

Cross-Party Group on Wellbeing Economy

23rd of April 2024, 6:00-8:00 pm, Hybrid (MS Teams & Scottish Parliament)

Present

MSPs

Maggie Chapman MSP, Emma Harper MSP, Ariane Burgess MSP, Maurice Golden MSP, Rhoda Grant MSP, Edward Mountain MSP

Invited guests

Ciaran Mulholland, Danielle McKinnon, Eilidh Keay, Euan Leitch, Graeme McCormick, Greig Robertson, Hannah Clark, Isla Miller, Janine Mills, Katie Barnwell, Katie Brabbs, Linda Gillespie, Lisa Cunningham, Louise Scott, Lucy Rothenberg, Luisa Riascos, Malcolm Combe, Mandy Macfarlane, Margaret Bennett, Morag Paterson, Phoebe Cochrane, Sam Page, Simon Ritchie, Sterre Vester, Victoria Barthelmess, Xabier Villares, Catherine Thomson, Andy Paterson, Alasdair Reid, Andy Wightman, Brady Stevens, Acacia Marshall, Ailsa Clark, Alex Jarrett, Anne-Marie Bergseng, Beverley Craig, Catriona Mallows, Chelsea McKinnon, Claire Duncanson, Claudia Albrecht, Michael Danson, Darren Wisniewski, David Cameron, David Coyne, David Muir, David Petrie, Deb Roberts, Eilidh Young, Emma Sedgwick, Erin Seaman, Esther Robertson, Euan Munro, Fabio Villani, Faye MacLeod, Gemma Rubio Amargant, George Hosking, Heather Urquhart, Helene van der Ploeg, Imogen Cadwaladr-Rimmer, James Glendinning, James Littlejohn, Jamie Stewart, Jo McKenzie, John Todd, Josie Saunders, Karen Grant, Kate McLean, Katie (?), Katryn Buchanan-Jardine, Linda Gillespie, Marianne Hutchison, Matthew Hawkins, Michael Leidl, Jane Morrison, Naomi Beingessner, Roland Chaplain, Rosemary Champion, Sadie-Michaela Harris, Saffron Roberts, Sam Poskitt, Sarah Allen, Simon Ritchie, Anna Spiesova, Stephen Boyle, Stephen Kelly

Non-MSP Group Members

Iain Black, Tom Sneddon (DTAS), Heather Williams (Scottish Women's Budget Group), Renata Osowska, Pam Maxwell, Rachel Searle (Foundation Scotland), Martin Meteyard (Co-operate Scotland), Gill Davies, Gemma Campbell (Scottish Land Commission), Errin Anderson (DTAS), Carey Doyle (Community Land Scotland), Lindsay Chalmers (Community Land Scotland), Josh Doble (Community Land Scotland), Hamish Trench (Scottish Land Commission), Sarah Jane-Laing (Scottish Land and Estates), Lukas Bunse (WEAll Scotland), Aileen McLeod (WEAll

Scotland), Hedda Roberts (WEAll Scotland), Alex Turner (WEAll Scotland), Charis Chittick (WEAll Scotland)

Apologies

Charlotte Maddix, Janine Mills, Elspeth Grant

Minute

1 Welcome

Welcome from co-convener and Emma Harper MSP.

Approval of minutes from the previous two meetings on the 8th of December 2023 and 20th of September 2023, proposed by Josh Doble, seconded by Emma Harper MSP.

Lukas Bunse gave a summary of the responses given by meeting attendees regarding learning outcomes they sought from this event:

- better understanding of the latest plans for land reform,
- ideas for sustainable land use and creating community spaces, and
- how land reform connects to a wellbeing economy.

2 Scene setting by young citizens & youth members of the Rural Parliament

Speaker: Catherine Thomson, Galson Estate Trust

Catherine works for the Galson Estate Trust as a Community Development Apprentice on the Isle of Lewis and is also a member of the Western Isles Youth Local Action Group. Catherine gave a brief history of the Galson Estate Trust coming into community land ownership. Catherine emphasised the importance of land in culture, heritage and agriculture, particularly in Lewis, Harris, Uist and Barra .

Speaker: Andy Paterson, Member of the Scottish Youth Rural Parliament

Andy is a Member of the Scottish Youth Rural Parliament and has previous policy experience working for Universities UK and currently with Social Enterprise Scotland. Andy set out why land is crucial to young people in Scotland as it shapes their connection to the country. Andy notes that the Bill focuses on rural land, but that addressing urban areas could provide more opportunities. He emphasised that land management is critical to meeting climate targets and underlined the importance of

involving local communities in land management, rather than centralising power in Edinburgh. He explained that expanding the Community Right to Buy act could give more people the chance to connect with land in their communities. Andy proposed that land sales should be transparent, with a public interest test to ensure community benefit when companies seek to purchase land. He concluded by urging the consideration of long-term impact of land use to take into account the wellbeing of future generations.

