



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

**Commissioners Meeting**  
**8<sup>th</sup> May 2025, 9.30am, Perth Concert Hall**

**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.	Commissioners Updates			Commissioners
3.	Quarterly Progress Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Delivery</li><li>- Finance</li><li>- Risk</li><li>- Communications</li><li>- Casework</li></ul>	2	For information	Hamish Trench
4.	Research Strategy	3	For agreement	James MacKessack-Leitch
5.	Rural Land Market Insights Report 2025: emerging findings	4	For discussion	James MacKessack-Leitch
7.	Community Wealth Building Bill: Response to Call for Views	5	For agreement	Hamish Trench
8.	AOB			Chair

*Patrick Kirkham, Head of Land Reform at Scottish Government will attend the board meeting.*

*Following the board meeting there will be a meeting of the Remuneration Committee.*



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

**Minute of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at An Lochran, Inverness.**

**Commissioners Present:** Michael Russell (Chair) Deb Roberts, Craig Mackenzie, Lucy Beattie, Calum MacLeod (Land Commissioners), Rob Black (Tenant Farming Commissioner)

**In Attendance:** Hamish Trench, Nikki Nagler, Emma Cooper, Gemma Campbell, Scarlett Macfarlane, James MacKessack-Leitch (Scottish Land Commission); Patrick Kirkham, Sian Ledger, Andy Proudfoot (Scottish Government)

**Apologies:** None

**Declarations of interest:** None

**Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes from the meeting held on 4 February 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

**1. Report from Chair of Audit and Risk Committee**

Craig provided a report from the recent ARC meeting, noting in particular the findings of the internal audit governance review. The Chair asked for an update on the actions arising at the next meeting.

<b>Action 04032501</b>	<b>Update on actions arising from governance report to be included in agenda for next meeting</b>
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**2. Commissioners Updates**

Commissioners provided updates on their key activities and events since the last meeting.

This included an update from the Tenant Farming Commissioner on key issues arising from current cases and ongoing engagement with tenants, landlords and stakeholder bodies.

Other matters raised included:

- Current net zero projections for residual 2045 emissions show the significance of land (60% of expected residual emissions), a key part of the context for the Commission's work on tax;
- The potential relevance of Scottish Government's commitment to LIDAR information, in relation to improving land data, work on tax and land management plans;

- Business continuity – members agreed that Commissioners’ phone numbers should be shared among the board.

<b>Action 04032502</b>	<b>Commissioners’ phone numbers to be shared within board</b>
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The Chair referred to the recent public service reform summit convened by Scottish Government, noting that the board should return to a discussion on public service reform later in the year.

<b>Action 04032503</b>	<b>Discussion on public service reform to be scheduled into board programme</b>
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### **3. Land Reform Bill**

Andy Proudfoot provided the board with an update on behalf of the Scottish Government bill team. He noted the expected timing for the Stage 1 debate and outlined the parliamentary process ahead. He noted that the Cabinet Secretary will be considering the Commission’s advice further once the NZET Committee’s Stage 1 report has been published.

Members discussed other legislative opportunities in relation to the review of Community Right to Buy and other routes for urban land reforms, noting that these will fall into the next Parliament. The Chair noted that the Commission is convening the reference group to support Scottish Government’s review of community rights to buy, the first meeting of the group being 7<sup>th</sup> March.

### **4. Programme of Work, 2025/26 Business Plan and Budget**

#### ***Programme of Work***

Hamish introduced the refreshed Programme of Work, noting minor changes following the previous board discussion and feedback from sponsor team.

The board agreed the Programme of Work, noting it will now be submitted to the Cabinet Secretary and then laid in Parliament.

<b>Action 04022504</b>	<b>Programme of Work to be sent to Scottish Government to provide to Cabinet Secretary and to lay in Parliament</b>
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#### ***25/26 Business Plan and budget***

Hamish introduced the Business Plan and budget, noting the plan sets a full programme that can be delivered within capacity, but that any significant changes or additional in-year work would need to be resourced.

He noted there is a possible ask of the Commission from Scottish Government agriculture team in relation to work on the new form of lease set out in Part 2 of the Land Reform Bill. At this stage it is not clear what the Commission may be asked to do, and resourcing will need to be considered.

The board welcomed the business plan and the focus it provides on priorities. Commissioners noted the need to retain flexibility in responding to progress of the land

reform bill. Commissioners also emphasised the importance of progressing the work on the website, which will underpin our wider communications.

Craig reported that the ARC has considered the 25/26 budget at its recent meeting, highlighting the key area of risk being rising staffing costs. He noted the budget makes provision for staffing costs that takes account of increased national insurance contributions, pay progression and a pay award in line with public pay policy, and that the ARC considers the approach taken appropriate. The board agreed the cost pressure should continue to be managed in line with the levers identified in our medium-term financial planning, reviewing vacancies, seeking efficiencies and value through collaboration.

Hamish flagged further efficiency savings achieved within the spend on core corporate systems. He also noted the impact of increasing reporting requirements on a small NDPB, for example new duties on records retention and other duties such as the new consumer duty that all impact on the core corporate resource the Commission needs to maintain.

The board agreed the 25/26 business plan and budget.

## **5. Good Practice Protocols Refresh**

Gemma introduced the paper, seeking the board's agreement to the proposed approach.

Commissioners agreed with the light-touch approach to refreshing the protocols, given the context of wider change associated with the land reform bill. Commissioners sought more information about some of the expected changes, including the rationale for considering an additional protocol. Gemma explained this is due to the current stewardship protocol covering a wide range of topics that include vacant and derelict land, and there is a case for considering this in a stand-alone protocol.

Commissioners also sought more information on the potential for a crofting protocol. Gemma explained the Crofting Commission has asked that consideration be given to a specific crofting protocol, seeing a way that this could complement their regulatory functions. The review will consider how this is best done, including whether a protocol or guidance is the most appropriate route.

Deb noted her initial discussions to date with members of the Good Practice Advisory Group indicate support for the approach being proposed.

The board agreed the approach as set out in the paper.

## **6. Land-Reformed Scotland Project**

The board discussed key considerations in taking forward the project, identified as a priority area of work within our Programme of Work and Business Plan. The board considered the rationale, intended outcomes, risks and opportunities. In particular Commissioners discussed:

- The value in the Commission being able to draw out where there is consensus in thinking and where there is divergence, and noting that the Commission's advice is not dependent on achieving full consensus;
- What is realistic in relation to increasing certainty in policy direction; the board agreed it is not possible to provide absolute certainty but it should be possible to support

greater clarity of direction, intended outcomes and potentially for land reform policy to move towards a more stable position having made significant changes;

- communications for the project will need careful framing so as not to over-promise the outcome, but to engage people in considering the question;
- the value of the work supporting a co-ordinated programme of different policy instruments, identifying how different mechanisms can be most appropriately deployed and to what end;
- the need for the project to encompass urban land reform considerations as well as rural;
- the importance of taking a fully open and transparent approach to developing this work, so that stakeholders feel fully able to engage.

The board emphasised the desire to engage less heard voices where possible but noted the practical constraints of resource and staff capacity. It was agreed that our engagement will need to seek to work through the networks that other stakeholder organisations are able to connect with.

Finally, the board emphasised the importance of the communications and promotion of the project providing very clear information about how people can engage, how the information will be used, and what the intended purpose is, to provide clarity and transparency in expectations.

With these considerations noted to inform delivery, the board agreed the scope of the project as proposed.

## **7. Scottish Government Update**

Patrick, Sian and Andy provided a brief update on other sponsor team matters. Sian noted that arrangements will be made shortly for the board's annual meeting with the Cabinet Secretary.

## **8. Monthly budget update**

The board noted the current position and welcomed the updated projection for a year-end position within 1% underspend.

## **9. AOB**

None

***Date of next meeting:***

***Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025***

***Perth***



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
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**Commissioners' Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025**  
**Perth**

**PAPER 2**

**Quarterly Progress Report**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To review quarterly progress for Qtr. 4 (Jan-Mar)
<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 24/25 Business Plan and therefore reports on conclusion of the financial year. The table below shows current status against the Strategic Plan KPIs.

KPI MEASUREMENT	TARGET	Progress
DELIVERY		
% of planned outputs in annual business plans delivered	95%	On track: 94%
		Delayed/Changed: 3%
		Non-delivery: 3%
		See ANNEX A
STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS		
Feedback as reported through perceptions audits	Maintain or increase perceived impact	Next review due 2025
STAFF SATISFACTION		
% reported staff satisfaction in staff surveys	Increase	Oct 24 survey: 80% satisfied with the Commission as a place to work (up from 71% April 24). Next survey due Apr/May 25.
FINANCE		
End of year out-turn	Within 2% of total allocated budget	See ANNEX B: 0.5% underspend

The report comprises five annexes:

**a) Delivery Progress:** Annex A sets out the RAG assessment and progress commentary for delivery against our 24/25 Business Plan. Highlights in Quarter 4 include:

- Publication of further advice on the Land Reform Bill;
- Publication of research and proposal on rural housing land supply;
- Publication of online resource on land governance guidance;
- Establishment of the Reference Group to support the Review of Community Rights to Buy;
- Scoping engagement on tax advice;
- Engagement and training with land agents;
- Appointment of Community Benefits from Nature Adviser.

