



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Commissioners Meeting
3rd December 2024, 9.30am, An Lochran, Inverness

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	2 Annex A	For discussion	Hamish Trench & James MacKessack-Leitch
4.	Good Practice Programme Refresh	3	For discussion	Emma Cooper
5.	2025/26 Planning	4	For discussion	Hamish Trench
6.	Tax workstream update	5	For information	Kathie Pollard
7.	Budget monitoring report	6	For information	Nikki Nagler
8.	Communications update	Verbal update	For information	Scarlett Macfarlane
9.	AOB			Chair



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Minute of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on Tuesday 5th November 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, Nikki Nagler, James MacKessack-Leitch, Scarlett Macfarlane, David Stewart, Andrew Megson (Scottish Land Commission); Sian Ledger, Orshi Keri (Scottish Government, observers)

Apologies: None

Declarations of interest: None

Minutes of previous meeting 1 October 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 1 October 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

1. Report from Chair of Audit & Risk Committee

Lorne presented his report from the recent meeting of the ARC held on 4th November. The board sought more information on the change in financial accounting software, seeking assurance about risks in the transition. Andrew confirmed the change will provide more automated and consistent reporting as well as simplifying the IT arrangements behind it. It will reduce staff time input and result in a small financial saving next financial year. He confirmed that external support is in hand to support the transition, ensuring back-up information. The Chair welcomed the intended ability to provide more detailed management accounts but asked that the board be kept informed of progress with the transition and that it be carefully risk managed.

2. Commissioners Updates

Commissioners provided updates on their key activities and events since the last meeting.

3. Land Reform Bill Update

The Chair and CEO provided an update following their meeting with the Cabinet Secretary on 10th October. Hamish and James outlined follow-up work underway with the Bill team, noting also that Stage 1 of the Parliamentary process is due to conclude on 28th March 2025.

4. Rural Housing Land Proposal

The board welcomed the key elements of the proposal but asked that it be reframed to set out more clearly the urgency, ambition and realism that is required. In particular the board asked that the proposal is developed further to include:

- More reference to the University of Glasgow report and the wider recommendations it made;
- More reference to the wider context including land reform, role of the private sector, and distinctive island challenges;
- Stronger reference to the overall need for the state to play a substantial role, including the provision of appropriate and necessary resources particularly for infrastructure and the expectation that public bodies have an obligation to deliver on rural housing in the public interest;
- Stronger acknowledgement that delivering this does require financial commitment.

The board also noted the opportunity to work with key partners such as Forestry and Land Scotland as well as Enterprise Companies ahead of publishing a final output in the new year.

Action 05112401	David and Hamish to strengthen drafting and liaise with key partners ahead of publication.
------------------------	---

5. Quarterly Progress Report

The Board welcomed delivery progress, noting the high level of planned delivery that is on track. The board asked whether there is opportunity to advise further on the Community Wealth Building Bill planned by Scottish Government. Hamish undertook to engage further with the Government team. The board also sought more information on the amber rating against the Crown Estate Scotland collaboration on community land ownership. Hamish explained that the business case is now with the CES investment committee for a decision on whether it proceeds so at this point further progress is dependent on that.

The board noted that budget management is on track, within a very tight financial context in which the Commission's annual budget this year is 97% committed. Given this context the board asked for monthly budget reports to be provided.

The board noted that risk 2 is increasing due to the tight financial constraints which reduce the ability to react quickly in switching resources if required.

Finally the board welcomed the continued good communications profile and Scarlett provided a look ahead to key publications and events coming up.

Action 05112402	Financial reports to be provided to the board on a monthly basis
------------------------	---

6. Annual Strategic Risk Review

The board reviewed the strategic risk register to consider any changes in our operating environment, internal or external, that are not sufficiently reflected in the current risk register, and any risks that can be removed. The board agreed:

- Risk 12 can be removed given that we are no longer in a transition to hybrid working but have established new patterns, noting this risk has been scored as low and decreasing consistently over the last year. However, there remain risks associated with the pattern of working, in particular to organisational flexibility and resilience. It is proposed that risk 11 also be reframed to ensure oversight of these remain.
- Risk 3 can be removed shortly once board recruitment is completed, noting this will not then be due again for a number of years.
- A new risk should be added that addresses the risks associated with the Land Reform Bill, given its significance and potential impact on the Commission.
- A new or amended risk should also address more directly the financial risk to the Commission associated with the public finance environment as well as the potential new functions.
- Risk 7 should be widened to reflect relationships with Parliament and others as well as government.
- The risk register should also help keep oversight of risks associated with the ongoing need to keep Good Practice Programme information up to date and evolving, given resource constraints and uncertainties in how it evolves alongside the bill.

