



Minute of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on Thursday 3 July at An Lochran, Inverness

- **Commissioners Present:** Michael Russell (Chair), Lucy Beattie, Deb Roberts, Craig MacKenzie, Calum MacLeod (Online) (Land Commissioners), Rob Black (Tenant Farming Commissioner)
- **In Attendance:** Hamish Trench, Nikki Nagler, Emma Cooper, Scarlett MacFarlane, Kayleigh Watson, Andrew Megson, James MacKessack-Leitch, Gemma Campbell, Uwe Stoneman (Land Commission)
- **Apologies:** None
- **Declarations of interest:** None

1. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes from the meeting held on 5 June 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

2. Commissioners Updates

Commissioners began the meeting by providing updates on key activities and recent events they had attended. This included participation in the Royal Highland Show, where the Commission hosted two successful panel discussions. Other commissioners reflected on their attendance at different sector events since the last Board meeting. The Chair noted a recent meeting with the Minister for Public Finance, which focused on public sector reform and included discussions with officials around housing, particularly in rural areas.

3. Quarterly Report

Hamish provided an update on progress from Quarter 1 (April to June 2025). He confirmed that the Commission remains on track and is entering Quarter 2 from a strong position, with delivery on track at this stage.

3.1 Delivery

Hamish highlighted the successful launch of the ScotLand Futures campaign, publication of the community benefit route map, the completion of Phase 1 engagement on the tax workstream, and panel discussions held at the Royal Highland Show. He also noted the appointment of a new contractor to deliver a new website for the Commission. The board was also updated on discussions in the tenant farming advisory forum. The board asked for more information on the items noted as red. Hamish confirmed the CES collaboration has ended early and focus now needs to shift

to using that learning with others, and that the planned work on land agent training and LRRS protocols has been rescheduled due to reduced staff capacity.

Action 25070301	Emma to bring paper to September Board meeting focussed on Land Rights and Responsibilities protocols.
------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

3.2 Finance

Andrew reported that delivery progress remains strong, with no concerns noted at this stage in the financial year. While some cost pressures are anticipated in Q2, including those relating to recruitment and travel costs, the forecast remains on track.

Commissioners welcomed the format and clarity of the finance report.

3.3 Risk

The board noted that there were no significant changes to the strategic risk register.

The ongoing implications of the Land Reform Bill and constrained public finances continue to represent the most material risks.

3.4 Communications

Scarlett gave an update on communications activity, noting positive engagement with the ScotLand Futures campaign and recent events. The campaign survey remains open until 8 September. The board welcomed the increased impact from panels at the Royal Highland Show compared to previous years and noted that the most effective channels continue to be reports and blogs. Work is underway with the newly appointed website agency. Future video content is planned to support upcoming work.

3.5 Casework

Gemma reported that 25 cases were received in Q1, with 15 ongoing. Most casework remains focused on landowners in the Highlands. The board welcomed the continued steady level of activity and noted the need to continue reviewing options to strengthen the Good Practice programme given staff capacity.

4. Good Practice Programme

Emma introduced a paper exploring options to expand the impact of the Good Practice programme. The board discussed the proposal in the context of resource constraints and wider opportunities to support greater reach and resilience across Scotland. It was agreed that while the potential expansion would be beneficial, further clarity on the direction of the Land Reform Bill and available resources is needed.

In considering possible approaches, the board supported the benefits of having regionally based advisers as a way to widen accessibility and impact. The board also noted public sector leadership as a key opportunity for future development of the programme.

The board noted and discussed the need for careful integration with expected functions of a new Land and Communities Commissioner, including the degree to which separation is required between statutory and good practice functions.

The importance of establishing the Land and Communities Commissioner role and ensuring that all necessary structures and arrangements were in place before the formal commencement of the work of the Commissioner was strongly emphasised which would necessitate, inter alia, early financial provision from Government. That necessity would also apply to other aspects of the Bill when it was finally enacted.

Discussion also touched on the importance of continuing to support urban-focused work and whether collaboration with other organisations might assist with resourcing, though it was agreed the Commission must maintain its independence and clear identity. Commissioners highlighted that the ScotLand Futures campaign will help to identify the priorities the public wishes to see progressed. Emma concluded by noting that good practice support will be vital regardless of the Bill's final content and that additional support will be needed both before and after the transition period.

The board asked staff to continue to develop the strategic case for expanding the impact of the programme, incorporating:

- The potential for regionally based or focussed advisers;
- Integration with wider planning for Land Reform Bill implementation;
- Focus on the impact and outcomes.

This should inform future business planning and engagement with sponsor team on future priorities.

5. ScotLand Futures Updates

Scarlett provided an update on the ongoing campaign. The survey has so far generated thoughtful and detailed responses, and events are planned across Scotland during September and October to broaden engagement. The board was asked to continue promoting the campaign through networks. James will publish a blog summarising key themes later this month. From September, phase 2 will use the emerging themes to develop the policy direction and there will be further board and staff engagement to develop this.

6. AOB

The Chair confirmed that post-board staff feedback session is scheduled for 8 July and that another Commissioner will attend. A meeting with the Cabinet Secretary is also being arranged. The October board meeting may begin later in the day due to an event scheduled the previous evening.

Date of next meeting: 4 September 2025, Thurso