94% of planned activity was completed as scheduled for the financial year.

Exceptions to note are:

- Planned work on Common Good not taken forward in order to redirect time to the Land Reform Bill;
- Collaboration with Crown Estate Scotland on enabling community land acquisition progressed through the year as planned with the project completing phase 1. However, at the financial year-end, Crown Estate Scotland's investment committee decided not to proceed to a pilot phase.

**b) Finance Review:** Annex B provides a summary of our budget position at the financial year-end. The expected year-end position is a 0.5% underspend of approximately £7,000. Please note this is not yet a final outturn position for annual accounts, that work is in progress pending final adjustments.

**c) Risk management:** 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.

**e) Casework:** Annex E provides a summary of Good Practice casework for the full 24/25 year including comparison figures for the previous year.

## Other Updates

### Staffing

Annabel Davidson Knight joined the Commission on 3<sup>rd</sup> February in the Community Benefits from Nature Adviser post. This post is a 2-year fixed term post with external funding and is focused in the Cairngorms National Park.

Recruitment is underway for a Modern Apprentice Business Support Assistant.

Hanna Wheatley (Researcher & Data Analyst) left the Commission in April to take up a new job. The board agreed to proceed to recruit into a research post with an updated job description and recruitment is now underway.

### Finance and accounting system

The planned transfer of the Commission's finance and accounting system to the 'Xero' software package has been successfully completed. The new system provides improved and more automated reporting.

### **Scottish Government engagement**

The Chair and CEO attended a 6-monthly meeting with the Director General Net Zero which focused on assurance for good governance arrangements and forward plans for the Commission.

The Tenant Farming Commissioner met with Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon for an introductory meeting. Regular staff meetings with sponsor team and the bill team continue.

### **Programme of Work**

The refreshed Programme of Work agreed by the board was laid in Parliament on 1<sup>st</sup> April and published on our website.

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



## ANNEX A

PROGRESS REPORT ON 2024/25 BUSINESS PLAN DELIVERY				
RAG Rating:		Delivery on track	Delivery delayed or changed	Risk of non-delivery
Theme	Priority	Planned Activity	Progress Commentary	RAG
<b>1. Advising on reforms to law, policy and practice</b>				
<b>1.1 Legislative Reforms</b>	Provide advice, analysis and evidence as required to inform development and implementation of legislative reforms	Evidence and advice to inform Land Reform Bill	Submitted written evidence to NZET and FPAC committees; gave evidence to NZET committee 11 June; board considered further advice on 1 Oct & 3 Dec; Advice submitted to Cab Sec published January. Ongoing liaison with Bill team.	
		Evidence and advice to inform other bills if introduced, including Community Wealth Building and Human Rights bills	Community Wealth Building Bill introduced to Parliament in March. Commission to respond to committee call for views in new financial year (May)	
		Convene Land and Human Rights Advisory Forum	Meeting held in Qtr 1; Group's role now concluded following board review; group closed.	
<b>1.2 More diverse land governance</b>	Advise and promote opportunities in policy and practice to support more diverse models of land governance	Complete scoping phase and subsequent research on international experience in natural resource governance	CLES research report and summary briefing published in November.	
		Provide advice and guidance on practical opportunities to develop different governance models including mixed governance and increasing availability of small-scale land holdings	Board paper 11 <sup>th</sup> June; conference workshops on opportunities; Land Focus paper and blog published; Governance guidance published Qtr 4; Collaboration with Crofting Commission ongoing.	
		Develop recommendations for reforms to Common Good Land	Activity paused to reprioritise staff time for work on land reform bill.	
		Convene Community Land Leadership Group to further develop community land ownership	Meeting held in Qtr 3 focused on finance and large land acquisitions. First meeting of Reference Group to support Review of CRTB held Qtr 4.	

## ANNEX A

		Continue collaboration with Crown Estate Scotland on the community land accelerator initiative	Phase 1 signed off by Project Board with proposal to progress to Stage 2 pilot. 24/25 project delivery completed as planned but CES investment committee confirmed April 25 decision not to proceed to pilot. Now in project closure stages.	
		Support the KLTR Ownerless Property Transfer Scheme through panel membership and advice	Advice being provided through panel membership and through project to identify proactive opportunities for VDL reuse.	
<b>1.3 Approaches to land valuation</b>	Review and research bringing scrutiny to approaches to land valuation	Develop advice on ways land value can support community wealth building, drawing on previous work on land and taxation	Board agreed key messages for refreshed tax advice 1 <sup>st</sup> October; work plan agreed with SG; SG commitment in 25/26 Budget and Tax Strategy. Phase 1 engagement delivered in Qtr 4.	
<b>1.4 Land assembly for development</b>	Support collaborative land assembly approaches and inform policy and practice enabling development	Advise on practical ways to increase land supply to help meet Scotland's housing challenge	Stakeholder roundtables held May & August; Research report completed; Draft proposal considered by board 5 Nov. Reworked and submitted to Ministers January, published in February.	
		Inform Scottish Government's review of Compulsory Purchase Order powers	Initial discussion with review co-chairs; participated in workshop on compensation issues in Qtr 4.	
<b>1.5 Vacant &amp; derelict land</b>	Review progress to maintain momentum in delivering on the recommendations of the Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce	Complete and publish progress review against VDL taskforce recommendations	Research contract completed and report published October with summary briefing and series of guest blogs.	
<b>2. Supporting practical implementation of Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement</b>				

## ANNEX A

<b>2.1 Good practice in land ownership, use and management</b>	Develop and support implementation of practical Land Rights and Responsibilities Protocols with accompanying guidance and case studies	Champion and share good practice in implementing the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement	Workshops held at 5 events reaching 206 people in Q4.	
		Refresh and update the Good Practice Programme and resources to improve accessibility and encourage uptake	Review completed with actions identified. Refresh of Protocols scheduled for 25/26.	
	Deliver an ongoing programme of engagement and CPD for land agents and other professionals in collaboration with partners	Deliver training for land agents and other professionals in collaboration with their representative bodies to promote high standards in land rights and responsibilities	Land agents webinar series underway and to continue into 2025-26. First sessions fully booked.	
	Provide advice for land owners and managers seeking to be proactive in implementing the LRRS	Provide individual advice and guidance to support the development of good practice	Ongoing.	
		Consider how standards for leadership in good practice are further developed	Checklist for land professionals disseminated with positive feedback.	
	Provide advice to communities and land owners where concerns are raised about implementation of the LRRS to support good practice	Deliver casework to support good practice and promote good relations between landowners and communities	89 cases in total in 24/25.	
		Regularly review casework to identify learning for policy and practice	Monthly internal casework review meetings in place; quarterly reporting to board.	
	Convene the Good Practice Advisory Group as a regular means of stakeholder	Collaborate with core industry bodies to collectively promote and support good practice	Meetings held in Q1 and Q3. Introductions to new Chair made.	

## ANNEX A

	engagement and collaboration			
2.2 Community benefits and wealth building from land use change and natural capital	Publish Guidance and support innovative practice to ensure land use change and nature finance create social and economic benefits for local communities, including convening the Community Benefits Advisory Group	Convene the Community Benefit Advisory Group to provide leadership and coordination in delivering community benefits from land	6-weekly meeting programme in place with regular attendance from members.	
		Provide advice and guidance to support the delivery of community benefits from land including a partnership post in the Cairngorms National Park	Successful recruitment for Advisor for partnership post in Cairngorms National Park. Partnership board established with SLC chair. Route map published. Further Advisors now recruited to Community Land Scotland.	
		Inform development of Scottish Government’s nature market framework and UK market standards to embed the LRRS	Scottish Natural Capital Market Framework endorsed SLC guidance on community benefits; secured advisory role on development of UK community benefits standards.	
3. Promoting good relations between agricultural landlords and tenants through the functions of the Tenant Farming Commissioner				
3.1 Codes of Practice, Guidance and Casework	Ensure Codes and Guidance address current and emerging issues to support good relations	Publish new Codes and Guidance as required	Ongoing.	
		Draw on experience to inform development of the agricultural tenure measures in the Land Reform Bill	Ongoing engagement through TFAF. Updated Part 2 Bill advice submitted in Qtr 4.	
		Extend mediation scheme	One mediation application received, approved, and completed.	
	Respond to casework enquiries or alleged breaches of Codes of Practice		Ongoing.	
3.2 Relinquishment and Assignment	Fulfil the statutory requirement to appoint a valuer when required	Ensure statutory requirements are fulfilled, update process and guidance as appropriate	Ongoing, timescales met to date.	