The board asked the management team to review and redraft the risk register to address these considerations, for further review at the ARC meeting in February and the board meeting in March.

Action 05112403	Proposed revisions to risk register to be considered at ARC in February and Board in March
------------------------	---

7. Appointment of ARC Chair

With Lorne's appointment as a Commissioner coming to an end in December, the board thanked Lorne for his role chairing the Audit and Risk Committee over two periods. The board agreed to appoint Craig Mackenzie to chair the ARC, with effect from 18th December 2024.

8. AOB

None

Date of next meeting:

3rd December 2024

An Lochran, Inverness

Actions from Board Meetings - Update of actions to date

Action number	Date Raised	Context	Action Detail	Responsible	Date Required	Date Closed	Comments
05112401	05/11/2024	Rural Housing	David and Hamish to strengthen drafting and liaise with key partners ahead of publication.	David Stewart and Hamish Trench			Paper reworked and summary added addressing changes from board meeting. Publication arrangements to be agreed with Chair. Included in December agenda and schedule for future meetings
05112402	05/11/2024	Finance	Financial reports to be provided to the board on a monthly basis	Hamish Trench			
05112403	05/11/2024	Risk	Proposed revisions to risk register to be considered at ARC in February and Board in March	Hamish Trench			Scheduled for Feb and March meetings



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Commissioners' Meeting 3rd December 2024 Inverness

PAPER 2

Land Reform Bill Update

Purpose:	To update the board on the Commission's advice to inform the Land Reform Bill
Previous board papers:	Paper 4, 1 st October 2024
Action required:	For discussion

Commission advice

The board agreed interim advice on the bill at the 1st October meeting. This advice has subsequently been shared with the Bill team and Cabinet Secretary.

We are currently working with the Bill team to explore the issues raised in our advice and the practical considerations involved. We expect to be in a position to finalise our advice and publish it in January.

Annex A provides an update in relation to the key themes of our policy advice.

We have also continued to provide further information to support the Bill team in their assessment of financial implications, specifically in relation to the proposed additional functions for the Commission.

Bill timetable

Parliament has confirmed that Stage 1 will be completed by the end of March 2025. The NZET Committee is continuing to hold a series of evidence sessions and we expect these will continue into the new year.

Recommendation

The board is asked to note the update provided in Annex A and to discuss any key issues arising to inform completion of our advice.

Hamish Trench, James MacKessack-Leitch & Kathie Pollard



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Commissioners' Meeting 3rd December 2024 Inverness

PAPER 3

Good Practice Programme Refresh and Focus

Purpose:	To consider the focus for the Good Practice Programme over the next 12-18 months
Previous board papers:	
Action required:	For agreement

This paper draws together information reviewing our Good Practice Programme. In a context of tight resource and rising demand for advice, it considers our focus for this work for the next 12-18 months.

1. Background

The Good Practice Programme was formed in 2019 to support voluntary implementation of the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (LRRS). The LRRS is a foundational document that stems from the Land Reform Act 2016. It was published by Scottish Government in 2017 following stakeholder engagement and refreshed in 2022 with advice from the Commission and other stakeholders. It provides us with a working definition of responsible land ownership and management through [7 principles](#) that underpin the work of the Commission.

[The Protocols](#), published by the Commission from January 2019 to August 2022, provide clear practical expectations for how landowners, in all sectors, should interpret the principles of the LRRS. The Protocols are endorsed by our key partners through the Good Practice Advisory Group: Scottish Land & Estates, National Farmers Union Scotland, Development Trust Association Scotland, Community Land Scotland and Scottish Property Federation, Scottish Environment Link.

Over time, we have seen a cultural shift toward adoption of the principles of the LRRS, supported by the Good Practice Programme, even whilst the LRRS may not explicitly be referenced. The successful implementation of the LRRS and Protocols in many different circumstances and contexts, by many different land owners and managers, demonstrates the practicability and robustness of the LRRS and Protocols. Where we see ongoing challenges and conflicts relating to landownership and communities, the principles of the LRRS continue to apply and provide a useful steer towards resolution.

