



Protocol on good stewardship of land

Good stewardship is about the long-term consideration of how best to use and manage land to deliver social, environmental, economic and cultural benefits. Decisions made with a focus on good stewardship are made with consideration for the needs of local communities and in support of wider national outcomes for Scotland. The purpose of this protocol is to promote good stewardship and high standards of land use and management across Scotland.

Landowners have legislative duties which are designed to protect both people and the environment. This protocol complements them and supports the practical implementation of the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (LRRS).

How this protocol should be followed

- ✓ Where we use the word must, this means the action is required by law and failing to comply would be a breach of legislation.
- ✓ Where we use the word should, we expect everyone involved to follow the approach described, unless it conflicts with their legal duties.
- ✓ Where we use the word recommend, it means this is good practice, but we recognise that other approaches may be equally effective and necessary.

Expectations

Contribute to the public benefit, acting as the stewards of land for future generations

Landowners and managers should make decisions about land and buildings that support a wide range of social, environmental, economic and cultural benefits, contributing to the public interest. Decisions should consider the long-term impacts of land use and management and support the sustainability of communities.

Where applicable, decision-making should recognise the suitability of land for a primary use (for example, food production, flood management, water catchment management and carbon storage) and the short and long-term impacts on that use.

Landowners and managers should collaborate with others to deliver a coherent approach to social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits, including across landholdings where applicable.

Support the local community to meet their needs and aspirations

Landowners and managers should consider local needs and aspirations when making plans about land ownership, management and use. It is recommended that landowners participate in local planning processes and consultations about land (e.g. Local Place Plans), either through direct involvement, through local groups, or through membership organisations.

It is recommended that landowners and managers consider how they contribute to community wealth through procurement, fair work, and inclusive ownership and whether there are opportunities to enhance this contribution.

When undertaking significant land use change to manage natural capital and carbon, landowners and managers should work with the local community to identify opportunities to share the benefits from investment with them and to support local priorities and aspirations. It is recommended that the establishment of a community benefit fund to provide direct financial returns to local communities is considered.

Effectively maintain land and buildings

Landowners and managers should review their holdings and assess whether land and buildings need repairs or maintenance, as part of regular business planning. Landowners and managers should take reasonable actions to carry out repairs and maintenance.

Landowners and managers should avoid allowing land or buildings to fall into poor condition, where possible. Where this has, or is likely to happen, it is recommended that landowners explore opportunities to address the issue(s), including working with others.

Own, manage and use land and buildings productively

Landowners and managers should plan for land and buildings to be used to fulfil a clear purpose. Landowners and land managers should identify land and buildings that are or may become surplus to requirements and take steps to reduce the likelihood that they will become vacant or derelict.

It is recommended that landowners and managers proactively explore opportunities to re-use buildings or land that have fallen into disuse. If this land or buildings are causing demonstrable harm to the surrounding community due to their condition, landowners and managers should work with stakeholders, including local community organisations, to examine options for restoring them back into economically, socially or environmentally productive use.

Landowners should avoid taking any steps that lead to land being declared ownerless, such as winding up a company that holds title(s) to land without transferring the title to another person or entity.

When there are long-term plans for land and buildings that will take time to come to fruition, it is recommended that landowners and managers consider whether there are suitable interim uses including through leasing, partnership or other collaborative working.

Facilitate access to green spaces

Landowners and managers must manage land in a way which respects the public's statutory access rights. All parties must follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in accessing land. It is recommended that landowners and managers facilitate and support access to green spaces, especially in areas where people live.

Seek net environmental and biodiversity gains from land and buildings

Landowners and managers should assess the impact of land and building use on the environment and biodiversity. It is recommended that landowners reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve biodiversity.

It is recommended that landowners and managers consider opportunities to carry out high-integrity nature restoration activities to reduce carbon emissions and sequester carbon.

When delivering nature restoration activities, existing natural capital should be protected and enhanced where possible alongside the development of new activities. Wherever feasible, surveys should be conducted to establish baselines and monitoring systems should be put in place to establish environmental and biodiversity impacts.

Plan and consider how to adapt to the impacts of climate change

Landowners and managers should plan and take action, where feasible, to adapt to climate change impacts, including extreme weather.



Who this protocol is relevant for

- ✓ Owners of land and buildings including individuals, companies, trusts, public bodies, non-governmental organisations, charities and community owners, but excluding individual home owners;
- ✓ Land managers including tenants of land and agents or other people employed or contracted by the owner to look after land or buildings on their behalf;
- ✓ The community comprising of:
 - Community Councils representing any area(s) which may be impacted by the landholding;
 - Constituted community organisations, who have an open membership, demonstrate community control, and who represent a defined geographic area, which may be impacted by the landholding, and;
 - Residents who live in and businesses that are based in the local area.

Definitions

You can find definitions of terms used in our protocols in our Protocols Definitions document.

[Protocols Definitions →](#)

How to use this protocol

If you own or manage land, you can use the expectations set out in this protocol as a guide to assess the actions you are taking in relation to transparency.



If you have an example of good practice to share:

Consider writing a case study to share your positive example with others. We may be able to help with this.



If you are experiencing a situation that differs significantly from the expectations we have set out:

Speak to the relevant landowner or community organisation to try to find a resolution.



If the situation relates to a regulated issue (like the environment or planning) then approach the relevant regulator.



If you have not been able to resolve the issue, then contact us with details and any supporting evidence. Where appropriate we will provide advice and work with you and the other parties involved, if applicable, to deal with any difficulties and help improve practice.

If you would like support to assess or improve your practice or have any questions about this protocol:

We may be able to provide advice or support about your situation.

Contact the Good Practice Team:

[goodpractice@landcommission.gov.scot](mailto:@ goodpractice@landcommission.gov.scot) 01463 423 300.