



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

**Commissioners Meeting**  
**5<sup>th</sup> November 2024, 9.30am – 12.00noon, online.**

**A G E N D A**

Item no	Item	Paper no	Action	Lead
	Welcome/Apologies			
	Declarations of Interest			
1.	Minutes of the previous meeting	1	For agreement	Chair
2.	Commissioners' updates	Verbal Briefing	For information	Commissioners
3.	Land Reform Bill update	Verbal Briefing	For information	Hamish Trench
4.	Rural Housing Land – draft proposal	2	For agreement	David Stewart
5.	Quarterly Progress Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Delivery</li><li>– Finance</li><li>– Strategic Risks</li><li>– Communications</li></ul>	3 Annex A Annex B Annex C Annex D	For discussion	Hamish Trench Andrew Megson Scarlett Macfarlane
6.	Annual strategic risk review	4	For discussion	Hamish Trench / Nikki Nagler
7.	Audit and Risk Committee – nomination of new Chair	Verbal Briefing	For agreement	Chair
8.	AOB			Chair



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**Minute of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 at An Lochran, Inverness**

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

**In Attendance:** Hamish Trench, Nikki Nagler, James MacKessack-Leitch, Kathie Pollard, Hanna Wheatley, Scarlett Macfarlane

**Apologies:** None

**Declarations of interest:** None

**Minutes of previous meeting 3 September 2024**

The minutes from the meeting held on 3 September 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

**1. Commissioners Updates**

The Commissioners provided updates on their key activities and events since the last meeting. Michael also provided an update on progress in board member recruitment.

**2. Report of Audit and Risk Committee meeting**

Lorne gave an update following the Audit and Risk Committee meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> September noting that it had agreed to recommend approval of the annual report and accounts, had reviewed internal audit reports, the risk register and risk interrogation. He further noted that undertaking a resource review to inform business planning remains a standing item for the committee. He confirmed the committee held a closed meeting following the main meeting with the internal auditors, as a standard matter of good practice, and that no issues of concern were raised.

The board expressed continuing concern about the level of external audit fee which appears disproportionate to the nature of the organisation and audit requirements. Given the impact this has in context of tight spending restrictions, the board asked the Chief Executive to make contact again with Audit Scotland to seek a review of the fee level.

<b>Action 24100101</b>	<b>CEO to contact Audit Scotland re external audit fee level</b>
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### 3. 2023/24 Annual Report and Accounts

The board considered first the external auditors' annual report, noting the key messages and assurance provided.

The board approved the draft annual report and accounts subject to a minor amendment to correct two of the board member profiles which referred to roles they no longer hold.

<b>Action 24100102</b>	<b>Nikki to amend Commissioner bio profiles; Chair and CEO to sign annual report and accounts</b>
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### 4. Advice on Land Reform Bill

The board considered the proposed advice on the land reform bill. The board welcomed the draft advice aimed at strengthening and simplifying the bill.

Key issues discussed were:

- That the avoidance risk of using company structures should be addressed;
- The implications of using a lower threshold for Land Management Plans, including resourcing and the need for a proportionate template/burden on land owners. The board agreed to advise aligning the threshold at 1000Ha, recognising that implementation will need to take account of resourcing, potentially with a phased approach.
- That the framing of 'Land Management Plans' should make clear the difference between these and other existing operating plans; a different terminology may be appropriate and helpful.
- That the SLC is well-placed to host the proposed online portal for land management plans;
- That there needed to be a clearer reference to the opportunity to introduce a simplified initial registration step in the existing Part 2 Community Right to Buy provisions;
- That there needed to be an understanding that earlier stage land acquisition by Ministers could actually reduce costs in some cases due to shorter time frame (and avoidance of interest on any end stage Court of Session judgement) whilst also offering greater certainty for the public finances;

With these adjustments, the board endorsed the proposed advice on holdings in scope, prior notification, transfer test and lotting, and land management plans.

The Chair confirmed that he and the CEO will be meeting with the Cabinet Secretary on 10<sup>th</sup> October to discuss the land reform bill and that they will update the board following that discussion.

The board agreed that our advice should be finalised for publication and shared with the NZET committee in due course, in a format and with a timing to be agreed by the Chair.

<b>Action 24100103</b>	<b>CEO to share interim advice with the Land Reform Bill team</b>
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## 5. Advice on tax

The board considered the proposed key messages for refreshing our advice on land reform and taxation. Commissioners queried whether there is a strong enough case made for the inclusion of all land on the valuation roll. It was agreed that this remains an important step without which any land-based system of taxation would be difficult.

It was also agreed that our advice should emphasise the need for government to develop a clear route-map for improving the way land is taxed, so developing more clarity with regard to the end point and benefits for the country.

Commissioners sought more clarity on the LBTT surcharge proposal, noting it would be helpful to make clear that it is intended to apply only to large scale land transactions, rather than all high value transactions.

Commissioners agreed that consideration of the government's commitment to explore a carbon land tax should include clarity of purpose and whether other interventions or mechanisms may also be able to achieve the same objective.

Commissioners agreed that our advice should continue to recommend reforms to capital taxation, albeit these are reserved, not least because this issue should be drawn to the attention of the new UK government.

Commissioners also noted caution was required when using the phrase 'active farming' in the advice, agreeing that the focus of our advice in relation to tax and agriculture would be best focused on supporting tenure models, including tenant farming.

The board agreed the overall approach and key messages, subject to improving clarity as indicated above.

Commissioners noted that refreshed advice will be provided to Scottish Government in the next month, in advance of their tax strategy, and that we expect follow-up work over the coming six months.