## ANNEX A

<b>of Agricultural Tenancies</b>	to enable relinquishment and assignation of agricultural tenancies			
<b>3.3 Role of Agents – progress review</b>	Review progress against the TFC’s recommendations in the 2018 review of the conduct of professional agents of agricultural landlords and tenants	Complete and engage on progress review	Review published 9 <sup>th</sup> October. No further action required.	
<b>3.4 Tenant Farming Advisory Forum</b>	Convene the Forum as a regular means of stakeholder engagement and collaboration	Convene regular Forum meetings to support leadership and collaboration	One TFAF meeting held in Qtr 4. Regular engagement on Part 2 of Land Reform Bill	



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GIA 1,600,000.00  
Allocated 1,614,330.28  
Under / (Over) Budget (14,330)

Categories	Dept Codes	Allocated Annual Budget	Committed	Total Spend (To date)	Year End Position	Variance (Based on Allocated)
<b>1. Advising on reforms to law, policy and practice</b>						
<b>Reforming Land Rights</b>						
Advice & Research to support Land Reform Bill	95	H	-	-	-	-
Diversifying the Pattern of Land Ownership	103	T	35,000.00	32,083.33	35,000.00	-
<b>Reforming Land Markets</b>						
Natural Capital, Land Market & Just Transition	96		27,987.83	27,987.83	27,987.83	-42.17
Land Development & Regeneration	97	H	1,433.17	1,433.17	1,433.17	0.11
Vacant and Derelict Land	101	T	-	-	-	-
Research Capacity Building	122		2,500.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,500.00
<b>Strategic Plan total</b>						
			66,963	62,504.33	65,421.00	1,542.28
<b>2. Supporting practical implementation of Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement</b>						
<b>Responsible Land Ownership/Use</b>						
Strengthening Land Rights & Responsibilities	94	EC	5,000.00	550.00	550.00	4,450.00
<b>Strategic Plan total</b>						
			5,000.00	550.00	550.00	4,450.00
<b>3. Promoting good relations between agricultural landlords and tenants through the functions of the Tenant Farming Commissioner</b>						
<b>Tenant Farming</b>						
Tenant Farming - Mediation	99	EC	3,000.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	1,800.00
Tenant Farming - Agent Review etc.	93		-	3,000.00	3,000.00	(3,000)
<b>Strategic Plan total</b>						
			3,000.00	4,200.00	4,200.00	(1,200)
<b>4. Engaging people in why land matters and how they can be involved</b>						
<b>Communications</b>						
Events	112		17,000.00	29,577.31	29,606.51	(22,811)
Communications Campaigns	113		-	-	-	-
Digital	114	N	2,000.00	1,460.00	1,460.00	540.00
Design & Printing	115		16,000.00	13,220.89	13,221.10	2,778.90
Communications, Monitoring & Review	116	N	7,362.00	6,459.34	4,492.94	2,869
Internal Communications	117		-	1,960.00	1,960.00	(1,960)
Communication Support	100		20,000.00	9,849.60	9,849.60	10,150.40
<b>Dept Total</b>						
			62,362	62,527.14	60,794.15	1,567.85
<b>5. Underpinned by sound corporate governance and organisational development</b>						
<b>Organisational Development</b>						
HR Service	118		20,000.00	15,866.15	15,860.39	4,536.48
IT Services	119		75,000.00	85,393.15	85,123.57	1,754
Website Accessibility	139		20,000.00	-	-	20,000.00
Legal Advice	120		15,000.00	14,125.68	14,125.68	6,344.76
Organisational & Financial Performance	121		60,000.00	65,551.20	41,191.20	6,551.00
Climate Action	124	N	1,000.00	834.00	834.00	166.00
Office Accommodation	125	N	20,000.00	26,800.00	26,800.00	20,800.00
Office Supplies	126		200.00	314.73	405.56	(206)
External Meeting Costs	127		200.00	118.38	118.38	82
Insurance & Bank Charges	128		2,000.00	662.00	962.01	1,415.24
Subscriptions & Memberships	129		2,000.00	2,051.40	2,051.40	76
HSEQ	130		1,000.00	2,520.54	2,520.52	(1,521)
<b>Dept Total</b>						
			225,400	216,237.23	191,992.71	27,300.31
<b>Staffing</b>						
Staff Payroll/ On-Costs	131		1,141,105.00	1,156,730.88	1,162,101.28	(3,766)
Staff Travel & Subsistence	132	H	12,000.00	19,149.55	20,301.80	(8,302)
Staff Training & Development	133	T	18,000.00	12,836.68	12,836.68	4,911.32
Recruitment	134		20,000.00	1,745.48	1,745.48	1,625.48
FIRMS	140		-	32,010.63	32,220.77	9,231.44
<b>Dept Total</b>						
			1,173,105	1,222,479.22	1,228,053.76	(16,314)
<b>Commissions</b>						
Commissioners Fees	135		62,000.00	62,364.86	62,364.86	(365)
Commissioners Travel & Subsistence	136	H	11,000.00	12,374.32	12,821.91	(1,822)
Commissioners Training & Development	137	T	4,000.00	3,960.00	3,960.00	1,456.00
Commissioners Meetings	138		1,500.00	1,206.10	1,206.10	293.90
<b>Dept Total</b>						
			78,500	79,905.28	79,905.87	(437)
<b>Grand Total</b>						
			1,614,330.28	1,651,313.87	1,629,827.37	16,810

1,615,000.00 GIA ( 9,231.44) FIRMS Grant Remaining - Expected April 25  
( 3,000.00) SG GIA (HT) - Expected April 25  
1,400.00 Digital 23/24 cost missed to be put in 24/25 accounts.  
21,000.00 Estimated Flexi/Holiday accruals

1,007,588.04

100%

7,410.96 Est GIA remaining

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						
VISION: Fair inclusive and productive system of ownership management and use of land that delivers greater benefit for all the people of Scotland															
RISK CATEGORY: DELIVERY															
1	Risk of 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	Multi factor authentication implemented for network access. Cyber security requirements embedded in retendered IT service. Potential increase in cyber threats due to current political environment. Secured continued Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation for 2024. Transfer of finance and accounting software completed April 25 with back-up in place.	5	Sep-25	Head of Communications and Corporate services
2	Risk that Land Reform Bill creates increased obligations without sufficient resource leading to adverse impacts on delivery	4	4	16	Engagement with sponsor team on implications; anticipating resource requirements; maintaining flexibility in medium term financial planning	Partial	3	4	12		Minimalist	Initial estimates of financial implications of new measures as drafted provided to sponsor team Oct 24. To be reviewed as Bill progresses. Regular engagement with sponsor team. Significant uncertainty at this point	4	Sep-25	CEO
3	Risk that public finance constraints mean the Commission is unable to deliver planned work and/or is unable to react quickly to changes in priorities, reducing its effectiveness	3	4	12	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	25/26 Business Plan sets focused priorities matched with staff resource. Additional asks would require additional resource. Staff posts reviewed as vacancies arise in order to remain agile and refresh focus where necessary.	4	Sep-25	CEO
RISK CATEGORY: REPUTATIONAL															
4	Changes in Board appointments or failure to recruit timely 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	2	1	2		Minimalist	2023 & 2024 appointments concluded, in place with induction and transition arrangements completed. Opportunities for board stakeholder engagement to be built into programme for year.	4	Sep-25	CEO
5	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	3	9		Minimalist	Close engagement with stakeholders and sponsor team to identify potential issues in advance and take action. Clear case handling and internal communications procedures. Land Reform Bill creates new dynamics but clarity of SLC focus agreed with board and SG and advice published.	3	Mar-26	CEO
6	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	2	4		Minimalist	Refreshed Programme of Work published April 25. Launch of Scotland Futures initiative May 25 provides platform for coherent narrative beyond individual legislative steps. Improved regular e-newsletters provide regular overview of Commission's work.	2	Mar-26	Head of Communications and Corporate services
7	Risk that failure to maintain effective relationships with key stakeholders impacts on our ability to deliver and constrains opportunities for collaboration.	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 across policy, good practice and tenant farming work. Structured engagement through standing advisory groups, bilateral stakeholder engagement via Commissioners and staff. Dynamics of land reform bill actively managed via open advice and engagement.	4	Mar-26	CEO
8	Risk that insufficient relationships across Scottish Government and Parliament result in reduced impact and value from the Commission's work	5	4	20	Ensure regular engagement between the Commission Chair and the Land Reform Minister, and between the Tenant Farming Commissioner and the Cab 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. Chair & CEO liaison with DG. Engagement in other formal SG structures eg NSET Programme, EELG, Planning Advisory Group. Annual board meeting with Cab Sec due Qtr 1/2.	4	Sep-25	CEO
RISK CATEGORY: COMPLIANCE															
9	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	23/24 annual report laid in Parliament on time. Using checklist of assurance controls; 25/26 internal audit plan agreed; 24/25 year-end and annual report preparation on schedule; staff responsibilities for data, information, climate reporting and other duties identified.	1	Mar-26	CEO
10	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	Improvements to budget monitoring and reporting made in 24/25. Monthly MT and board monitoring in place. Transfer to new finance software from 1st April completed to reduce manual data input and further improve consistency and format of reporting. Internal audit review of financial process undertaken 24/25. SG in-year spend controls implemented. Year end outturn expected 0.5% underspend.	1	Mar-26	CEO
RISK CATEGORY: STAFFING															
11	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	2	6		Cautious	Ongoing absence monitoring in place. Resilience improvements in corporate team implemented. Desk instructions for critical tasks in place. Policy to review all vacancies at board level. Vacancies for business support and research currently reduce capacity.	4	Sep-25	Head of Communications and Corporate services
12	Risk that staff wellbeing is adversely impacted by hybrid pattern of working, changes in priorities or insufficient prioritisation.	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 responsive ways of working.	Effective	2	3	6		Cautious	Regular staff surveys and action plan in place. Training and development plan in place. Business Plan prioritisation matched to resource capacity. Monthly all staff meetings and individual line management meetings in place. Mental health awareness training undertaken by all line managers March 25.	3	Sep-25	CEO

