</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>1,568,000</b>	<b>1,536,640</b>	<b>1,505,907</b>	<b>1,475,789</b>	<b>1,446,273</b>
Staff costs (permanent)	1,065,288	1,118,552	1,174,480	1,233,204	1,294,864	1,359,607
Staff costs (fixed term)	86942	65133	0	0	0	0
Commissioner costs	62000	63,240	64,504	65,794	67,109	68,452
Corporate fixed costs	194000	199820	205,814	211,989	218,348	224,899
<b>Total fixed costs</b>	<b>1,408,230</b>	<b>1,446,745</b>	<b>1,444,798</b>	<b>1,510,987</b>	<b>1,580,321</b>	<b>1,652,958</b>
<b>Available programme spend</b>	<b>191,770</b>	<b>121,255</b>	<b>91,842</b>	<b>(5,080)</b>	<b>(104,532)</b>	<b>(206,685)</b>

**3. 2% Increase scenario:**

- 2% year-on-year increase in grant-in-aid
- Staff costs rise 5% year-on-year
- Other fixed costs rise 3% year-on-year

	<b>24/25</b>	<b>25/26</b>	<b>26/27</b>	<b>27/28</b>	<b>28/29</b>	<b>29/30</b>
<b>Grant-in-Aid</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>	<b>1,632,000</b>	<b>1,664,640</b>	<b>1,697,932</b>	<b>1,731,891</b>	<b>1,766,529</b>
Staff costs (permanent)	1,065,288	1,118,552	1,174,480	1,233,204	1,294,864	1,359,607
Staff costs (fixed term)	86942	65133	0	0	0	0
Commissioner costs	62000	63,240	64,504	65,794	67,109	68,452
Corporate fixed costs	194000	199820	205,814	211,989	218,348	224,899
<b>Total fixed costs</b>	<b>1,408,230</b>	<b>1,446,745</b>	<b>1,444,798</b>	<b>1,510,987</b>	<b>1,580,321</b>	<b>1,652,958</b>
<b>Available programme spend</b>	<b>191,770</b>	<b>185,255</b>	<b>219,842</b>	<b>186,945</b>	<b>151,570</b>	<b>113,571</b>

*Notes on scenarios:*

- *'Corporate fixed costs' include: Office accommodation, IT provision, HR service, core TFC legal advice, audit provision.*

- *Available programme spend includes all other spend including research and projects; communications and events; staff/board training and development; corporate costs, travel and subsistence.*

## **Implications for medium term financial strategy**

The scenarios show the following:

- Based on our current split of fixed/flexible costs we would be able to continue to operate with a flat cash scenario but with reduced staff numbers from 2026/27 and 27/28 and we would need to reduce our delivery accordingly.
- By 28/29 a flat cash scenario would have significantly reduced the ability of the Commission to operate our current model which combines in-house expertise with the ability to contract research and specialist expertise. We would not have resource to operate our current model.
- In this scenario we would need to continue to deliver the statutory functions of the TFC and scale back significantly our policy and advice work and/or our good practice work supporting implementation of the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement.
- If a 2% cut is applied to our grant-in-aid, the Commission can adjust over two years by reducing delivery but if applied year on year we would not be able to continue to operate our current scope of delivery. This scenario essentially brings forward the point at which we would no longer have resource to commission or bring in expertise and capacity in addition to reducing staff numbers.
- A 2% year-on-year increase in grant-in-aid has a significant impact in maintaining our delivery capacity. We would be able to continue to deliver broadly the current level of our policy and good practice work over the next three years.
- As stated above, these scenarios do not take into account any new functions and associated resource requirements that may come as a result of the land reform bill. The scenarios show that additional resource would be required to deliver these.

We identify the following ways in which we can manage our medium term financial strategy:

### ***Staff turnover***

- We have a point of flexibility when fixed term posts end and/or when a member of staff leaves. At present we are operating with no assumption that a vacancy will be replaced. In each case the need for the post is carefully reviewed in order to allow us to reduce the staffing level if necessary.

### ***Efficiency savings***

- The public service reform agenda expects us to continue to make year on year efficiency savings. The Commission has already delivered efficiencies

through shared services for HR functions and co-location with HIE to reduce our office costs.

- There are limited additional savings to be found through core corporate operating costs. As a small NDPB there is a base level of resource required in people and systems to ensure good governance.
- Wider Scottish Government work currently underway on public service reform may create further options for shared service functions (eg IT provision) in future years and we will keep these under review.

### ***Partnership and collaboration***

- Our current model does not offer opportunities for alternative income sources, however we should seek to collaborate with others where it is possible to pool resources efficiently.
- For example this year we reached agreement with partners about more efficient joint spend on future land market monitoring, and we secured external project funding to support implementation of community benefits.

### **Recommendation**

**The Board is asked to consider the budget scenarios and agree the implications for our medium-term financial strategy.**

**Hamish Trench**

## Commissioners' Meeting 07 May 2024

### Scottish Land Commission Conference

#### PAPER 7

<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide an update to the Board on planning for the conference.
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Action required:</b>	For information

### 1.0 Overview

The Scottish Land Commission's fourth conference is due to be held at the MacDonald Resort in Aviemore on the 13 of June. The theme for this year's conference, *Pioneering Practice: Shaping Scotland's future through inclusive land ownership*, will explore innovative and practical approaches to reshaping ways Scotland's land is owned and seek to inform and drive thinking beyond the Land Reform Bill.

### 2.0 Programme

To help facilitate debate and discussion, the conference will be chaired by experienced broadcast journalist, John Morrison.

The opening address will be delivered by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, subject to Parliamentary business.

As well as plenary sessions, the conference will also deliver a series of practical workshops on areas including; community benefits land and natural capital, land governance, and common grazing's in partnership with the Crofting Commission. A detailed programme for the day is included in Appendix A.

### 2.1 Role of Board Members

Commissioner's have been allocated to a workshop group where to help chair/facilitate the session. Staff will discuss specific arrangements for the workshops individually and more detail on practical arrangements will be provided nearer the time.

### 3.0 Event Registration and Speakers

At present we have 23 speakers from over 18 organisations confirmed.

Registration was opened on Tuesday the 16 of April and was initially shared with members of our mailing list. Prior to tickets being released, early access to the event registration was used as a lead magnet resulting in 59 new subscribers to our mailing list.

Tickets were registered quickly, and we are looking at ways to increase the number of people able to attend the event. The response suggests there is a strong appetite amongst stakeholders for events like this and confirms our ability to convene voices across the spectrum of land reform.

- 86% of the available tickets were registered via our mailing list
- All tickets were registered in less than 24 hours
- Our waiting list reached 70 before we closed the list
- A further 25 tickets will be released the w/c 29 April

### 3.1 Session Bookings

Session	Number of Delegates
Supporting small-scale – collaborative approaches for improving access to land for small-scale land management and use	50
Community collaboration in governance	35
Innovative governance to support housing delivery	14
Land governance - International experience and innovation	37
Community benefits, land and natural capital	40
Crofting – Common grazing's	23

### 4.0 Evaluation

Following the conference, we will also undertake an evaluation exercise to glean insights for future planning. This evaluation will be conducted through a post event questionnaire to gauge attendee feedback and insights. By doing so, we aim to gain valuable insights into the success of the conference, identify areas for improvement, and understand participants' expectations for future events. This feedback will also help to inform our future approach to public engagement and consider other opportunities to engage people with our work.

**Scarlett Macfarlane**

**Communications and Engagement Manager**

**29 April 2024**