<b>Action 24100104</b>	<b>Kathie to provide refreshed advice in line with agreed key messages to Scottish Government ahead of tax strategy</b>
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## 6. Rural land market data report

Hanna introduced the rural land market report, pending publication, which reports on transactions during 2023. The board welcomed the further development of trend information that the report provides and the relevance of the data to the land reform bill and wider policy work.

The board discussed the data challenges identified in the report, noting the constraints associated with the legal framework within which Registers of Scotland operate.

Commissioners identified the potential for the Commission to undertake further work to advise on reforms to land data and information, something to be considered in future work planning.

Commissioners sought more information on the trend of recording 'implementation of missives' in place of the financial consideration, which has the effect of reducing transparency and making it difficult to know the sale price. The board asked staff to continue to engage with Registers of Scotland on ways to provide more transparency on this, including options to identify in future reports any transactions using this approach.

## **7. Communications update**

Scarlett provided an update on planned communications through Quarter 3 including:

- The Land Links webinar series
- Publication of the report on international experience in natural resource governance
- Publication of the rural land market data report
- Publication of TFC Review of Agents progress report
- Blogs including TFC and the natural capital market framework
- Forthcoming events

## **8. AOB**

No other business was raised.

**Next meeting 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024**  
**09.30 – Online by Microsoft Teams**

**Actions from Board Meetings - Update of actions to date**

Action number	Date Raised	Context	Action Detail	Responsible	Date Required	Date Closed	Comments
24100101	01/10/2024	Audit	CEO to contact Audit Scotland re external audit fee level	Hamish Trench			HT to write wk 28/10
24100102	01/10/2024	Annual Report and Accounts	Nikki to amend Commissioner bio profiles; Chair and CEO to sign annual report and accounts	Nikki Nagler			Amendments completed. Signing awaiting final confirmation from external auditor following change in senior partner responsible.
24100103	01/10/2024	Land Reform Bill	CEO to share interim advice with the Land Reform Bill team	Hamish Trench			Completed with follow-up discussions underway
24100104	01/10/2024	Tax	Kathie to provide refreshed advice in line with agreed key messages to Scottish Government ahead of tax strategy	Kathie Pollard			Draft advice shared with tax team colleagues. Further engagement with SG to agree specific role for SLC and work plan.



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## Commissioners' Meeting 5 November 2024 Online

### PAPER 2

#### Land for Rural Housing

<b>Purpose:</b>	To present the proposed output from the Land for Rural Housing work.
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	March 2024, May 2024 (Stakeholder Roundtable), June 2024, July 2024
<b>Action required:</b>	For agreement

#### Background

In February the board agreed that the Commission should give high priority to converting its work on land for housing into action that helps meet Scotland's rural housing challenge.

A roundtable discussion with key stakeholders was held on 7<sup>th</sup> May looking at how changes to the way land is brought forward could support an increase in delivery of rural homes. At the same time, a team from the University of Glasgow undertook research to develop practical steps to increase the supply of developable land for rural housing.

#### The Proposal

The outcomes from the commissioned University of Glasgow research, our round table discussions, our previous research on land for housing and information from stakeholder discussions have been combined to develop a proposal for practical steps to support increased supply of developable land for rural housing.

The proposal is attached at Annex A and focuses our findings into two areas:

- A more pro-active approach to land assembly, via public bodies taking a co-ordinated approach to land banking and de-risking sites for development and a strategy of active public land ownership;
- Supportive planning policy and targeted support for Local Place Plans to enable rural communities to identify development land to meet their needs and aspirations

#### Context

Increasing the supply of land for rural housing has the potential to support inclusive economic growth in rural Scotland at a time when there are significant plans for investment, particularly in the Highlands and Islands. Practical steps to deliver developable land can also play a role in enabling rural repopulation.

Both of these opportunities were highlighted by the Minister for Housing as key priorities at the recent Rural and Island Housing Action Plan delivery event in October.

A separate Highland Housing Summit run by Prosper and Highland Council in October also focused on securing economic growth and repopulating fragile communities and saw the Highland Council make a number of announcements to support the delivery of more homes. These included an additional £6M investment in the Highland Landbank Fund, reinvigoration of Local Development Forums and the planned use of Masterplan Consent Areas.

This is a very live area of policy and our proposal has the potential to support the Scottish Government to deliver its Rural and Island Housing Action Plan, the South of Scotland Housing Plan and the housing component of the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Strategy.

## **Conclusion**

The proposal as drafted seeks to offer practical steps that can support delivery, with a tight focus on aspects that are core to our remit in relation to land. If this focus is agreed by the board, we intend to share this as a draft output with the key partners engaged to date, seeking any feedback that will strengthen its impact and inform publication plans. We expect to publish a final output in January/February.

### **The Board is asked to:**

- **Consider and agree the focus of the proposal;**
- **Consider how best we publish the proposal with the support of partners and engagement with Scottish Government.**

***David Stewart***  
***October 2024***





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**Commissioners' Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024  
Online**

**PAPER 3**

**Quarterly Progress Report**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To review quarterly progress for Qtr. 2
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	July 2024 Quarterly Progress Report
<b>Action required:</b>	For discussion

The quarterly progress reports maintain oversight of progress against the Business Plan through the year. This report covers the second quarter of the 24/25 Business Plan. The table below shows current status against the Strategic Plan KPIs.