The Good Practice Programme is intended to complement and inform legislative changes, not to replace them. The Programme can deliver quicker and more responsively than legislative approaches and reaches those landowners to whom legislation does or will not apply. The Programme provides useful learning to inform policy approaches and ensures our work remains grounded in lived experience.

2. Approaches & methods

The Good Practice Programme seeks to raise awareness of the opportunities and benefits of responsible land ownership and management and has an impact in three ways:

- **Directly**
Practical guidance, advice and training on implementing the LRRS for land owners, managers, professional advisers, and communities. We deliver this on a 1:many and a 1:1 basis. Our methods include written guidance and video case studies published on our website, bespoke in-person or online training for specific sectors or organisations (e.g. land agents, Forestry & Land Scotland), casework on a 1:1 basis, self-evaluations on a small group or 1:1 basis.
- **Indirectly**
Embedding the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement at a more strategic level in other policy and guidance, for example, Forestry Grant Scheme, NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy, Natural Capital Market Framework.
- **Partnerships**
Working with or supporting others to deliver good practice activities, for example, securing funding for the network of community benefits advisers to be hosted by Community Land Scotland, and working with Scottish Land & Estates and Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors to deliver training for their members.

In addition, we work with stakeholders and our communications team to raise awareness of the Good Practice Programme and the benefits of following our Protocols, including our current Land Links series and previous Land@Lunch series. All our work is informed through stakeholder engagement and we work collaboratively to maximise the impact of our resources and activities.

3. Impact and learning

We have conducted a review of the Good Practice Programme including:

- Independent review of the Good Practice Programme including survey and interviews.
- Review of casework, case studies and resources including website downloads.
- Analysis of feedback from webinars, training and pilot self-evaluation cohorts.
- Workshop with Good Practice Advisory Group and internal staff workshop.

Key findings of the review indicate that our strengths include:

- The Good Practice Programme has been effective in raising awareness of and promoting action on the LRRS principles, in particular on community engagement where a real cultural shift has taken place.
- Our different approaches (directly, indirectly, and partnerships) enable us to reach both the willing and the reluctant, and to change the culture as well as the actions of individuals. Each of the methods we use (training, casework, guidance, etc) are beneficial and complementary, enabling us to reach different audiences and to tailor

our messaging to those we interact with. They are inter-dependent, and there are benefits to continuing with each strand of our work.

- The Good Practice Programme is valued by stakeholders and provides an important contribution to the reputation of the Commission as a reasonable, practical organisation, willing to listen to different viewpoints, and with policy-advice that is grounded in practice.
- The LRRS provides a robust and reasonable definition of responsible landownership. Our associated Protocols build on this basis to create a foundation for all of our advice and guidance and are an essential component of our Good Practice Programme. The Protocols remain one of our most popular tools.
- Our casework service provides an immediate and practical intervention that can help to both prevent and resolve conflicts or challenges, providing better outcomes for all parties, and building better relationships for the future.

However, we also recognise some challenges in our work:

- We need to balance our ambition to drive change with limited resources. The Good Practice Programme is in high demand and we see many opportunities for further work. Organisations are increasingly referred to or directed to us for advice by other organisations e.g. by Scottish Government through the Natural Capital Market Framework. We cannot necessarily meet this demand.
- Whilst many land owners and managers are acting in alignment with the LRRS, there remain many who are unaware of the LRRS or unsure how to apply the LRRS in their context. In addition, whilst we have worked successfully with other sectors, we have predominantly been effective in reaching rural private landowners, and to some extent public landowners.
- We have a good selection of resources and tools that can be used with or without support from the Commission. They cover a wide range of topics and are aimed at a wide range of audiences. However, navigating our website and finding the resources appropriate and applicable to you, can be a challenge.
- The current context of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill is creating tensions amongst stakeholders, with some fearful of the implications and resistant, but others seeking to 'get ahead' and take action now. Stakeholders have previously expressed concern that the Protocols would become mandatory with the introduction of new land reform legislation and although it is clear now that this is not the case, the Protocols were written (with the exception of the natural capital protocol) 3-4 years ago and the process of agreeing them was resource intensive and challenging.
- Whilst some organisations are now very familiar with the LRRS and Protocols and able to progress to the next stages of considering responsible land ownership (for example, publicly demonstrating and reporting on their commitment to the LRRS), others are just starting their journey, and maybe do not understand the LRRS expectations, or may consider them unreasonable.
- There are organisations (including stakeholder organisations, land owning organisations, and others) who do not view land reform as relevant to them and who are engaged in a very limited way.

