Scottish Land Commission
Coimisean Fearainn na h-Alba

Minute of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on Thursday 2nd October at An Lochran, Inverness

- **Commissioners present:** Michael Russell (Chair), Calum MacLeod, Deb Roberts, Lucy Beattie (Land Commissioners)
- **In attendance:** Hamish Trench, Nikki Nagler, Emma Cooper, Kathie Pollard, Kayleigh Wilson (Scottish Land Commission)
- **Apologies:** Craig MacKenzie and Rob Black
- **Declarations of interest:** None

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

2. Commissioner Updates

Commissioners provided updates on key activities and recent events they had attended. Hamish flagged Rob's attendance at the land agents' event at An Lochran and the TFAF meeting in Edinburgh. Other updates also included Michael and Hamish's meeting with the Scottish Government sponsor team, Lucy's involvement in the podcast with Highland Reimagined, Calum's involvement in Dumfries public meeting and Deb's involvement with audit and finance and her attendance at the Macaulay lecture in Edinburgh. Deb also confirmed that James Hutton Institute can provide a larger space for the Aberdeen public meeting at the end of October.

3. Quarterly Report

Hamish provided an update on progress from Quarter 2 (July to September 2025). He confirmed that delivery remains largely on track and the Commission is entering Quarter 3 in a good position.

3.1 Delivery

Reflecting on quarter 2, 84% of the planned outputs in the annual business plan are on track to be delivered. The board noted the previously agreed red status of the collaboration with Crown Estate Scotland which has now ended, seeking an update on when the lessons learned report will be available. Hamish confirmed this has been drafted and once internal Crown Estate Scotland discussions are completed, it should be available shortly.

3.2 Finance

Nikki reported that financial performance remains on track, with no concerns noted at this stage in the financial year. Currently in a similar position to last month's update. Spend on track for the rest of the year, forecasting 98% overall spend of GIA.

3.3 Risk

The board noted that there were no significant changes to the strategic risk register and noted the two risks identified as increasing. These reflect the ongoing implications of the Land Reform Bill and constrained public finances.

Deb reported on discussion at the recent ARC meeting which included interrogation of risk 3 (constrained public finances). She noted the ARC asked staff to prepare a paper to help explore the balance between fixed and flexible funds, what the Commission should aim to retain as a basic flexible resource, and key factors that will shape decisions in the event that we need to reduce staffing levels. It was agreed that this paper would be brought to the board as well as ARC for discussion.

3.4 Communications

Nikki mentioned that the quarterly report update did not include a full quarters worth of data, with 4 weeks of social media analytics missing. Nikki mentioned there has been slightly less press coverage compared to last year, however socials are going well. 50-60% engagement in emails and newsletter uptake increasing. Website development going well and on track for Q4, the website agency will come to board meeting in December with updates on progress. The tax report (research on international practice) will be published this month, with refreshed protocols being published now in January.

Michael asked for an update on the use of X. The comms team are continuing to monitor and SLC will follow same guidance as Scottish Government.

3.5 Casework

Emma highlighted the increase in casework with 57 cases currently in at around halfway through the year. Usually there has been approx 88 per year. However, the good practice team are managing at current capacity. This report shows a continued increase in casework associated with the stewardship protocol.

4. Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25

Nikki introduced the paper seeking the board's approval of the annual report and accounts. Nikki flagged a discrepancy in the figures received from the pension provider in which one figure for the previous year differs from that provided last year. Deloitte are seeking clarity on this in order to understand the reason or identify it as an error on CSP part. Deloitte have confirmed this is an issue for other organisations as well. Until that is resolved we are unable to sign the annual report and accounts, but we expect it to be addressed by means of a short note to the relevant section within the next week.

The board welcomed the external auditors report, noting the assurance it provides and the two observations. Nikki confirmed these will be addressed through updated procedures.

The board reviewed the annual report and accounts and confirmed approval, subject to satisfactory resolution of the outstanding pension query. Some members noted minor typo amendments, to be sent directly to Nikki.

Action 251002.01	Commissioners to send any minor amendments noted directly to Nikki

5. ScotLand Futures Next Steps

It was agreed there will be a November publication on ScotLand Futures based on what we heard, with the final output planned for February. Members agreed a further board discussion in December and an additional online meeting to agree the final output in January. It was agreed that the staff team should be involved in the December discussion, as a follow-up to the workshop held prior to this meeting.

Commissioners welcomed the level and quality of feedback received from the public survey. It was agreed that the final output should aim to provide a concise overview of the Commission's thinking on key elements for the forward land reform programme.

AOB

No other business was discussed at this meeting.

Date of next meeting:

Thursday 6th November

Online