<b>KPI MEASUREMENT</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>DELIVERY</b>		
% of planned outputs in annual business plans delivered	95%	On track: 91%
		Delayed/Changed: 6%
		Risk of non-delivery: 3%
		<b>See ANNEX A</b>
<b>STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS</b>		
Feedback as reported through perceptions audits	Maintain or increase perceived impact	Next audit due 2025
<b>STAFF SATISFACTION</b>		
% reported staff satisfaction in staff surveys	Increase	Apr 24: 71% satisfied with the Commission as a place to work (increase from 69% Nov 23) (New survey undertaken Oct, results pending)
<b>FINANCE</b>		
End of year out-turn	Within 2% of total allocated budget	<b>See ANNEX B</b>

The report comprises four annexes:

- a) **Delivery Progress:** Annex A sets out the RAG assessment and progress commentary for delivery against our 24/25 Business Plan. Highlights in Quarter 2 include:
- Publication of Progress Report on Vacant and Derelict Land Re-Use;
  - Publication of Progress Report on TFC Review of Agents;
  - Publication of TFC Guidance on use of comparables in rent reviews;
  - Development of further advice on land reform bill;
  - LRRS training events for land agents and professionals
  - Completion of annual report and accounts.
- b) **Finance Review:** Annex B provides a summary of our current budget position.
- c) **Audit and Risk:** The Strategic Risk Register is provided at Annex C.
- d) **Communications:** Annex D provides a summary of communications activity over Quarter 2 and a look ahead.

## **Other Updates**

### **Staffing**

Andrew Megson started in the Finance and Business Systems Lead post in Qtr 3. We have a vacancy for the Corporate Services Assistant post for which recruitment is progressing, and recruitment is also underway for the externally funded 'Community Benefits from Nature Adviser' post.

### **Scottish Government**

The Chair and CEO have met with the sponsor team and with the Director General for Net Zero as part of the normal schedule of sponsorship meetings. The Chair and CEO also met with the Cabinet Secretary on 10<sup>th</sup> October to discuss the land reform bill and other Commission work.

### **Board recruitment**

Scottish Government held board interviews on schedule in September and we expect announcements to be made in due course.

**Hamish Trench**  
**Chief Executive**

PROGRESS REPORT ON 2024/25 BUSINESS PLAN DELIVERY				
RAG Rating:		Delivery on track	Delivery delayed or changed	Risk of non-delivery
Theme	Priority	Planned Activity	Progress Commentary	RAG
<b>1. Advising on reforms to law, policy and practice</b>				
<b>1.1 Legislative Reforms</b>	Provide advice, analysis and evidence as required to inform development and implementation of legislative reforms	Evidence and advice to inform Land Reform Bill	Submitted written evidence to NZET and FPAC committees; gave evidence to NZET committee 11 <sup>th</sup> June; board considered advice on 1 Oct; now engaged with bill team to review advice.	
		Evidence and advice to inform other bills if introduced, including Community Wealth Building and Human Rights bills	No further action yet	
		Convene Land and Human Rights Advisory Forum	Meeting held in Qtr 1; Group's role now concluded following board review; group closed.	
<b>1.2 More diverse land governance</b>	Advise and promote opportunities in policy and practice to support more diverse models of land governance	Complete scoping phase and subsequent research on international experience in natural resource governance	CLES report completed, summary briefing prepared and ready for publication October.	
		Provide advice and guidance on practical opportunities to develop different governance models including mixed governance and increasing availability of small-scale land holdings	Board paper 11 <sup>th</sup> June; conference workshops on opportunities; Land Focus paper and blog published; Guidance due for publication January; collaboration with Crofting Commission.	
		Develop recommendations for reforms to Common Good Land	Activity paused to reprioritise staff time for work on land reform bill.	
		Convene Community Land Leadership Group to further develop community land ownership	Meeting held in Qtr 2 focused on CRTB review – agreed CLLG role as reference group.	
		Continue collaboration with Crown Estate Scotland on the community land accelerator initiative	Phase 1 signed off by Project Board, due for CES investment committee	

			consideration Nov. Phase 2 intended to work with one or more pilot opportunities.	
		Support the KLTR Ownerless Property Transfer Scheme through panel membership and advice	Advice being provided through panel membership and through project to identify proactive opportunities.	
<b>1.3 Approaches to land valuation</b>	Review and research bringing scrutiny to approaches to land valuation	Develop advice on ways land value can support community wealth building, drawing on previous work on land and taxation	Board agreed key messages for refreshed advice 1 <sup>st</sup> October; ongoing engagement with SG tax team, refreshed advice to be provided Nov, plan for engagement Qtr 4.	
<b>1.4 Land assembly for development</b>	Support collaborative land assembly approaches and inform policy and practice enabling development	Advise on practical ways to increase land supply to help meet Scotland's housing challenge	Stakeholder roundtable held May & August; Board discussions June & July; Research report completed; Draft proposal for board consideration 5 Nov, intended publication Qtr 4.	
		Inform Scottish Government's review of Compulsory Purchase Order powers	Initial discussion with review co-chairs; timescale for advice over coming year.	
<b>1.5 Vacant &amp; derelict land</b>	Review progress to maintain momentum in delivering on the recommendations of the Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce	Complete and publish progress review against VDL taskforce recommendations	Research contract completed and report published with summary briefing and series of guest blogs.	
<b>2. Supporting practical implementation of Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement</b>				
<b>2.1 Good practice in land ownership, use</b>	Develop and support implementation of practical Land Rights and Responsibilities	Champion and share good practice in implementing the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement	Ongoing casework; team attendance at key events; publication of checklist	