# COMMUNICATIONS QUARTERLY REPORT

Q4: JANUARY 2025 - MARCH 2025



This quarter saw strong progress across our communications and engagement work, with a focus on increasing reach, improving accessibility, and experimenting with new formats.

A key highlight was the launch of our Governance Guide, published using Microsoft Sway which is a move away from our usual PDF format. This allowed for a more engaging, accessible presentation and was well received by users.

With thanks to Karen Grant and the Good Practice Team, we hosted several fully booked CPD webinars, covering key topics such as housing, the LRRS and a land market and LRB update from the Policy team. These sessions continue to be a valuable way of maintaining visibility across stakeholder groups.

Our media coverage increased again this quarter, up 17% , with strong pickup on housing. This was driven in large part by the successful launch of the Land for Rural Housing report, as well as Hamish's podcast appearance.

On social media, we were pleased to exceed our LinkedIn follower target for the quarter, with continued good engagement across that platform. However, we did see a drop in engagement on Instagram, the cause of which is not yet clear and will be reviewed in the next period.

If you require further details or would like to discuss any aspect of the report, please contact Scarlett Macfarlane at [scarlett.macfarlane@landcommission.gov.scot](mailto:scarlett.macfarlane@landcommission.gov.scot).

Month	Event/Activity
April	Land agents CPD webinar on landowner-led housing developments
April	Commission and TFC newsletters
May	ScotLand Futures launches
May	Op-ed from Chair
May	Land agents CPD webinar on Tenant Farming
May	ITT for website closes
June	Land Markets Insights Report
June	Land Markets event with SRUC at Royal Highland Show
June	ScotLand Futures panel at Royal Highland Show



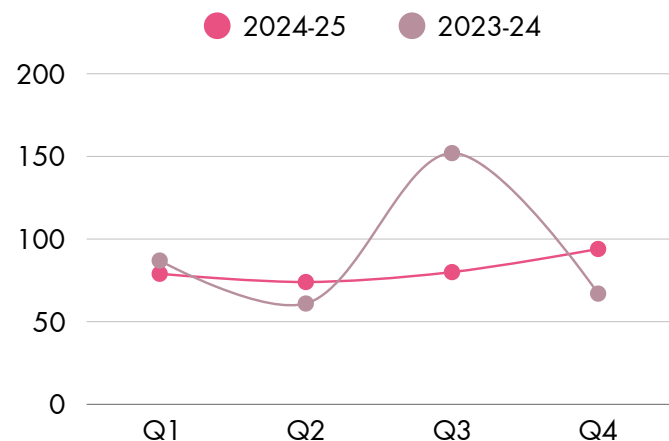
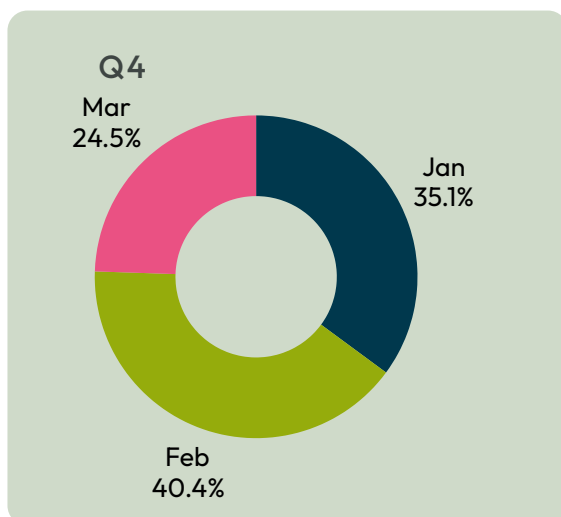
## PRESS COVERAGE

Press coverage increased by 17% this quarter, reflecting growing media interest in our work and strong performance against key messaging areas. Notably, we met our annual KPI for housing-related coverage, driven by targeted communications and successful media engagement.

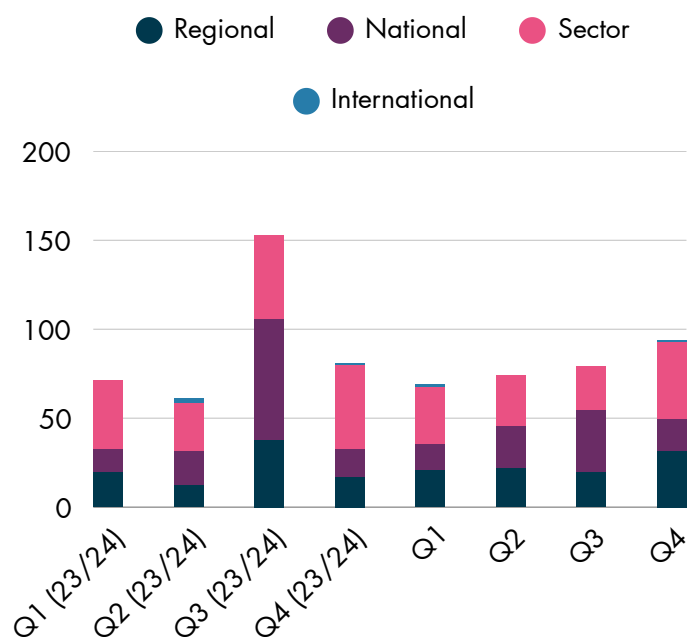
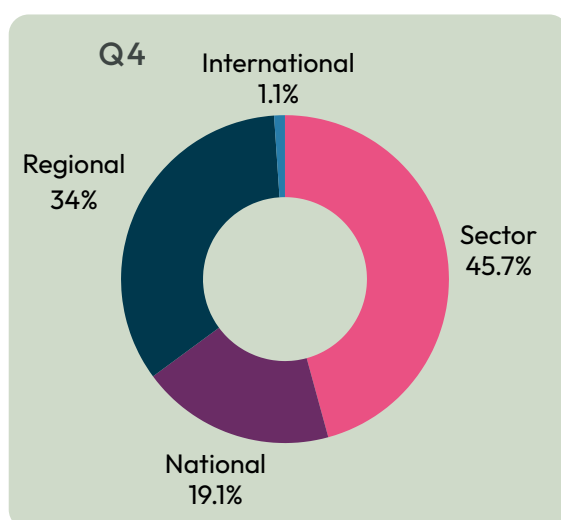
A major highlight was the Land for Rural Housing report, which received significant media attention, including a front-page feature in The Herald.

We also saw strong interest in our Good Practice work, with several regional outlets covering Annabel's appointment to the role of Community Benefits from Nature Adviser.

