

An Lòchran
10 Inverness Campus
Inverness IV2 5NA

Edward Mountain, Convenor

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

By email

27th June 2024

Dear Edward

Land Reform Bill

I write to follow up our recent appearance before the Committee.

First of all, I am grateful to you for facilitating the opportunity and particularly in being flexible about the date. We are keen as a commission, and I am personally keen, to ensure that we do everything possible to help the Committee on this and other relevant matters.

We were therefore very pleased to have the opportunity to give evidence on the land reform bill and I hope the committee found it a helpful session. We appreciate the committee has significant scrutiny work ahead and I would therefore like to take the opportunity to draw out three points that we touched on in the evidence session and which are relevant to the tasks that lie ahead:

1. We referred in our evidence in several places to the published research and recommendations that we have made publicly available over the years. This includes the significant review of the issues associated with scale and concentration in land ownership (as outlined by Hamish at the start of the session) as well as publications to inform the wider land reform programme for both rural and urban Scotland, including on housing, tax and fiscal policy, vacant and derelict land, the rural land market, natural capital and a just transition. These reports are available on our website and a summary publication is available here: [Summary of Research and Recommendations \(landcommission.gov.scot\)](https://www.landcommission.gov.scot)
2. We support the policy intention of the bill. None the less we think there are ways in which it needs to be strengthened and simplified in order to fully achieve the outcomes government seeks. The Scottish Land Commission is already doing further work to consider how the proposals for land management plans and lotting in particular can operate most effectively in practice. We will be sharing this advice with Scottish Government colleagues and of course will be happy to share it with the committee and others.
3. The final question of the evidence session asked what success looks like. I would like to take the opportunity to reiterate our view that we should move, through this bill and a wider programme of co-ordinated reforms, to envisage the end point of land reform one in which there is a more diverse and dynamic pattern of land ownership. This

needs to look beyond the pattern of legislating every ten years or so and use the wide range of relevant policy levers and legislative opportunities to deliver changes, with as much consensus on the direction of travel and the destination as possible. Achieving this would mean people could feel comfortable that the balance of rights and responsibilities in land has shifted fairly, that key matters of public interest in land are being addressed and that people can plan and invest with sufficient certainty.

The Scottish Land Commission remains committed to providing evidence and advice to inform consideration of the bill and support its passage. We will of course be happy to engage further with the committee at any time.

I would be grateful if you can share this letter with committee members.

Yours as ever

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael W Russell', written over a horizontal line.

Michael W Russell

Chair

The Scottish Land Commission