<b>and management</b>	Protocols with accompanying guidance and case studies	Refresh and update the Good Practice Programme and resources to improve accessibility and encourage uptake	Review underway with action plan drafted	
	Deliver an ongoing programme of engagement and CPD for land agents and other professionals in collaboration with partners	Deliver training for land agents and other professionals in collaboration with their representative bodies to promote high standards in land rights and responsibilities	Land agent training delivered for Galbraith; South of Scotland landowner training scheduled for O3; further land agent training scheduled for Q4	
	Provide advice for land owners and managers seeking to be proactive in implementing the LRRS	Provide individual advice and guidance to support the development of good practice	Ongoing.	
		Consider how standards for leadership in good practice are further developed	Checklist for land professionals published. Further consideration planned for Q4.	
	Provide advice to communities and land owners where concerns are raised about implementation of the LRRS to support good practice	Deliver casework to support good practice and promote good relations between landowners and communities	Ongoing. Revised information management process. 30 cases in Q2.	
		Regularly review casework to identify learning for policy and practice	Monthly internal casework review meetings in place; quarterly reporting to board.	
	Convene the Good Practice Advisory Group as a regular means of stakeholder engagement and collaboration	Collaborate with core industry bodies to collectively promote and support good practice	Q3 meeting planned and refreshed terms of reference	
<b>2.2 Community benefits and wealth building</b>	Publish Guidance and support innovative practice to ensure	Convene the Community Benefit Advisory Group to provide leadership and coordination in delivering community benefits from land	Meeting programme in place with regular attendance from members	

<b>from land use change and natural capital</b>	land use change and nature finance create social and economic benefits for local communities, including convening the Community Benefits Advisory Group	Provide advice and guidance to support the delivery of community benefits from land including a partnership post in the Cairngorms National Park	Now recruiting to partnership post in Cairngorms National Park; secured funding to establish new advisory capacity (to be hosted by third party) - first partnership meeting scheduled Q3; contractor appointed to develop route map and provide advice for 6 pilots	
		Inform development of Scottish Government's nature market framework and UK market standards to embed the LRRS	Provided advice to Scottish Government on framework; supporting development of UK market standards, especially on engagement and benefits	
<b>3. Promoting good relations between agricultural landlords and tenants through the functions of the Tenant Farming Commissioner</b>				
<b>3.1 Codes of Practice, Guidance and Casework</b>	Ensure Codes and Guidance address current and emerging issues to support good relations	Publish new Codes and Guidance as required	Ongoing.	
		Draw on experience to inform development of the agricultural tenure measures in the Land Reform Bill	Ongoing engagement through TFAF.	
	Extend mediation scheme	One mediation application received, approved, and completed.		
	Respond to casework enquiries or alleged breaches of Codes of Practice		Ongoing. 27 cases in Q2 (30 Q1)	
<b>3.2 Relinquishment and Assignment of Agricultural Tenancies</b>	Fulfil the statutory requirement to appoint a valuer when required to enable relinquishment and assignation of agricultural tenancies	Ensure statutory requirements are fulfilled, update process and guidance as appropriate	Ongoing, timescales met to date.	

<b>3.3 Role of Agents – progress review</b>	Review progress against the TFC’s recommendations in the 2018 review of the conduct of professional agents of agricultural landlords and tenants	Complete and engage on progress review	Review published 9 <sup>th</sup> October.	
<b>3.4 Tenant Farming Advisory Forum</b>	Convene the Forum as a regular means of stakeholder engagement and collaboration	Convene regular Forum meetings to support leadership and collaboration	Two TFAF meetings in Q2, one planned for Q3 (22 <sup>nd</sup> Dec, last meeting for current TFC)	



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24/25 Budget

	<b>Allocated Annual Budget</b>	<b>Estimated Budgeted (To Date)</b>	<b>Committed Costs *</b>	<b>Spend to Date (paid)</b>	<b>% **</b>	<b>Uncommitted Costs</b>	<b>Remaining Cost to Commit %</b>
<b>1. Advising on reforms to law, policy and practice</b>							
Reforming Land Markets	31,963	30,463	30,470	25,950	1.6%	1,493	5%
Reforming Land Rights	35,000	35,000	35,000	17,500	1.1%	0	0%
<b>2. Supporting practical implementation of Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities</b>							
Responsible Land Ownership/Use	5,000	1,050	550	150	0.0%	4,450	89%
<b>3. Promoting good relations between agricultural landlords and tenants through the Tenant Farming</b>							
Tenant Farming	3,000	2,400	1,200	1,200	0.1%	1,800	60%
<b>4. Engaging people in why land matters and how they can be involved</b>							
Communications	62,362	56,867	54,609	46,466	2.9%	7,753	12%
<b>5. Underpinned by sound corporate governance and organisational development.</b>							
Organisational Development	225,400	228,505	202,412	144,352	8.9%	22,988	10%
Staffing	1,173,105	1,206,053	1,167,545	661,701	41.0%	5,560	0%
Commissioners	78,500	78,500	64,962	42,477	2.6%	13,538	17%
	<b>1,614,330</b>	<b>1,638,838</b>	<b>1,556,748</b>	<b>939,797</b>	<b>58.2%</b>	<b>57,582</b>	<b>4%</b>

\*\* This comes from 'Spend to Date' divided by 'Allocated Annual Budget of £1,614,330'.

\* Costs are for the full year and include CTM & EPC.