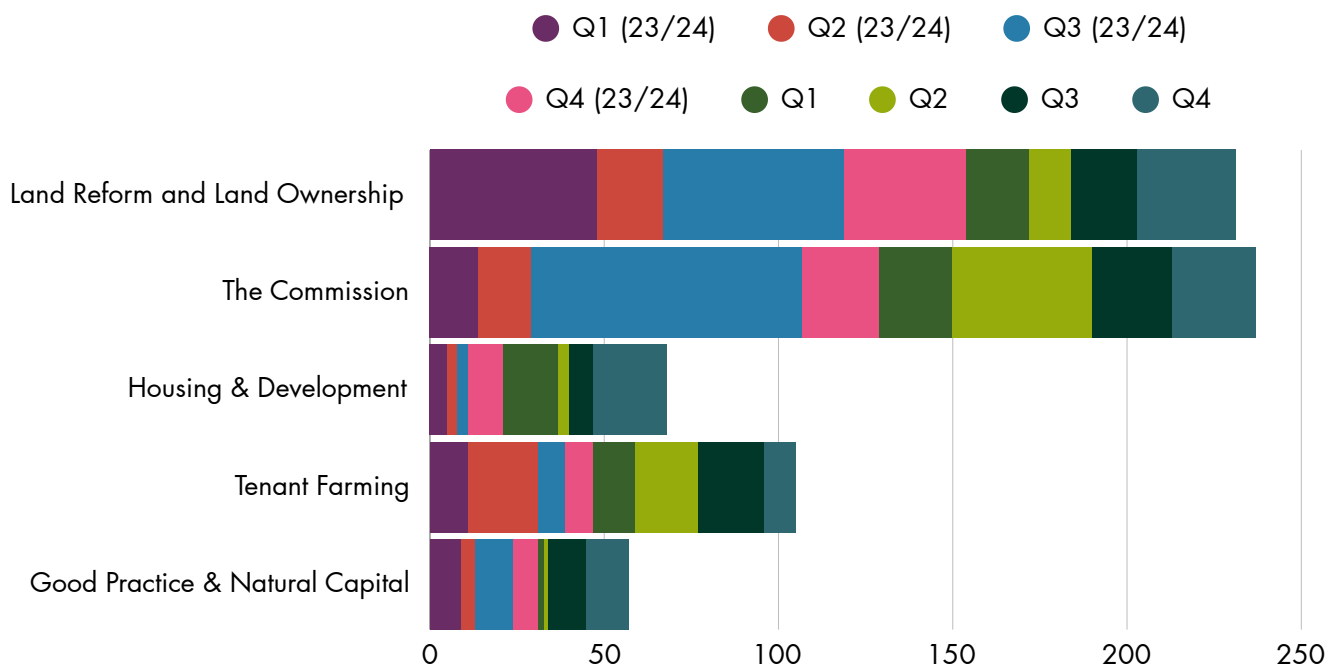
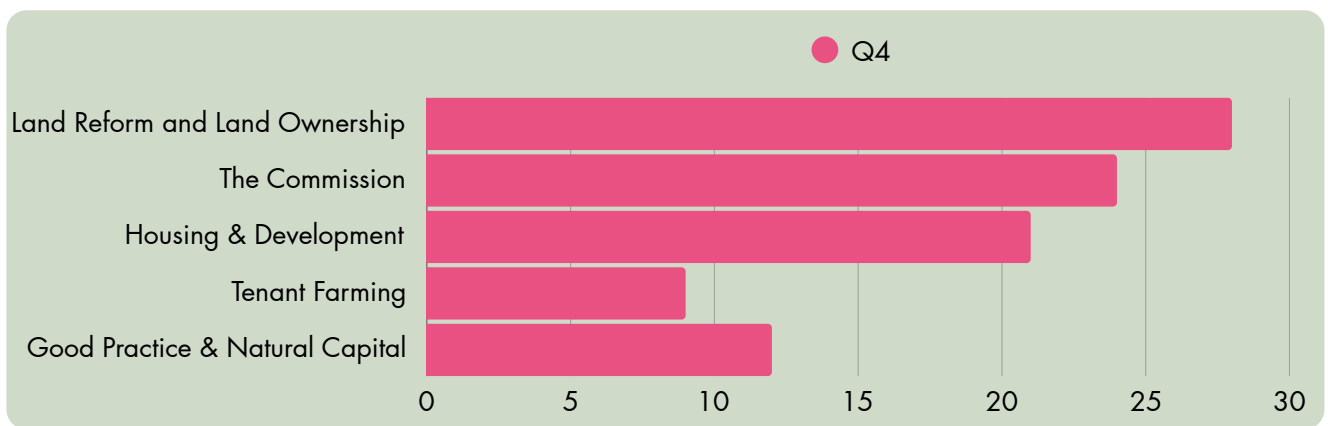
### DATES OF COVERAGE



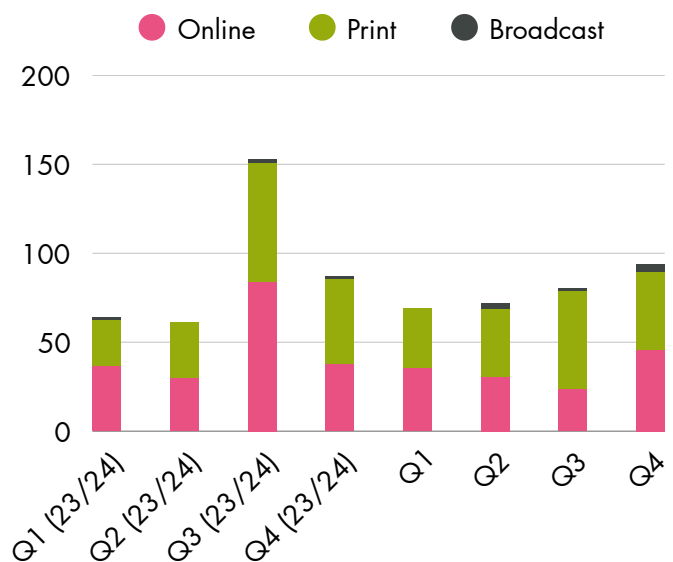
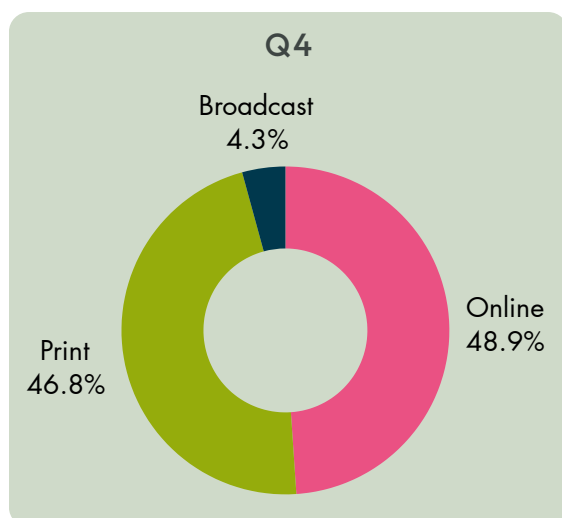
### REGION OF COVERAGE



## PRIORITY AREA COVERAGE



## CHANNEL OF COVERAGE



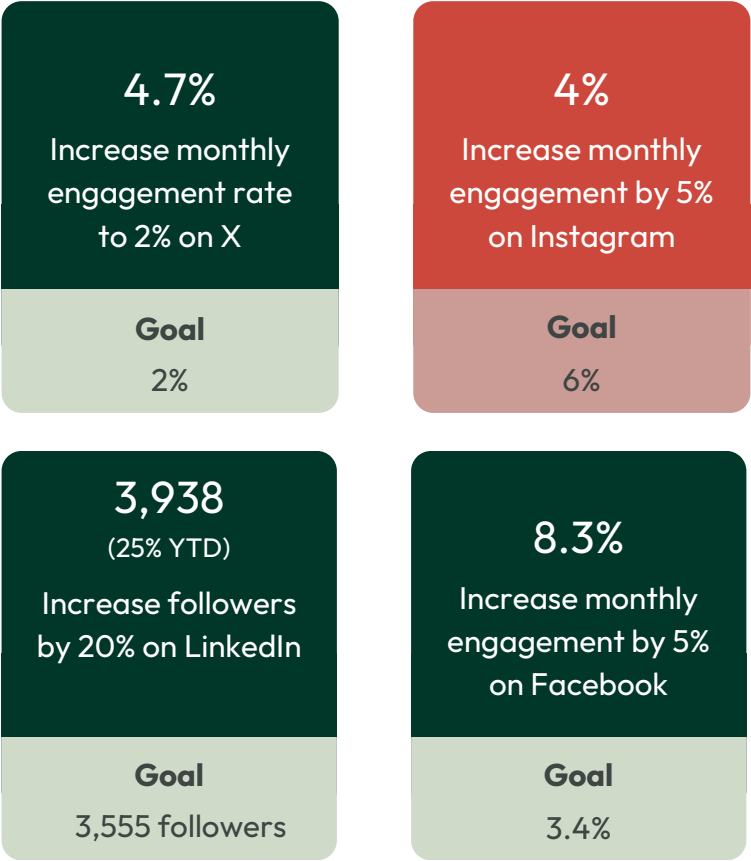
# SOCIAL MEDIA

This quarter saw steady performance across most of our social media platforms, with some strong audience growth and engagement highlights.