4. Next Steps

The current Land Reform Bill has the potential to significantly change the role of the Commission and the balance of statutory vs good practice approaches for landholdings over a certain size. Going into this change it is important that we have clear and consistent expectations of what good practice looks like and that we can provide advice and support on

delivering this in a variety of contexts. We need to ensure we maintain systems and processes that are effective and fair and a team able to support good practice in a variety of contexts.

We cannot at this point pre-empt changes resulting from the Bill or redesign our systems around this. What we can do is ensure that the core elements of our Good Practice Programme are up to date and continue to develop so that we are able to adapt when required. Over the coming year we expect to have to consider further the interaction of our Good Practice Programme with legislative requirements that emerge from the Bill.

Those landholdings not within scope of the Land Reform Bill will continue to have a significant impact on communities and the wider public interest and need to continue to be encouraged and supported to deliver good practice. It is important that we reach land owners and managers in all sectors, making the most of our reputation as fair and reasonable, and that we recognise the need to maintain a voluntary Good Practice Programme in the long-term.

Culture change takes time and consistency and must be built through trusted relationships and mutual understanding. Our stakeholder relationships are very valuable in reaching a wide range of people and organisations, and our resources are efficiently used when working in partnership with others.

We have tight resources in both staff capacity and finance available to the Commission, against rising demands on our Good Practice advice. To maintain consistency of messaging, strong relationships, and maximise our impact, our proposed next steps for the Good Practice Programme are:

- Continue our approach and focus on core existing elements of the Good Practice Programme, based on the LRRS, rather than developing new methods or working with new sectors.
- Update our protocols, which provide the foundation of the Programme, in collaboration with others.
- Improve access to and raise awareness of our existing resources, ensuring that we are making the most of our work to date, and enabling organisations to independently review their practice for alignment with the LRRS. This includes updating or adding to existing resources to make sure they are as practical as possible.
- Particularly focus on community benefits and diversification of ownership and tenure - rather than other aspects of good practice/LRRS - as we see good opportunities in these areas to have a broad impact, and they build on the progress we have made with community engagement and transparency since the Programme began.
- Prioritise approaches that either reach more people or have greater influence on culture; specifically, working with groups of people and organisations, working in partnership with others, and 1:1 work with high-profile or influential landowners.

5. Recommendation

The Board is asked to agree the next steps for the Good Practice Programme and in particular consider:

- **The proposed focus on core elements of the programme including refreshing the Protocols**
- **The balance of resource given to engaging with the less willing/unwilling**

- **Preparing for changes associated with the Land Reform Bill**

Emma Cooper



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Good Practice Programme Refresh November 2024

Contents

Introduction	3
Our approach to Good Practice	3
Review of Programme to Date	7
Good Practice Programme Evaluation.....	7
Recommendations from Review of Casework 2020-23	8
Review of case studies	9
Feedback from webinars and workshops	10
Self-evaluations.....	10
Website and resources	11
Good Practice Advisory Group	11
Land Reform Bill.....	11
Internal engagement.....	12
What are we trying to achieve with the Good Practice Programme?.....	12
Our ways of supporting good practice	13
Opportunities for good practice.....	13
Findings	15
What we will continue doing:	15
What we will update:	16
How we will communicate:	17
How we will collaborate:	18
Next Steps	19
Gantt Chart	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Introduction

The Scottish Government's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (LRRS) sets out a vision and principles for land use, management and ownership in Scotland. It applies to land and buildings in rural and urban areas and to all types of land owners, managers and users. To support the implementation of the LRRS and its principles, in December 2019 we launched the [Good Practice Programme](#). The programme aims to encourage good behaviour, culture and practice with straightforward and practical advice on.