Risk ID	Risk Description	GROSS RISK			Controls in Place	Control Effectiveness	NET RISK			Risk Movement	Risk Appetite	Action Taken/Planned	Target Risk	Target Review Date	Risk Owner
		Untreated Impact	Untreated Likelihood	Untreated Risk Score			Current Impact	Current Likelihood	Current Risk Score						
<b>VISION: Fair inclusive and productive system of ownership management and use of land that delivers greater benefit for all the people of Scotland</b>															
<b>RISK CATEGORY: DELIVERY</b>															
1	Catastrophic loss of systems resulting in the Commission not being able to operate as an organisation	5	4	20	Business continuity plan in place, cloud based IT system accessible outside of the office environment, cyber essentials plus accreditation, improved cyber security for log in to the network.	Effective	5	1	5		Averse	Cyber incident response plan approved by ARC. Achieved Cyber Essentials Plus for 2023. Multi factor authentication implemented for network access, updated antivirus software aligned to SG recommendations, cloud network tested. Cyber security requirements embedded in retender for IT service. Potential increase in cyber threats due to current political environment. IT re-tender completed	5	Apr-25	Head of Communications and Corporate services
2	Ability to react quickly in matching resources to changes in priorities	3	3	8	Maintain team approach to delivery enabling staff to draw on capacity and expertise across the team as required; Quarterly progress reporting to Board	Effective	3	3	9		Cautious	Improved cross-team working and quarterly planning with delivery tracker monitoring. 23/24 Business plan refreshed resourcing to current priorities. Staff posts reviewed as vacancies arise in order to remain agile and refresh focus where necessary. Changes in corporate team structure to improve resilience. Tight 23/24 budget limits ability to react to new asks/opportunities.	4	Feb-25	CEO
<b>RISK CATEGORY: REPUTATIONAL</b>															
3	Changes in Board appointments or failure to recruit timeously result in disruption to effective governance or lack of clarity in strategic direction	4	3	12	Recruitment to start 12 months ahead (SG responsibility). Plan succession timescales; ensure effective Strategic Plan in place Sept 23; Board induction processes refreshed and in place.	Partial	3	3	9		Minimalist	2023 appointments concluded, in place with induction arrangements and successful transition. 2024 recruitment process on track.	4	Dec-24	CEO
4	Emerging issues result in reactive policy making, and relationship management.	5	4	20	Proactive horizon scanning to anticipate future issues, work closely with stakeholders and put internal processes and measures in place for handling.	Partial	3	3	9		Minimalist	Working closely with stakeholders and sponsor team to identify potential issues in advance and take action. Clear case handling and internal communications procedures. Land Reform Bill publication creates new dynamics but clarity of SLG focus agreed with board and SG.	3	Mar-25	CEO
5	Inconsistent or incoherent narrative relating to our body of work leading to inaccurate discussions around the wider land reform agenda	4	3	12	Develop strong narrative between role of land in economic recovery and delivering wellbeing economy, climate action, and reducing inequalities. Implement strategic communications plan, including maintaining strong digital and media presence; regular performance monitoring	Effective	2	1	2		Minimalist	Comms planning & improved team quarterly planning providing more joined up approach. Strategic plan and programme of work launched. Summary of research and recommendations published. Early planning for new Programme of Work will help transition to refreshed narrative beyond the bill.	2	Mar-25	Head of Communications and Corporate services
6	Failure to maintain effective relationships with key stakeholders impacts on our ability to deliver and constrains opportunities for collaboration.	5	4	20	All relevant stakeholders are identified and a clear engagement strategy put in place, Commission presence at key stakeholder events, regular liaison meetings with stakeholders and periodic review of stakeholder analysis	Effective	2	2	4		Open	Wide stakeholder engagement through policy development and communications. Ongoing and increasing LRR engagement. Structured engagement in Good Practice, Human Rights, Tenant Farming, Natural Capital & Strategic Plan. Relations and dynamics are changing with the LR bill and being actively managed.	4	Mar-25	CEO
7	Manage relationship across Scottish Government so that Commission's work is understood and recommendations are well received.	5	4	20	Ensure regular engagement between the Commission Chair and the Land Reform Minister, and between the Tenant Farming Commissioner and the Cab Sec for Rural Affairs. Ensure regular engagement between the CEO and the SG Sponsor and Policy Teams.	Effective	2	2	4		Open	Regular sponsorship & land reform team liaison in place. Engagement in other formal SG structures eg NSET Programme, ELUG, Planning Advisory Group. Meeting with sponsor team and board held in September 23 and with Cab Sec Feb 24, chair and CEO meetings with sponsor team and Cab Sec Sept/Oct 24.	4	Apr-25	CEO
<b>RISK CATEGORY: COMPLIANCE</b>															
8	Failure to have in place or adhere to statutory or non-statutory corporate governance policies or procedures.	4	4	16	Ensure internal control system in place; Work to the production timetable for completion of all documents, and disseminate widely to ensure maximum awareness.	Effective	2	1	2		Minimalist	Using checklist of assurance controls; Draft annual accounts and report completed on planned timeline. Internal governance refreshers delivered. 22/23 audit completed with clean audit report. Internal audit programme agreed, 23/24 annual report completed.	1	Mar-25	CEO
9	The Commission fails to deliver to its allocated budget, resulting in reputational, administrative and governance failures.	5	4	20	Corporate and Business plan set appropriate budget allocations. Work to specified monitoring cycles, reporting requirements, and guidelines set out in the SPFM. Ensure correct adherence to authorisation procedures and delegated limits. Close monitoring of spend and profiled spend.	Effective	2	2	4		Averse	Internal Scheme of delegation in place; Quarterly board monitoring in place. Monthly profiling to manage spend evenly through the financial year and to be kept under review. Peer review on budget management from NatureScot Mar 23 to support resilience improvements. Improvements to budget management & reporting identified Apr 23. New Finance officer role in place with reporting responsibilities transferred.	1	Mar-25	CEO
<b>RISK CATEGORY: STAFFING</b>															
10	Staff turnover or absence due to illness etc resulting in loss of capacity for critical elements of business systems and delivery	5	4	20	Ensure good internal communication and provision of desk instructions for business critical functions. Resilience planning to ensure backup capability within staff team. Continuously seek to improve the working environment by monitoring and improving staff satisfaction and absence levels.	Partial	3	3	9		Cautious	Internal policies prepared and series of desk instructions for critical tasks prepared. Continued review of HR policies & staff engagement. Careful monitoring of priorities and capacity by MT and regular staff communication in place. Staff survey action plan in place. Ongoing absence monitoring in place. Resilience improvements in corporate and comms team implemented. Recruitment for replacement Finance & Business Systems post provides handover time.	4	Apr-25	Head of Communications and Corporate services
11	Change in work priorities, competing expectations or insufficient prioritisation impacts on staff wellbeing	5	4	20	Open and transparent - hold regular staff meetings, keep all staff informed of big picture direction, changes in priorities/focus. Overview through management team. Strong internal comms and leadership from managers to ensure wellbeing of staff and manage move to new ways of working.	Effective	2	4	8		Cautious	Improved monthly staff meeting format in place. Improved quarterly resource planning through Management Team. Monthly conversations, effective line management. Capacity reviewed through teams. Regular pulse staff surveys and action plan. Training and development plan in place. Business Plan prioritisation matched to resource capacity.	3	Apr-25	CEO
12	Disruption to delivery and business systems as a result of some staff moving to more permanent options of home working	4	3	12	Preparing new policies, ways of working and adapting internal processes to ensure staff remain well connected across teams and the organisation. Organisational policy that no member of staff should be disadvantaged due to where they work.	Partial	1	1	1		Cautious	Home working policy outlines expectations for home working and monthly all staff team meetings to take place face to face. Office has hot desking and flexible working patterns in place. Closely monitoring and reviewing working practices, and adapting where needed. Office move completed with staff encouraged to meet face to face, routine of monthly in person all staff meetings.	1	Apr-25	Head of Communications and Corporate services