3 Panel discussion: Land reform for a Wellbeing Economy

Speakers:

Hamish Trench, Chief Executive and accountable officer, Scottish Land Commission

Hamish is Chief Executive of the Scottish Land Commission, - a non-departmental public body that advises the Scottish Government on the ongoing programme of land reform. He is a former chartered surveyor with experience of land use policy, management and research in the public and private sectors. His previous roles include director posts at the Cairngorms National Park Authority and Deer Commission for Scotland.

Hamish stressed the crucial role of land ownership in national and local levels, connecting it to economic productivity, climate action, and community well-being. He outlined the Scottish Land Commission's proposed reforms including changes to ownership, taxation, decision-making, and benefit-sharing to democratise land use and enhance its value for people and places.

Hamish emphasised the importance of diverse ownership models, government intervention in land markets, and strategic use of tax policies. He also underscored the need for community engagement, regional partnerships, and public sector involvement in addressing challenges like vacant land, housing shortages, and climate action. While recognizing the positive steps of the Land Reform Bill, he highlighted the necessity for broader reforms and advocated for a comprehensive approach to land reform beyond individual bills.

Lindsay Chalmers, Development Manager at Community Land Scotland (CLS)

Lindsay promotes community land ownership in Scotland and facilitates peer-to-peer learning and networking among landowners. She previously worked for Edinburgh Social Enterprise Network, where she developed Buy the Good Stuff and organised Scotland's first social enterprise festival. Prior to that, Lindsay spent nine years

supporting community reuse organisations across Scotland with Community Resources Network Scotland.

Lindsay shared insights on community land ownership. CLS is the representative body for community landowners in Scotland, supporting communities in the community ownership journey and advocating for land reform. With over 500 communities, CLS promotes diverse land ownership models to benefit the wellbeing economy. She highlighted the diverse range of assets owned by their members, including islands, housing and business centres, and emphasised the importance of land ownership in areas such as housing, food production and biodiversity conservation. Lindsay recounted that during COVID-19, community landowners played a vital role in supporting communities, showcasing their ability to respond quickly and effectively to community needs.

Despite ongoing land reform efforts, Lindsay pointed out that land ownership in Scotland remains concentrated, with implications for community landowners' ability to purchase land. Lindsay called for more robust land reform measures, including public interest tests for land purchases, limits on aggregate land ownership, and reforms to the Community Right to Buy process to make it more accessible for communities. In conclusion, she urged Scotland to be more ambitious in its approach to land reform and to draw inspiration from the experiences and successes of community landowners in building a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Sarah-Jane Laing (Rural Communities) Chief Executive at Scottish Land and Estates

Sarah-Jane works with the Scottish and UK Governments on issues affecting rural Scotland and promotes responsible landownership through SLE's Landowners' Commitment. With over 10 years of experience in housing and planning before she joined SLE in 2024, she has been involved with various stakeholder groups and organisations like the Women In Agriculture Taskforce and Rural Housing Scotland.

Sarah-Jane Laing gave an overview of Scottish Land & Estates which is a membership organisation representing a diverse range of land-based businesses in Scotland, including traditional private owners, tenants, community groups, environmental NGOs and public agencies. She emphasised the importance of responsible landownership and highlighted the role of Scottish Land & Estates in promoting modern land management practices that provide benefits for everyone, delivering for people, jobs and nature.

Sarah-Jane emphasised the positive impact of land-based businesses as stewards of the natural environment, placemakers, and contributors to the rural economy. She gave an overview of Biggar Economics's research into how estates contribute to Scotland's wellbeing economy, including 70% of the country's renewable energy

generated on estate land, and providing land and properties to 14,000 rural enterprises.

Regarding further land reform, Sarah-Jane advocated for increased positive collaboration, improved local engagement and greater utilisation of existing land reform measures to address issues such as neglected or abandoned land and barriers to sustainable development. While acknowledging some potential benefits of the current land reform bill such as increased visibility, Sarah-Jane expressed concerns about certain provisions, such as those related to lotting and prior notification, which she believed could have a negative impact on the contribution to the wellbeing economy if not implemented correctly. In conclusion, Sarah-Jane stressed the need for pragmatic and collaborative approaches to land reform that support the wellbeing economy and benefit all stakeholders in Scotland's land sector. She suggested that any new proposals should be carefully considered to ensure they are workable for all parties involved and will not require reworking in years to come.