In the almost five years since the programme was launched, we have: developed a series of protocols, supplemented by guidance documents, templates and case studies; developed guidance on key topics relevant to land reform; delivered webinars, training and workshops for thousands of participants; provided advice and support on a wide range of topics landowners and land managers; helped landowners to assess their practice against the principles of the LRRS; supported communities and individuals with enquiries and cases, and; influenced strategies and policies relating to land ownership, use and management.

Over time, we have seen a cultural shift toward adoption of the principles of the LRRS, supported by the Good Practice Programme, even whilst the LRRS may not explicitly be referenced. The successful implementation of the LRRS and Protocols in many different circumstances and contexts, by many different landowners and managers, demonstrates the practicability and robustness of the LRRS and Protocols. Where we see ongoing challenges and conflicts relating to landownership and communities, the principles of the LRRS continue to apply and provide a useful steer towards resolution.

The Good Practice Programme is intended to complement and inform legislative changes, not to replace them. The Programme can deliver quicker and more responsively than legislative approaches and reaches those landowners to whom legislation does or will not apply. The Programme provides useful learning to inform policy approaches and ensures our work remains grounded in lived experience.

We are now reviewing the programme with a view to refreshing and updating it to improve accessibility and uptake, and to make sure that we are prioritising our time and resources to have the best impact. This work supports our business plan objective "Develop and support implementation of practical Land Rights and Responsibilities Protocols with accompanying guidance and case studies".

Our approach to Good Practice

The Good Practice Programme seeks to raise awareness of the opportunities and benefits of responsible land ownership and management and has an impact in three ways:

- Directly
Practical guidance, advice and training on implementing the LRRS for land

owners, managers, professional advisers, and communities. We deliver this on a 1:many and a 1:1 basis. Our methods include written guidance and video case studies published on our website, bespoke in-person or online training for specific sectors or organisations (e.g. land agents, Forestry & Land Scotland), casework on a 1:1 basis, self-evaluations on a small group or 1:1 basis.

- Indirectly
Embedding the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement at a more strategic level in other policy and guidance, for example, Forestry Grant Scheme, NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy, Natural Capital Market Framework.
- Partnerships
Working with or supporting others to deliver good practice activities, for example, securing funding for the network of community benefits advisers to be hosted by Community Land Scotland, and working with Scottish Land & Estates and Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors to deliver training for their members.

In addition, we work with stakeholders and our communications team to raise awareness of the Good Practice Programme and the benefits of following our Protocols, including our current Land Links series and previous Land@Lunch series. All our work is informed through stakeholder engagement and we work collaboratively to maximise the impact of our resources and activities.

The range of methods that we use to encourage voluntary good practice and culture change, based around the LRRS principles, have different benefits and aims: our protocols set out reasonable expectations in relation to the LRRS; we provide templates and guidance to make information more accessible, and case studies to provide inspiration; we raise awareness of expectations and encourage change through workshops, webinars, and self-evaluations; we help when situations differ from expectations through our casework, and; we support people to demonstrate good practice through providing advice and influencing strategies and policies.

Protocols and guidance

Our series of protocols around the Scottish Government's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement sets out practical advice on how landowners, land managers and communities can work together to make better – and fairer – decisions about land use. Our protocols and guidance provide the foundation for the rest of our good practice work, making it clear what expectations are around land ownership, use and management, and what actions can be taken to support the LRRS principles.

We have published nine protocols, supplemented by templates, guidance documents and FAQs, covering:

- Community Engagement
- Transparency of Ownership and Land Use Decision-Making
- Land Ownership by Charities
- Land Ownership by Private Trusts
- Diversification of Ownership and Tenure
- Negotiated Transfer of Land to Communities
- Good Stewardship of Land
- Common Good Land and Buildings
- Responsible Natural Capital and Carbon Management.

The protocols on Community Engagement and Transparency provide core expectations, which run through the rest of our protocols.

We have also published guidance and additional materials focussed on Community Wealth Building and on Delivering Community Benefits from Land.

Case Studies

Through our work we have identified good practice case studies which can provide inspiration and share lessons. Some of these have been written as part of commissioned work, while others have been developed in-house or as part of our My Land website.

In total, we have more than 135 written and video case studies, covering rural and urban examples from 23 different local authorities. Our case studies cover a wide range of topics, including community engagement, diversification of ownership and tenure, housing, vacant and derelict land, community ownership, land management plans, and community benefits.