# COMMUNICATIONS QUARTERLY REPORT

## Q2: JULY 2024 - SEPTEMBER 2024



This quarter, we achieved 74 press placements, marking a 7% increase from the previous quarter, driven by interest in our Board recruitment and new TFC guidance on rent reviews. As of early September, we transitioned to managing PR in-house following the end of our contract with an external PR agency.

We also refined our KPIs to more accurately track social media engagement, tailoring them for each platform based on historical performance and industry standards.

Our email marketing continued to perform well, with the relaunch of the quarterly TFC newsletter seeing encouraging engagement. However, new subscriber growth has slowed after the boost seen from integrating Eventbrite and Mailchimp during our conference bookings.

Website traffic declined this quarter, this primarily due to lower traffic during the school holidays and is countered by an increase in time spent on our site.

If you require further details or would like to discuss any aspect of the report, please contact Scarlett Macfarlane at [scarlett.macfarlane@landcommission.gov.scot](mailto:scarlett.macfarlane@landcommission.gov.scot).

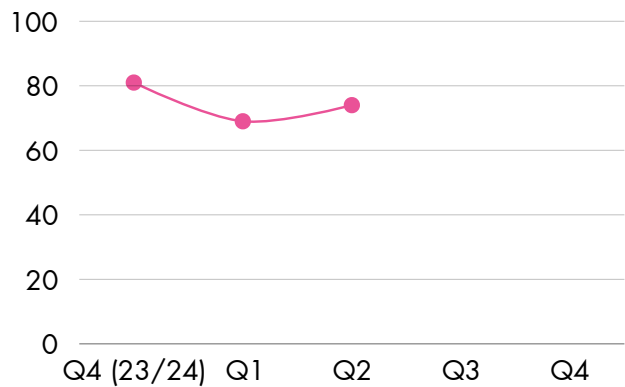
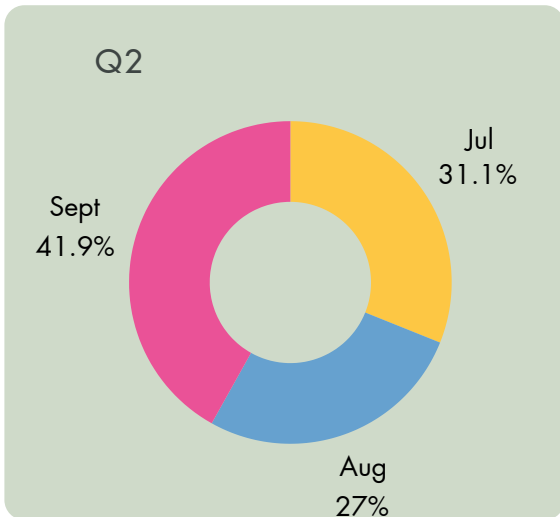
Month	Event/Activity
October	Land Links launch and first webinar
October	Review of Agents published
October	CLES report published
November	Rural Land Markets Data Report Published
November	REVIVE conference
November	50 Years of Land Economy Aberdeen Conference
November	Issue 4 Commission newsletter
December	TFC interview with Farmers Guardian
December	Land Links final sessions
December	STFA newsletter
December	Board appointments

