



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Minute of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on Tuesday 3 September 2024 online

Commissioners Present: Michael Russell (Chair) Deb Roberts, Craig Mackenzie, Lorne MacLeod, Sally Reynolds (Land Commissioners), Bob McIntosh (Tenant Farming Commissioner)

In Attendance: Hamish Trench, Emma Cooper, Andrew Megson, James MacKessack-Leitch, Fliss Peall (minutes)

Apologies: None

Declarations of interest: Lorne noted his new role as a member of the Crown Estate Scotland board, which commenced on 1 September 2024.

Minutes of previous meeting 2 July 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 2 July 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising:

- **Cancellation of Thurso Board Meeting:** Michael extended his apologies for the cancellation of the Thurso board meeting due to the latest spend controls required by Scottish Government.

1. Commissioners Updates

The Commissioners provided updates on their key activities and events since the last meeting. Michael also provided an update on board member recruitment and Lorne an update on the recent meeting of the Community Land Leadership Group.

Commissioners also noted an update received following a community meeting at Tayvallich regarding the potential sale of land. The implications for the community of potentially short timeframe land sales was discussed, including opportunities for a public body to step in on an interim basis. The Board agreed that such an option would be preferable to the land going back on the open market, given the progress made with community involvement and the established community interest in acquisition.

2. CEO Update – Scottish Government spend controls

Hamish updated the board on the spend controls introduced as required by Scottish Government. He noted guidance has been shared with all staff. While most of the Commission's business plan activity is committed he made the board aware of the impact on the planned work to move the website to a more resilient platform, which is within the scope of 'marketing' spend government has asked be paused.

Hamish also provided an update on forthcoming reports and publications, confirming their current status and progress.

3. Audit and Risk Committee annual report 23/24

Lorne presented the 23/24 annual report from the Audit and Risk Committee. The committee met four times over the year, focusing on medium and long-term financial planning, cyber resilience, and cyber plus accreditation, key interrogations of the risk register were discussed.

Commissioners welcomed the report and asked that the Committee continue to maintain a focus on ensuring that audit recommendations and actions are proportionate to the small size of the organisation.

It was noted that the cost of external audit, set by Audit Scotland, remains disproportionately high and should continue to be challenged.

4. Review of Convened Groups

The board reviewed the status of five convened stakeholder groups, noting both the value in the Commission's leadership role and the need to continually review the deployment of limited resource.

It was agreed that the Land and Human Rights Advisory Forum should cease in its current form, having undertaken a valuable role particularly in advance of the land reform bill.

The opportunity for other organisations to convene some groups was discussed, noting it may be appropriate at a future point for others to step into the role. It was agreed this should be kept under review. At present, it was agreed there is continued value in the Commission convening the four specific groups and that they should continue as set out in the paper.

5. Conference Evaluation report

The board considered the evaluation report for the recent conference, "*Pioneering Possibilities - Shaping Scotland's Future Through Inclusive Land Ownership*," held on 12th June 2024. The report indicated strongly positive feedback.

The board discussed the demonstrable appetite for in-person events and the value in the Commission convening space for others to engage in discussions on land reform, noting the evaluation should inform planning for future events.

6. AOB

No other business was raised.

Next meeting 01 October 2024