Our case studies help to tell stories about what is possible and the benefits of following good practice. They are helpful in our workshops and training to demonstrate how the LRRS principles can be followed in real life situations and inspire action.

Workshops and training

We deliver training and development sessions with professional advisers, landowners, and key stakeholders to develop capacity, confidence, and leadership in good practice.

We have delivered a wide range of tailored workshops and training sessions to landowners and managers across the country. Some of these have been Commission-led, while others were delivered in partnership with sector organisations.

Our workshops and training events give us a chance to share good practice with larger groups and enable us to tailor messaging to the audience.

Webinars and awareness raising

We have run webinars to introduce the protocols, as well as a series of Land at Lunch webinars to raise awareness of a range of topics. We are currently running a series of evening Webinars called Land Links.

Our webinars have been well-attended and offer an opportunity for us to raise awareness of key issues and to answer questions from attendees. Attendees at

webinars sometimes follow up with cases or enquiries, or to ask for advice and support. We have also had follow ups from webinar attendees on training and self-evaluations.

Self-Evaluations

Our self-evaluation framework supports landowners and managers to assess the way they own and manage land, considering the expectations set out in our protocols. This enables them to identify good practice that they can share with others and areas for further action or improvement.

We worked with key stakeholders to pilot our framework with different kinds of landowners (31 participants in total) and have since developed the framework based on feedback and assisted individual landowners to evaluate their performance.

Casework and enquiries

We handle and record contacts from people who have questions about issues relating to land rights and responsibilities. We encourage people who experience situations which differ significantly from the expectations set out in our protocols to get in touch with us.

Responding to cases enables us to identify geographic areas or subjects that might require further attention. In some cases, they have given us an opportunity to make contact with an organisation or landowner, who we have gone on to work further with, either to provide advice and support, influence policies, or deliver training.

Advice and influencing

Landowners and managers can – and do – contact us proactively for advice on implementing our protocols and guidance. We help them to understand how the principles and expectations we set out can be applied in practice.

We also have a role in influencing strategies and policies to encourage voluntary good practice. When we are approached by those with decision-making power over land, we provide information, guidance and advice, including practical support where possible. We have commented on strategies and policies, provided feedback on plans, and acted as a sounding board for ideas. We have also signposted people to further sources of information or support.

Review of Programme to Date

There are several different elements to our good practice work, and these have evolved since the programme was launched. We have gathered informal and formal feedback at different stages of our work and have adapted our work to take this learning into account.

As part of our Good Practice Programme refresh, we have revisited previous monitoring and evaluation work, carried out work to assess our existing resources and case studies including how often they are accessed, spoken to members about the role of the Good Practice Advisory Group, and carried out an internal workshop.

Good Practice Programme Evaluation

In 2022, we commissioned an evaluation of the Good Practice Programme to determine its impact to date, inform its future development, and enable wider adoption of good practice. The evaluation was based on surveys of those who had accessed the programme, through webinars, workshops, self-evaluations and casework, and through stakeholder interviews.

The evaluation came to the following conclusions:

- Awareness of programme was okay, but some community organisations felt that it is only somewhat relevant to them
- The programme meets stakeholder expectations, but content could better reflect forestry and farming
- Protocols were more commonly used than the additional resources that support them
- Protocols were effective in raising awareness and understanding and encouraging implementation
- Workshops were effective in increasing awareness and understanding
- Protocols, workshops and self-evaluations were all effective in encouraging action
- Contacting the Good Practice team was deemed to be a positive experience
- Barriers to applying learning include time, need for considerable planning before enacting change, and belief that practice already aligned with LRRS.

The evaluation report made the following recommendations for the programme:

- More direct follow-up after engagement with programme to support change
- Focus on actions that can be implemented when developing Programme content
- Work with key stakeholders to encourage them to take a more active role in promoting good practice to their members
- Foster more direct contact from SLC, including nominated contacts
- Encourage stakeholders to take a more prominent role in raising awareness of SLC's work across a range of topics

- Expand on the content of the programme to cover other areas such as forestry, farming, alternative models of ownership and use, engaging Community Planning Partners on land use decision-making, communities of interest
- That SLC be given more powers to enforce change
- An increased role for SLC in planning decisions.