# PRESS COVERAGE

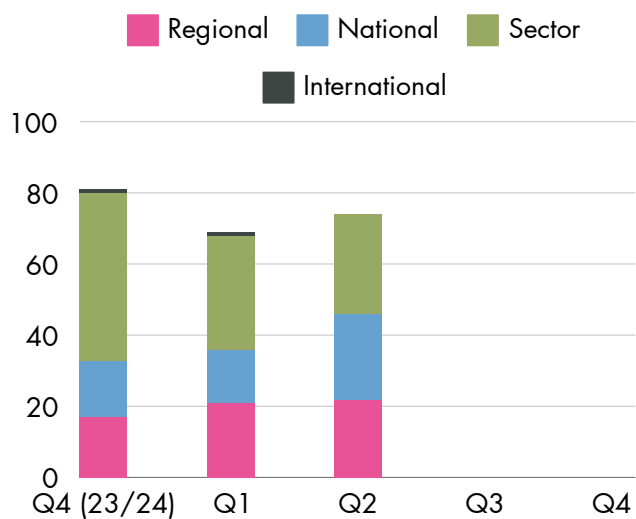
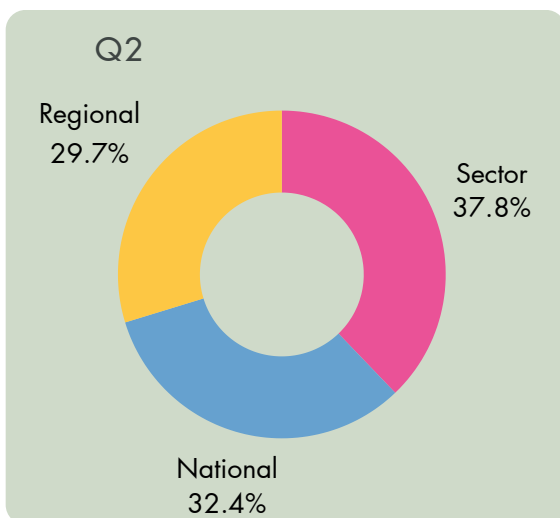
This quarter, we secured 74 press placements, a 7% increase from the previous quarter. The rise in media coverage was driven primarily by interest in the recruitment of new Board members. Additionally, there has been an increase in press attention for TFC related news, which is in line with the release of new TFC guidance on the use of comparables in rent reviews.

As of early September, our contract with the external PR agency concluded. In response to Scottish Government spending controls, we have transitioned to managing PR in-house and will reassess our PR needs in the new year.

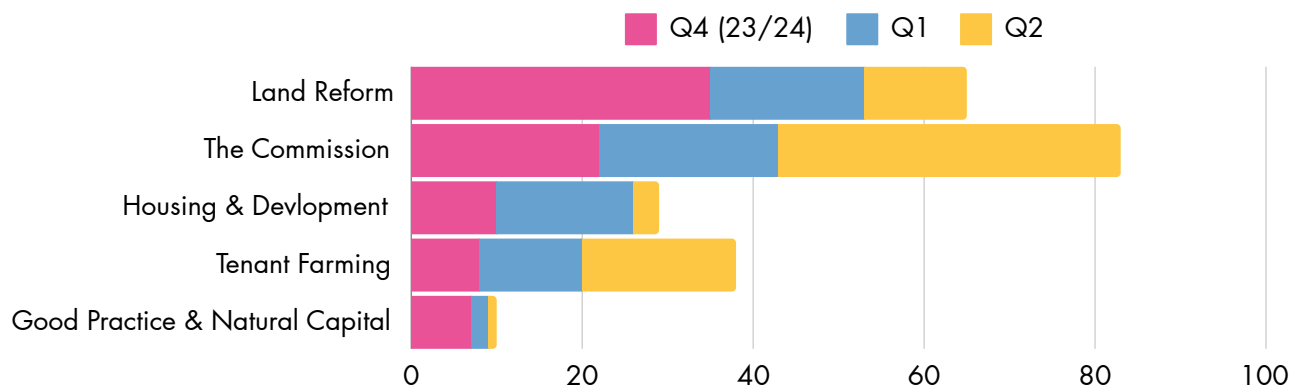
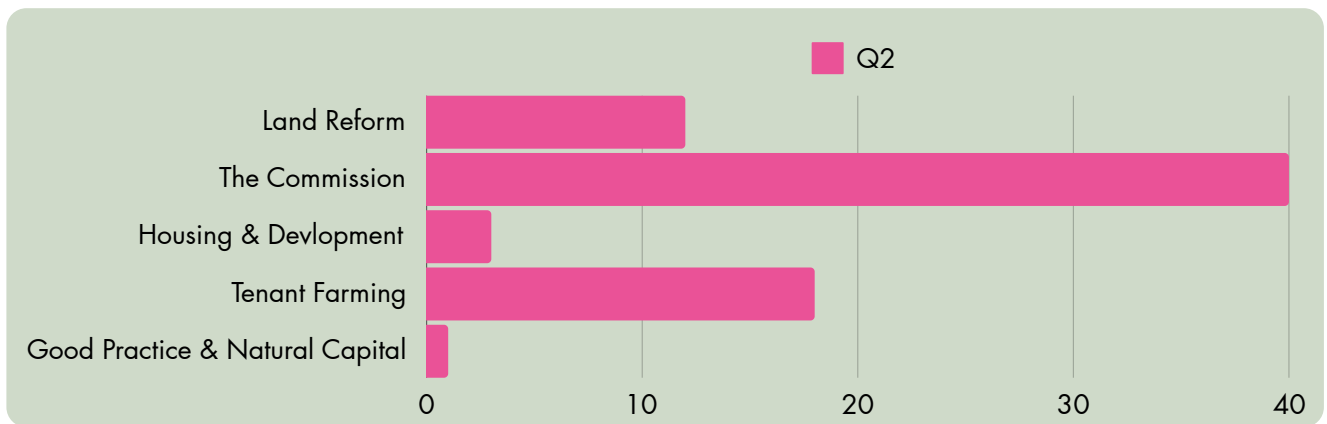
## DATES OF COVERAGE