We successfully hit our follower target for LinkedIn, which continues to be our strongest platform for professional engagement. Content around events, publications, and organisational updates has consistently performed well here.

We’ve also continued to grow our audience on Bluesky, as we explore opportunities to diversify our reach and adapt to changes in the social media landscape.

However, we did see a drop in engagement on Instagram, which is in contrast to the overall positive trend. The reasons for this are unclear at this stage and will be explored further in the next reporting period.



Platform	Avg. Engagement Rate
Instagram	4.1%
Facebook	3.2%
X	2.4%
LinkedIn	2% (Commission avg. 7%)

Source: Hootsuite

## EMAIL MARKETING

We issued two newsletters this quarter, both of which performed well, maintaining our goal of achieving an open rate above 40%. This continues to reflect a strong level of interest and engagement from our subscriber base.

Growing our mailing list remains a key focus, particularly as we look ahead to upcoming engagement work. As part of this, email sign-up will be integrated into the submission process for the ScotLand Futures initiative, helping us to build a more targeted and engaged audience over time.

Mailout	Open Rate	Click Through Rate
TFC Newsletter	62.6%	15%
Issue 5 (February) Newsletter	47%	13%

## WEBSITE

Website traffic was down slightly this quarter, which was expected following a strong performance in the previous quarter, driven by several high-profile publications and events. While there was a dip, overall engagement levels have remained steady, with key content continuing to perform well.

A key milestone this quarter was the launch of the procurement process for our new website. This marks the beginning of an exciting phase as we work towards a more accessible, user friendly, and intuitive platform.

Our top performing pages this quarter were:

- Home
- Transforming VDL
- Who we are

3,223

Avg. number of  
monthly users in Q4

**Previous quarter**

3,759

4,766

Avg. number of  
monthly sessions in Q4

**Previous quarter**

5,483

2m 49s

Avg. time on site

**Previous quarter**

3m 1s

# GOOD PRACTICE CASEWORK 2024-25



Between April 2024 and March 2025 we handled 89 unique good practice enquiries and cases, an average of 22 per quarter. This is an increase from 23-24 (82 enquiries and cases).

## OUTCOMES:



Information provided or meeting(s) held - 55



Ongoing - 27



Signposted - 6

1 contact was not taken forward

## ISSUES RAISED

	24-25	23-24	The most raised subject, as in previous years, was community engagement. There has been an increase in enquiries and cases relating to good stewardship (including 6 FIRNS cases) and diversification of ownership and tenure.
Community Engagement	23	27	
Good Stewardship	21	15	
Diversification of Ownership & Tenure	19	12	
Common Good	11	4	
Vacant and Derelict Land	5	10	
Transparency	4	8	
Negotiated Transfer to Communities	3	4	
Legislative Routes to Ownership	1	2	



## CONTACT FROM:

	24-25	23-24
Individual	41	31
Community organisation	22	21
Intermediary	6	8
Private owner / business	6	11
FIRNS project	6	0
Proactive	2	2
Public Body	2	6
Other	4	3

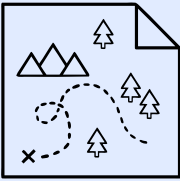
## CONTACT ABOUT:

	24-25	23-24
Private Landowner	31	35
Public Body	24	16
Unknown	10	14
Multiple owners	10	11
FIRNS	6	0
Charity	3	2
Church	2	0
Other	3	4

Other includes community landowners, housing associations, ownerless land

We received contact from 21 local authority areas:

Highlands and Islands	22
Argyll & Bute	8
West Lothian	6
Scotland-wide	6
Dumfries & Galloway	6
Fife	6
Moray	5
Not disclosed	5



## LOCATION

Aberdeenshire	4
Glasgow City	3
Perth and Kinross	3
Angus	2
East Lothian	2
North Lanarkshire	2
South Lanarkshire	2
Stirling	2

We had single contacts from Clackmannanshire, Edinburgh, East Renfrewshire, Na h-Eileanan Siar, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

**Commissioners Meeting**  
**8<sup>th</sup> May 2025**  
**Perth**

**PAPER 3**

**Research Strategy**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To consider and agree a Research Strategy, which outlines the Commission's approach to delivering research.
<b>Business Plan context:</b>	Advising on reforms to law, policy and practice
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> March 2025, Paper: Programme of Work April 2025 – September 2026
<b>Action required:</b>	For agreement

**1. Background**

In discussing the Programme of Work the board has identified a need to refresh the Commission's research strategy to harness opportunities for collaboration and external funding.

This paper asks the board to discuss and agree the draft Research Strategy (Annex A) so that staff can develop delivery plans while the current Research Officer vacancy is recruited.

**2. Purpose**

The Commission has undertaken and commissioned research since its inception but has not had a research strategy before. The draft strategy:

- articulates the Commission's organisational approach to undertaking and using research evidence.
- defines objectives and priorities which will guide our decision-making around research (including the use of AI).
- outlines how we plan to maximise the impact of our research through enhanced dissemination, partnerships, and capacity building; and
- provides indicators for measuring our progress.

**3. Summary of proposed aims and objectives**

Proposed aim

Our aim in research is to provide a sound evidence base from which to support advice to inform policy, as well as advice to landowners, managers, advisors, and communities to support the practical implementation of Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities.

### Proposed objectives

To achieve this aim we will work on four interrelated objectives:

- keep up to date with the existing body of evidence and ensure its effective use in our workstreams and advice;
- conduct high quality research to generate new evidence to address knowledge gaps;
- strengthen organisational capacity and partnerships to generate, understand, and use research evidence; and
- ensure effective dissemination of research findings within and outside the organisation.

#### **4. Delivery**

The strategy sets out our approach to research and does not in itself commit resource. Delivery will be taken forward in line with available resource in each financial year. Co-ordination and oversight will be the responsibility of the Research Officer (currently vacant).

#### **5. Recommendation: the Board is asked to consider and agree the adoption of the strategy.**

#### **6. Next steps**

Based on agreement of the strategy and key priorities, staff will make arrangements to begin with high priority tasks over this financial year.

***Hanna Wheatley & James MacKessack-Leitch***

# Scottish Land Commission Research Strategy April 2025

This strategy:

- articulates the Commission’s organisational approach to undertaking and using research evidence.
- defines objectives and priorities which will guide our decision-making on research.
- outlines how we plan to maximise the impact of our research through enhanced dissemination, partnerships, and capacity building; and
- provides indicators for measuring our progress.

## **The role of research evidence in our work**

Our strategic plan 2023-26 says “The Scottish Land Commission is here to provide leadership and fresh thinking, underpinned by sound research, analysis and advice.”

Research is an important source of evidence used by the Commission, but we also make decisions and provide advice and guidance based on our assessment of case work and experience. Research has a particular niche within the mix of evidence as rigorous scientific scrutiny and transparency provide research findings with credibility and comparability, which tend to mean research evidence is accorded a greater weight among decision-makers and practitioners.

At the Commission, research is a core organisational activity that contributes to the development of policy recommendations, advice, and guidance.

## **Aim**

Our aim in research is to provide a sound evidence base from which to support advice to inform policy, as well as advice to landowners, managers, advisors, and communities to support the practical implementation of Scotland’s Land Rights and Responsibilities.

## **Objectives**

To achieve this aim we will work on four interrelated objectives:

- keep up to date with the existing body of evidence and ensure its effective use in our workstreams and advice;
- conduct high quality research to generate new evidence to address knowledge gaps;
- strengthen organisational capacity and partnerships to generate, understand, and use research evidence; and
- ensure effective dissemination of research findings within and outside the organisation.

Objective 1: Keep up to date with the existing body of evidence and ensure its effective use in our workstreams and advice. (Activities below in order of priority).

- Take part in knowledge-sharing forums, e.g. Scottish Government Land Use Analytical Forum, Community Land Ownership Academic Network, RESAS steering board.



- Encourage the use of bitesize briefings internally to invite external speakers to share relevant research.
- Attend academic and practitioner conferences related to relevant research.
- Consider setting up a research network on LinkedIn, or consider other ways to enable cross pollination of ideas, collaboration, and keeping up to date.
- Provide training and skills for keeping up to date with research, for example using Google Scholar.
- Develop our organisational infrastructure to support the effective storage, retrieval and sharing of research evidence across the organisation. This could include developing a repository on Sharepoint of all our own research (potentially including brief summaries of each report), and relevant external publications.

Objective 2: Conduct high quality strategic research to generate new evidence to address knowledge gaps. (Activities below in order of priority).

