



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Community Land Leadership Group

Thursday 7th March 2024, 2pm, Online

Summary Note of Meeting

Present: Lorne MacLeod (Chair), Gemma Campbell (Scottish Land Commission), Sandra Holmes (HIE), Kirsten Logue (SoSE), Lindsay Chalmers (Community Land Scotland), Linda Gillespie (COSS), Ross Johnston (Scottish Government), Carey Doyle (Community Land Scotland), Malcolm Cowie (Scottish Government) and Rebecca Carr (Forestry and Land Scotland) also joined the meeting as guests.

Apologies were received from Hamish Trench (Scottish Land Commission), Rebekah Dundas (National Lottery Community Fund), Katie Alexander (Crown Estate Scotland), Ailsa Raeburn (Community Land Scotland), Fiona Taylor (Scottish Government), Dave Thomson (Scottish Government).

Introduction

The chair welcomed group members and noted the apologies of those who couldn't attend.

No amends to the minutes of the previous meeting were noted. The chair therefore committed that a summarised version of the minutes would be published on the Land Commission website for transparency.

The chair noted that the Cabinet Secretary has announced a [review of the effectiveness of Community Right to Buy powers](#). The review will begin in summer 2024 and report at the end of 2025.

Topic Discussion: Community Asset Transfer / Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 Review

Malcolm shared a presentation, which covered the powers introduced by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the review of the Act, which was confirmed in the Programme for Government 2021-22.

The review covers powers that sit with seven Ministers across nine policy teams. Tom Arthur is the Lead Minister and the Community Empowerment team are the Lead Co-ordinators. It is exploring if the legislation is doing what it set out to do and whether there are any changes required.

Part 5 of the review covers Community Asset Transfers. There are 96 relevant authorities covered by the legislation. Since the introduction of asset transfers, 225 requests have been awarded, with 80% of those received by local authorities and 20% by NHS Health Boards and Scottish Government Agencies. Only 9% of requests have been refused or withdrawn.

COSS have been supporting Scottish Government with their review, preparing a report on local data analysis and carrying out a community consultation to gather views on Part 5. They have been working with members and partner to understand their experiences. A report on the findings will be published in the coming months.

Rebecca shared her experience of managing CAT requests at Forestry and Land Scotland. FLS used their learning from the National Forest Land Scheme to inform their CATS process and to date have supported 25 successful transfers to communities.

Discussion followed the presentation. Group members reflected on their experiences of asset transfer. Sandra noted that the Scottish Land Fund has seen an increase in public bodies seeking to add clawback conditions to transfers at a late stage, following a land fund award. This has implications for the fund as some of these conditions are not considered proportionate and would require the applications to be re-considered.

Topic Discussion: Urban Community Land Ownership

Carey gave a presentation on Community Land Scotland's Community Ownership Hub for Glasgow and Clyde Valley. The pilot project involved action research designed to accelerate urban community ownership.

The project saw five times as many enquiries as initially expected (112 in total). Around half were early-stage projects, a quarter from established groups, and a further quarter post-acquisition. More than 125 potential community buyout sites were identified in total. The majority of enquiries were for negotiated sales or CRtB for privately owned land, with community centres and greenspaces being the most popular projects. There were many vacant and derelict sites identified, though most were not on the VDL Register.

The pilot found that urban communities do have a desire to take on land but sometimes require different tools to rural communities. While it had been expected that communities in urban areas would struggle to define geographic boundaries this was found not to be true, with neighbourhoods more clearly defined than anticipated. There were issues identified with complex land ownership patterns, with 30% of sites stalled due to ownership complexity. Issues were identified with inclusion and lack of trust in communities by decision-makers. There are also funding gaps, particularly at early stages and for legal advice and business planning, particularly for complex projects.

A discussion following the presentation. Attendees shared their experiences of working with communities in urban areas and acknowledged that the findings of the pilot project were reflected in places outwith Glasgow and Clyde Valley.

It was noted that the pilot project recognised problems with top-down proposals and communities firefighting and a focus on saving existing assets rather than economic development. It was identified that there are issues relating to current economic and budget conditions, with local authorities and other public bodies looking to dispose of large numbers of assets. There were reports of local authorities pressing communities to take on leases and ownership of assets to preserve services in local areas.

Date and focus of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday 17th June at 9am. The Commission's new Chair, Michael Russell, will join the meeting and the topic for discussion will be the Land Reform Bill.