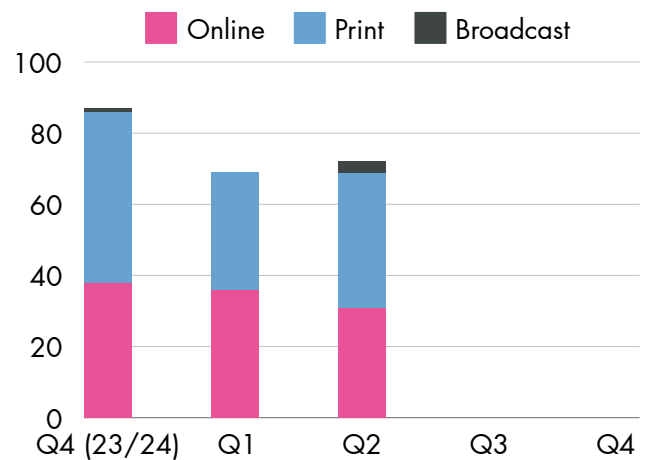
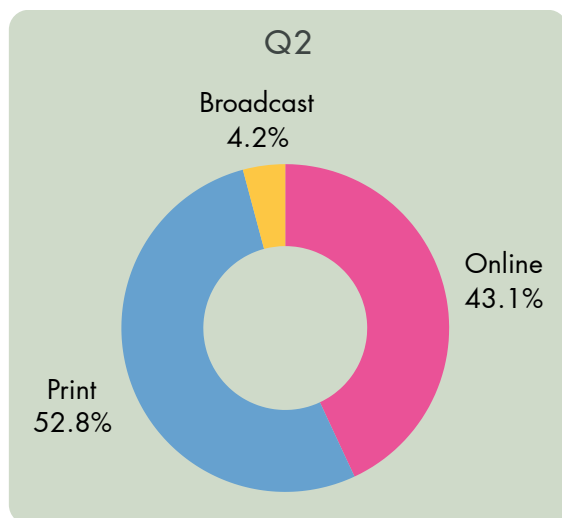
## REGION OF COVERAGE



## PRIORITY AREA COVERAGE



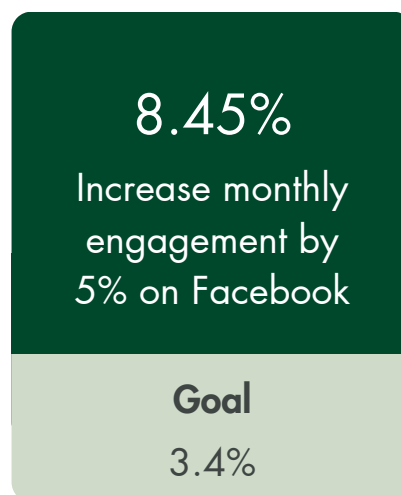
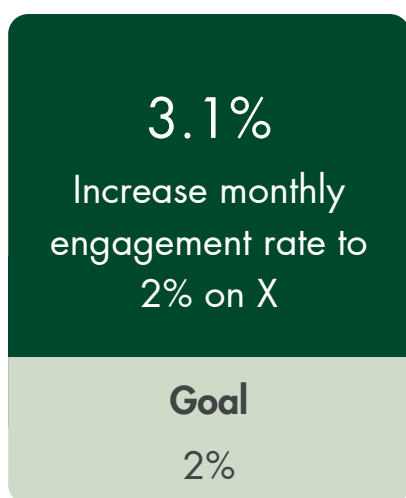
## CHANNEL OF COVERAGE



## SOCIAL MEDIA

We have recently developed a set of refined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to more accurately measure and track our social media engagement. These KPIs are designed to build on engagement trends from previous years, reflecting both our historical performance and the dynamics of each social media platform.

The scorecards provided below offer a view of our quarterly performance, while the table presents industry benchmarks for the first two quarters of 2024, allowing for a meaningful comparison of our results against our peers.



Platform	Avg. Engagement Rate
Instagram	4.1%
Facebook	3.2%
X	2.4%
LinkedIn	2% (Commission avg. 8%)

Source: Hootsuite

## EMAIL MARKETING

Over the past quarter, we have continued to effectively use email marketing, and recently relaunched the quarterly TFC newsletter, which saw a promising level of engagement in terms of opens and clicks. However, growth in new subscribers has slowed this quarter compared to previous periods. A significant portion of last quarter's success in new subscribers was driven by the integration of our signup process with Eventbrite, allowing conference attendees to easily opt in to our mailing list. This same integration has now been implemented for the Land Links webinars, which we anticipate will help boost subscriber growth.

Mailout	Open Rate	Click Through Rate
TFC Newsletter	64.9%	23.8%
July Newsletter	61.3%	9.1%
Issue 3 (September) Newsletter	58.9%	9.1%

## WEBSITE

Website traffic this quarter has been lower compared to the previous quarter, which aligns with a typical dip during the school holidays. Despite the overall decline, our top performing pages continued to attract significant engagement. These include:

- Home
- Statement on Highlands Rewilding
- News & Events

These pages remain key drivers of traffic, demonstrating an interest in our core updates and events.





SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

## Commissioners' Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024 Online

### PAPER 4

#### Annual Review of Strategic Risks

<b>Purpose:</b>	To review strategic risks
<b>Previous board papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Action required:</b>	For discussion

It is good practice for the board to review annually the key strategic risks facing the organisation. The strategic risk register is reviewed regularly at each Audit and Risk Committee meeting, which also undertakes more in-depth risk interrogation of individual risks; the board also receives a quarterly update on changes in the strategic risk register.

The current strategic risk register is attached at Annex A.

The board is asked to consider:

- Are there significant new or changed risks that are not captured in the current risk register?
- Are there risks that no longer need to be on the strategic risk register?

The board is specifically asked to consider removing risk 12:

#### ***Disruption to delivery and business systems as a result of some staff moving to more permanent options of home working***

This risk has been scored low and reducing consistently over the last year. It was introduced to the register when a shift to hybrid working first began during and post pandemic. Our hybrid working pattern is now well established, with appropriate support through policy and culture. Effective delivery and business systems have been retained without disruption. While the organisation's working pattern and culture should always be open to review, evolution and improvement, we no longer consider this to be a strategic risk to the organisation.