- Design and deliver high quality research, guided by our Strategic Plans, to underpin our policy and practice advice.
- Develop a process for identifying strategic research priorities as part of the development of the Strategic Plan every three years.
- Maintain a long-term research pipeline, including “shovel-ready” research ideas that can be drawn upon when business planning, or when unexpected funding becomes available. (Annex 2 provides an example of this infrastructure)
- Evaluate the process and impact of research projects on a project-level basis. This should involve setting out objectives at the beginning of a project, choosing indicators, and reviewing the project at the end. Learning should be shared with whole staff team.
- Make use of internal capacity to deliver research. Internal research methods might include calls for evidence, literature reviews, data analysis, case study development and action research. We will need to recognise that conducting research in-house may take longer than commissioning research externally, where a contractor may have a whole team working on a research project. (Annex 1 outlines when to conduct research internally/externally/collaboratively).
- Commission research externally. In the context of a constrained budget, we should only be commissioning research that we do not have the skills or capacity to undertake in house. E.g. legal advice, foreign language research, independent anonymous interviews (i.e. land market insights work).
- Continue to use and keep under review our research policies (Research Ethics Policy and Quality Assurance Policy).

Objective 3: Strengthen organisational capacity and partnerships to generate, understand, and use research evidence. (Activities below in order of priority).

- Explore new ways of working collaboratively. In the context of a constrained budget, work to diversify our sources of research income through joint grant applications with academic institutions to research funding bodies for specific pieces of strategic research, and through

research collaborations with other organisations. This may also enable us to engage in multi-year research projects. (Annex 2 explores potential funding avenues)

- Shape funding agendas: Participate in steering boards and endeavour to influence others to conduct research that we do not have capacity or resource to prioritise ourselves, e.g. RESAS, CaCHE, etc.
- Build internal capacity to increase in-house delivery of research through training, mentoring and skill sharing. This may require a skills audit, to understand which staff have, or would like to build, relevant research skills/experience.
- Develop an organisational approach to the use of AI in research and seek out opportunities for training and skills development (Annex 3 proposes SLC's approach).
- Continue to build capacity and support engagement with land reform research outwith the Commission by running National Student Award, co-supervising or hosting PhD students and taking up mentoring opportunities. These types of initiatives should be aligned with our strategic plan and therefore demonstrate direct relevance and benefits to our work, contribute to long-term research partnerships, and be cost-effective. We should prioritise joint capacity building with academic institutions and research funding bodies to develop further opportunities for collaboration.
- Build capacity within the sector by diversifying the organisations we work with to deliver research.

Objective 4: Ensure effective dissemination of research findings within and outside the organisation. (Activities below in order of priority).

- Upgrade the website infrastructure to make it easier to find research. Add a designated research area, including contact details for potential collaborators to get in touch.
- Maximise our efforts to ensure the findings of our research reach relevant stakeholders and achieve desired impact. We should identify target audiences for specific research projects early on as part of the Project Initiation Document process, and engage in active dissemination with that audience when a research project is complete. This should be a part of a Theory of Change for any project, which should also identify intended impact of the project.
- Adopt an 'open research' approach, to make our research and its dissemination accessible to all. This should include, where possible, data and research methods, as well as publications.
- Ensure that our research findings are disseminated to the communities who participate in and benefit from our studies, e.g. interviewees should be sent final reports, for example.
- Explore the use of Digital Object Identifiers (DOI) for our reports. DOIs are permanent and unique labels that can be used to identify objects even when they move (e.g. if a URL changes). However, as they are expensive, we should explore collaborative approaches, e.g. with CLAN research library.
- Explore the possibility of submitting our research to peer-reviewed journals and academic conferences where relevant, or collaborating with academic partners to do so.

## **Monitoring progress**

- Once agreed, this strategy should be reviewed within three years.
- Progress should be monitored to enable us to adjust where necessary to increase the impact of our research. We should maintain a system for tracking the following:
  - Capacity building activities (e.g. PhDs hosted, student awards provided etc)
  - Research projects completed and lessons learned, including project-level research impact (e.g. policy recommendations taken up)
  - Strategic research pipeline
- Monitor research-related event attendance by adding to the existing event tracker.

# Annex 1: Pros/cons of different types of SLC research

	Pros	Cons	When to use
<b>Internal</b>	<p>Total control over outputs</p> <p>Total control over timeline</p> <p>Knowledge gained through project stays in-house</p> <p>No cost beyond staff time and design</p> <p>Can happen any time of year</p>	<p>Limited capacity (usually 1-2 staff working on a research project). Can take longer than commissioning externally</p> <p>Limited subject expertise/research methods</p>	<p>When we have limited budget and enough expertise in-house. Internal research methods might include calls for evidence, literature reviews, data analysis, case study development and action research.</p> <p>E.g. Governance guide case study development</p>
<b>External</b>	<p>More capacity (sometimes a whole team working on a research project)</p> <p>Ability to tap into other organisations' networks</p> <p>Specific research skills/subject knowledge (e.g. different language)</p> <p>Academic rigour and independence can lend credibility to recommendations</p> <p>Diverse perspectives strengthen research</p> <p>Builds capacity outwith SLC</p>	<p>Cost</p> <p>Limited control over outputs</p> <p>Quality can vary, so there may be more risk (especially with an unknown supplier)</p> <p>Usually requires a long lead in time because of procurement</p> <p>Limited timing by financial year-end</p>	<p>When we do not have the skills or capacity to undertake in house. E.g. legal advice, foreign language research, independent anonymous interviews.</p> <p>E.g. Review of French SAFER model</p>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<p>Some control over outputs</p> <p>Knowledge gained through project stays in-house</p> <p>Increasing SLC skills</p> <p>May allow for multi-year projects</p>	<p>Requires higher degree of project management</p> <p>Reliance on others for elements of work can cause delays</p> <p>Small cost</p>	<p>When we have an established (working) relationship with the partner organisation</p> <p>E.g. SRUC land markets collaboration. Cost is £10k a year. SLC and SRUC both do the research.</p>

## Annex 2: Potential external funding options

SLC could diversify our sources of research income by adopting a very targeted approach and applying for funding in line with our strategic objectives. However, we should take care not to become driven by seeking funding. Seeking external funding takes significant staff time and should therefore be highly targeted and directed by SLC priorities.

### **Charities and trusts**

The following examples fund research activities related to our strategic objectives:

- [Landscape Research Fund](#) – supports a wide range of small, high-quality, independent research projects on land.
- [Nuffield Foundation](#) – improving social well-being through education, research and innovation (specific strands on tax, community and place, inequality costs and benefits of the transition to a net zero emissions economy)
- [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) – provides research funding for housing, social care and social policy through specific calls (including a strand exploring how government policy on net zero—including energy, housing, and transport—can be shaped to distribute costs and benefits fairly)
- [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#) – funds projects in four major strands arts, education and learning, environment and social change.
- [The Oak Foundation](#) – funding on housing, environment (people-centred).
- [Laudes Foundation](#) – funds work (including knowledge exchange) on climate change, nature loss, the built environment and social inequality.
- [Property Research Trust](#) (formerly RICS Research Trust) – supports research in the disciplines of land, real estate and construction.

### **Research funding**

SLC would need to attain [Public Sector Research Establishment \(PSRE\) status to be eligible](#) for funding from the following organisations (unless responding to a funding opportunity/call): UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), [British Academy](#) - for the humanities and social sciences. This is likely to be unattainable due to the current research capacity (staff and funding) at the Commission.

### **Academic options**

- Fellowships – explore possibility of SLC researcher applying for fellowship funding from Leverhume, British Academy, UKRI. However, SLC would need to become a recognised research institution (see above) and the post-holder would need to have completed a PhD.
- Joint appointments with academic institutions, e.g. JHI/SRUC are a more practical route.

### **Partnerships/collaborations**

- With think tanks, e.g. IPPR Scotland, CLES, Future Economy Scotland, Dark Matter Labs
- With academics/universities, e.g. UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, Edinburgh Futures Institute
- Land Use for Net Zero Hub – open to collaborations and also input from SLC in workshops
- ClimateXchange

## Annex 4: Approach to the use of AI in research

**Context:** Artificial intelligence (AI) is developing at a rapid pace and can be found throughout society in a growing range of everyday applications and decision-making. Although there is no current legislation on the use of AI, the Scottish Government is proactively fostering its development and ethical use to enhance public services and stimulate economic growth. In March 2021, SG published their AI Strategy titled "[Artificial intelligence strategy: trustworthy, ethical and inclusive](#)," aiming to position themselves as a leader in ethical AI development. However, AI presents both risks and benefits. There are implications for security, privacy, transparency, liability, labour rights, intellectual property and disinformation. This annex proposes an approach to using AI in SLC research.