Laurie Macfarlane, Co-director of Future Economy Scotland

Laurie is a visiting fellow at UCL IIPP, a research fellow at The Democracy Collaborative, a council member of PEF, and a member of North Ayrshire Council's Community Wealth Building Expert Panel. He co-authored the book 'Rethinking the Economics of Land and Housing'.

Laurie explained the critical role of land reform in achieving a wellbeing economy in Scotland, highlighting the multifaceted importance of land as physical space essential for all economic, social, and environmental activities.

Laurie pointed out the challenges posed by the highly concentrated pattern of land ownership in Scotland, which he sees as inhibiting entrepreneurial ambition and community potential. While acknowledging some incremental steps proposed in the new land reform bill, Laurie argued that they may not lead to fundamental shifts in ownership and governance. He expressed concerns about issues such as greenwashing and value extraction in relation to land ownership, particularly in the context of the climate and nature crisis. Laurie emphasised the need for land reform to address not only rural but also urban challenges, including the housing crisis. He called for reforms in land taxation to promote efficient and socially useful use of land. Laurie concluded by urging for land to be viewed as a central asset in government strategies for a wellbeing economy, advocating for its integral inclusion in policy and planning efforts.

4 Audience questions 1. If there was one thing you could add to the land reform bill, what would it be?

Lindsay was clear on the need for a public interest test on land ownership before sale to facilitate change and overcome challenges such as monopolistic landowners.

Laurie acknowledged that while there are multiple crucial areas to consider, implementing effective land taxation could help mitigate various challenges associated with land ownership and usage, including speculation and perverse outcomes.

Hamish suggested building on the recommendations made by the land commissioners, particularly emphasising the proposal for a public interest test that includes both acquisition and sale of land. He also highlighted the importance of strengthening the role of the Land Rights Responsibility Statement as a framework for land reform efforts, advocating for enhancing its statutory basis to further support land reform initiatives.

Sarah-Jane suggested that a review of the process for registration of community interest could be contained within the Bill and highlighted that a review of the current myriad of CRTB provisions won't be finished until after the Bill which is disappointing. Additionally, she proposed revisiting issues around the rights of responsible access, considering recent challenges in this area. Sarah-Jane viewed the land reform act as an opportunity to address these issues and potentially incorporate relevant changes to address irresponsible access.

2. What infrastructure do we need in place for taxation, especially in a land reform bill? Would it also apply in financial and economic sectors?

Laurie emphasised the importance of transitioning to a land value tax for both residential and non-domestic land, but acknowledged that the necessary infrastructure for such a tax is currently lacking, particularly in terms of land valuation. He suggested interim steps to improve existing taxation systems while signalling a long-term shift towards land value taxation, potentially incorporating green incentives tied to energy efficiency and sustainability.

Hamish echoed Laurie's sentiments, highlighting the need to establish the basics of a land value taxation system, such as ensuring all land is on the valuation roll. He also supported the move towards a cadastral system to better integrate and utilise land data. Hamish emphasised the importance of public support and understanding for transitioning to land value taxation, suggesting that better data integration and understanding would facilitate this transition.

3. What is the panel's view on single owner versus community ownership, and how important is the usage of the land is the primary focus within that, no matter who owns it? What is the panel's stance on the importance of land usage over ownership type, whether single or community-owned?

Hamish stressed the link between land ownership and use, promoting diverse ownership models to benefit communities and individuals. He advocated for community, private, shared, and collaborative ownership types to create more opportunities.

Sarah-Jane agreed, pointing out examples like Bute and the Mount Stuart Trust and Leys Estate where governance and management approaches created opportunities for businesses, groups and social enterprises without ownership changes.

4. How will the Land Reform Bill impact farming in Scotland, especially in relation to tenant farmers and food production and security?

Sarah Jane raised concerns about the potential impact of the Land Reform Bill on farming in Scotland, warning that new land management tenancies could limit land for food production and reduce confidence to let. This will limit opportunities for new tenant farmers.

Hamish acknowledged the complexities in farming and stressed the need to balance different interests, recognising the challenges and likely considerations involved in navigating the impacts of the Land Reform Bill on farming in Scotland.

5. How does the role of land management in Scotland align with the principles of a wellbeing economy?

Laurie stressed that the concentration of land ownership undermines democratic principles and wellbeing economies and noted how this impacts both rural and urban areas, worsening housing crises and limiting dignified living standards. Laurie proposed viewing land and housing as essential human rights, not just financial assets, to improve affordability and accessibility.