### **Proposed SLC approach**

1. **We should define what we mean by AI.** E.g. *Artificial intelligence (AI) is technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity and autonomy. (IBM)*
2. **We should agree a set of ethical principles.** E.g:
  - a. *Transparency*
    - i. *AI used in SLC research must be transparent, with clear documentation of how it has been used.*
  - b. *Fairness and Non-Discrimination*
    - i. *AI can be based on biased data or inadequately designed. Efforts must be made to reduce discrimination and ensure equitable outcomes.*
  - c. *Privacy and Data Protection*
    - i. *AI used in research must comply with Scottish and UK data protection laws.*
  - d. *Human Oversight*
    - i. *AI should support human decision-making, rather than replace it. Any outputs of work using AI should be critically assessed.*
3. **We should draft a policy/protocol for using AI that can guide our work and the work of contractors.** This policy should provide guidelines for the ethical, transparent, and responsible use of artificial intelligence in research at the Commission. It should ensure AI supports innovation while safeguarding privacy, fairness, and accountability. We should consider whether this policy is only for research, or whether we need an organisation-wide AI policy.
4. **We should have training and development opportunities for using AI in our work.** This should further inform policy development in specific areas, e.g. how to use AI in a green way, AI technologies, ethics, and data protection.
5. **We should incorporate a statement on AI into our Statements of Requirement when contracting work externally.** (Paul Hamlyn Foundation has a good one for their funding applications [here](#))
6. **We should review the policy regularly to remain aligned with emerging technologies, legal frameworks, and public expectations.**



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

**Commissioners' Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025  
Perth**

**PAPER 5**

**Community Wealth Building Bill – Call for Views**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To consider and agree the Commission's response to the Economy and Fair Work Committee's Call for Views on the Community Wealth Building Bill
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Action required:</b>	For agreement

The Scottish Government introduced the Community Wealth Building Bill to Parliament on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025. The Economy and Fair Work Committee has opened a Call for Views on the Bill inviting responses.

The Bill includes measures to:

- require Scottish Ministers to publish and report on a Community Wealth building Statement;
- require local authorities and relevant public bodies to prepare a Community Wealth Building Action Plan for their area;
- require Scottish Ministers to issue Guidance and specified bodies to have regard to the Guidance in developing corporate plans and delivery strategies (The Scottish Land Commission is included as a specified body for this purpose).

The Committee Call for Views invites responses to four questions:

- *If you think the Bill will achieve its aim.*
- *If you agree with the relevant and specified public bodies that are proposed, and the extra duties placed on them.*
- *If there are potential unintended consequences to the Bill.*
- *How the Bill could benefit local communities and small businesses*

There is strong synergy between Community Wealth Building and land reform. The Bill makes specific reference in the topics the CWB Statement should address to:

- *diversifying ownership of land or other assets by facilitating or supporting community ownership;*

- *bringing vacant and derelict land back into use in a way that provides financial, social or environmental benefit to the community.*

The Commission will respond to the Call for Views and the draft response is attached as Annex A for the board to consider and agree.

**Recommendation: to consider and agree the draft response**

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

## **ANNEX A**

### **DRAFT response to Call for Views by Economy & Fair Work Committee on Community Wealth Building Bill**

The Scottish Land Commission welcomes the Bill and supports the steps it takes which create a mechanism to ensure focus and reporting on actions to deliver Community Wealth Building. How land is owned, managed and governed has a significant impact on the social and economic development of communities, so there is a strong relationship between land reform and community wealth building, that is relevant to both urban and rural Scotland.

We respond below to the four questions posed by the Committee:

#### **1. If you think the Bill will achieve its aim.**

Publication of a Statement does not by itself ensure delivery, but it can have a significant impact on culture and practice. We highlight the parallel of Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (LRRS) which shows how such a legislative provision can be used. The LRRS is required by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 and was reviewed and revised in 2022. Agreed by Parliament, the LRRS provides a clear reference point, setting expectations for practice.

To help give the LRRS traction on the ground, the Scottish Land Commission has developed a Good Practice Programme. This includes publication of protocols setting out clear expectations for responsible practice, supporting guidance and advice, and a feedback mechanism through which cases of poor practice can be raised and improvement supported.

We encourage consideration of equivalent mechanisms that will help ensure traction for the CWB statement and will support consistent implementation of the community wealth building model. The proposed Action Plans required of local authorities will have a key role to play in delivery and it will be important that these connect beyond local authority functions to support and influence wider actions.



We welcome the commitment for Ministers to issue Guidance, which will be important in setting the expectations. This can draw on existing guidance in place for the land and property pillar of community wealth building, Guidance on Delivering Community Benefits from Land (based on CWB principles) published by the Scottish Land Commission, as well as wider existing guidance published by EDAS. It can also support alignment with other policy, such as the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement.

We particularly welcome the specific references in the Bill to:

- *diversifying ownership of land or other assets by facilitating or supporting community ownership;*
- *bringing vacant and derelict land back into use in a way that provides financial, social or environmental benefit to the community,*

The Scottish Land Commission will be able to advise on the Guidance in relation to these specific objectives. We set out more on the potential actions and benefits under Question 4 below.

## **2. If you agree with the relevant and specified public bodies that are proposed, and the extra duties placed on them.**

We note that the Scottish Land Commission is specified as a public body which must have due regard to the Guidance issued in developing our corporate plan and delivery strategies. We consider this appropriate.

We urge that any associated reporting requirements be proportionate and discharged via existing annual reporting obligations rather than creating additional separate reporting routes.

We note that Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) is not listed as a specified public body which must have due regard to the Guidance issued in developing our corporate plan and delivery strategies. We believe that FLS, as Scotland's largest landowner with holdings across the nation, can and should play a significant role in supporting national Community Wealth Building ambitions.

## **3. If there are potential unintended consequences to the Bill.**

We have not identified any further potential unintended consequences at this stage.

## **4. How the Bill could benefit local communities and small businesses.**

### ***Community ownership and governance***

Asset ownership helps create community anchor organisations with revenue generating capacity that can underpin wider delivery and local economic benefit. Our review of options for financing community land ownership identified a number of ways that community wealth building can support community land and asset ownership including:

- Development of community ownership strategies within a Community Wealth Building Action Plan;
- Alignment of place-based funding to support community asset acquisition;
- De-risking or providing interim ownership mechanisms to support community land acquisition;
- A more strategic approach to the use of public bodies in enabling community land ownership.

Our research on international experience in community, communal and municipal land ownership, as well as governance of natural resources, points to opportunities for land ownership models – notably co-operatives – that blend public, private and community interests in ways that secure local control and local benefit from investment and resources. The Action Plans and Guidance can support practical routes to implement this.

Although not contained in the Bill, a further legislative step that would deliver on community wealth building is to modernise the legislative framework for land held by Common Good in Scotland. This is in effect Scotland's oldest form of community land ownership but is governed via outdated legislation that does not realise the potential of this common resource for communities.

### ***Community benefits from land and natural capital***

The Scottish Land Commission has published Guidance on Community Benefits from Land, which explicitly uses Community Wealth Building principles and sets out a range of ways in which benefits from land can be retained in local communities and economies. This is relevant for land-owning organisations and is particularly of relevance in the context of significant rural land use change and investment stimulated by Scotland's net zero ambitions. A Community Wealth Building Statement and Action Plans should create a clear framework which embeds responsible approaches and the necessary governance arrangements so that a) local economies benefit directly from spend and investment and b) an appropriate share of the value created is reinvested in local economies.

### ***Vacant and derelict land***

The Scottish Land Commission convened and published recommendations from a national taskforce on vacant and derelict land in 2018. In 2024 we published a progress report, showing significant positive progress as well as some key risks to maintaining momentum. Between 2017 and 2022 site numbers reduced by 15% and land area by 21%. Two-thirds of sites re-used were smaller than 1Ha, small sites which often have a significant impact on local community wellbeing.

While that progress is encouraging, there is also evidence of a lack of early-stage support for community-led regeneration of vacant and derelict sites. A pilot project led by DTAS and supported by the Commission demonstrated the value of early-stage feasibility support but that pilot ended with no route to mainstreaming this support to unlock more re-use.

Vacant and derelict land has a disproportionate impact on the health and wellbeing of communities with higher levels of poverty. Organisations that re-use vacant and derelict sites are also more likely to retain generated income and skills in the local economy. Therefore we welcome the specific focus on vacant and derelict land in the Bill.

We advise there should be specific guidance on the re-use of vacant and derelict land to support the Statement and Action Plans, and the Scottish Land Commission can support its development.

Although not contained in the Bill, the introduction of Compulsory Sale Orders targeted to bringing vacant and derelict properties back into use would also be a significant step supporting community wealth building. The Scottish Land Commission published a proposal for the operation of Compulsory Sale Orders in 2018.