6. As a community counsellor in Edinburgh, we are actively working on a local place plan. I want to know if the efforts put into engaging with our community will truly impact the City Plan 2030 / 2040. Will the wishes of the community regarding land use be taken seriously or is this consultation merely for show?

Lindsay acknowledged that there's a variation in how seriously local place plans are taken across the country, however she highlighted that these plans as valuable tools for communities to identify important assets and influence their surroundings positively.

Ariane shared similar concerns and experiences from her role in local government housing and Local Government Planning Committee. She noted that the Housing Minister acknowledged the importance of developers taking local place plans seriously. She said that the planning team appears to be taking these plans seriously, recognising their power in engaging communities and identifying their needs and desires, but Ariane stressed the need for effective communication with developers on this importance.

7. Graeme McCormick's comment spoke to the urgent need for implementing a universal basic income system in Scotland to address poverty, bypassing the need for a land value tax. He expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of a land value tax, citing subjective valuation as a potential issue. Political will is crucial to bringing about meaningful change, with Graeme suggesting that prioritising action and cooperation among parties could lead to swift enactment of policies to benefit citizens and potentially serve as a model for other countries.

8. Could the speakers share their thoughts on the conflict sometimes seen between environmental impacts and local jobs/economic considerations, such as decisions on land use and developments like golf courses? How can this tension be managed effectively?

Hamish highlighted the inevitable tension between environmental impacts and economic considerations in land use decisions, emphasising the importance of managing this tension at the regional level through approaches that embed decision making locally.

Sarah-Jane echoed his sentiments, stressing the need for greater awareness of the scale of land use changes and advocating for more local democracy in decision-making processes.

Lindsay emphasised the need to avoid conflict between environment and jobs, suggesting that tapping into the knowledge of indigenous people and local communities could help reconcile these concerns effectively.

9. Is the criteria for allowing land transfer to local communities still based on community of interest and community of geography? The Mens Shed movement is currently not eligible for land transfer due to being a protected characteristic in heritable law, preventing communities from obtaining land for social engagement purposes. Has the bill addressed this issue in criteria for community asset transfer?

Laurie deferred to others more knowledgeable about community asset transfer. Hamish noted that while the bill doesn't make changes to the definitions, there is a commitment from the government to review community right to buy, suggesting engagement in that process. Lindsay mentioned ongoing consultations and encouraged patience, while also highlighting the importance of raising awareness about land reform issues, particularly among young people.

10. Turning 'Glorious 12th' into 'Scotland's controversial grouse shooting' was powerful in building grassroots support for land ownership action. How can we change the narrative and terminology around Scotland's Land Ownership to support systemic change?

Laurie highlighted the importance of bringing together a wide range of voices to influence politicians, pointing out the strong backing for land reform among the public. Hamish highlighted the role of evidence provided by organisations like the Scottish Land Commission in informing discussions on land reform. Lindsay drew attention to CLS's current awareness-raising campaigns on social media platforms. Sarah-Jane emphasised the importance of evidence-based discussions on land reform, flagging initiatives like the Tenant Farming Advisory forum and the Tenant Farming Commissioner, Bob McIntosh. She urged not to forget these aspects when focusing on legislative bills, and to ensure that all aspects of land reform are included in discussions.

5 Next steps and close of the meeting

Emma reflected the need for ongoing engagement as the Land Reform Bill progresses through its stages, highlighting that land reform issues extend beyond the bill itself and include wider issues like poverty and historic ownership. She thanked the speakers and highlighted the importance of including young people's voices in the discussion.

The next CPG on Wellbeing Economy meeting will focus on economic democracy, and will be held on Wednesday, the 12th of June 2024, as a hybrid meeting in the Scottish Parliament and online. Minutes will be circulated in due course. Attendees can contact Lukas Bunse (lukas@scotland.weall.org) if they want to be added to the mailing list.

Appendix: Relevant resources and links posted in the chat

Notes

Scottish Government is reviewing feedback on training for elected reps as part of the Planning (Scotland) 2019 Act to enhance understanding of NPF4.

Links

Community Land Scotland reports:

- [Scoping the classic effects of monopolies within concentrated patterns of rural land ownership](#)
- [Community Wealth Building and a Just Transition to Net Zero](#)

Report by Laurie Macfarlane: [Land reform for a Democratic, Sustainable and Just Scotland](#)

Report by Scottish Land & Estates: [The contribution of Rural Estates to Scotland's Wellbeing Economy](#)

[Summary of research and recommendations](#) by the Scottish Land Commission.

Scottish Government: [Land use - getting the best from our land: strategy 2021 to 2026](#)