Recommendations from Review of Casework 2020-23

We provide advice in response to enquiries and cases relating to the LRRS – giving guidance on how to apply the principles in practice and helping people to find solutions when they have concerns about whether and how the principles are being applied by those with decision-making powers over land.

We analysed three years of enquiries and cases, from April 2020 to March 2023, to identify common themes and help us understand any lessons or implications for policy and practice in implementing the LRRS.

From 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023, we recorded 263 contacts, from across 28 local authority areas. These covered a range of subjects, with the most common being community engagement, diversification of ownership and tenure, and vacant and derelict land.

Most contacts came from individuals and community organisations, although we also received contacts from land owners, many of whom were seeking advice about their own practice.

Many contacts we had were resolved by providing information or by signposting the person who got in touch to another organisation who could help them with their issue. Other issues have been taken forward as cases, which typically involve looking into the issue further, making contact with other parties, and trying to help those involved to find a way forward. This approach has been particularly successful in cases where there have been issues around communication and understanding, and we have been able to help those involved.

There have been some issues where we have not been able to help those who have contact us to reach a broader resolution of the issue or where only partial resolution was possible, for various reasons:

- The issue was not within the remit of the protocols
- The Commission did not have the power to act
- We were contacted so we were aware of a problem but asked not to take further action in case of repercussions
- We were unable to find suitable contact details
- We reached out but did not receive a response from the landowner or their land manager.

What could have made a difference

We assessed the issues that have been raised with us and identified a number of actions that could have prevented or moderated the issues, which were:

- Better communication between parties involved, especially at an early stage
- Greater transparency of information
- Availability of more guidance or advice on different topics
- Better application of existing legislation.

Areas for further focus

When considering the contacts in relation to the principles in the LRRS and to different aspects of the Commission's work, we identified the following opportunities to make progress in different areas:

- Support public bodies to lead by example
- Put legislative measures in place
- Conditionality of public funding
- Capacity building and support
- Focus on Common Good Land
- Assess progress with Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce Actions
- Continue work on Rural Land Market.

Review of case studies

We have more than 90 case studies published on our website or in reports that we have commissioned, more than 40 on our My Land website, and 21 videos and clips covering 8 community case studies on our Youtube channel.

The case studies cover 23 local authority areas, as well as Scotland-wide examples, case studies from the rest of the UK, and international examples. There are seven local authorities for which we have only one case study, while Glasgow and the Highlands are the most common case study areas. There is a balance of urban and rural examples across all of our case studies.

The case studies cover a range of topics with governance, vacant and derelict land, community engagement, and housing the most covered topics on our website. On the My Land site community ownership and vacant and derelict land are the most common topics. We have a group of case studies on land management plans but would benefit from having more case studies on transparency of ownership and decision-making more generally. We also have a gap in terms of case studies whose main topic is good stewardship or balanced decision-making.

The primary audience for most of our case studies is communities, although many of our vacant and derelict land and housing case studies are aimed at developers and private landowners. We have added to our case studies aimed at private landowners in recent years, with particular focus on community benefits, land management plans, and governance. We could benefit from having more case studies whose primary audience is public bodies.

Feedback from webinars and workshops

LRRS webinars and workshops

Following the publication of our protocols in 2020 and 2021, we hosted 5 webinars to introduce the protocols and their expectations and give participants the opportunity to ask questions. The protocols were attended by 381 individuals, some of whom attended multiple webinars.

The most common reasons for attending the webinars were a general interest in land reform or working with those who own land. An average of 81% of respondents rated the content of the webinars as good. While the webinars were mainly intended to raise awareness, an average of 55% of respondents who provided feedback indicated that they had left with ideas of changes their organisation could make to improve practice.

Land at Lunch

‘Land at Lunch’ was a series of 11 free public webinars, that ran from October 2022 through to March 2023. The aim of Land at Lunch was to provide accessible information and advice on a range of land reform topics for a wide audience, particularly focusing on good practice. We also aimed to showcase our work, inspire and support positive actions towards good practice, and test out new approaches to training that would inform later work, particularly our training and CPD programme for land agents and other professionals.

The series attracted 375 attendances, with at least 178 individuals attending (some attending multiple sessions). Public bodies and professional services providers were the top attendees, followed by community organisations, land owners and managers, and members of the public.

Evaluation took place following each webinar. The sessions were identified as being valuable for attendees. 89% of respondents reported that they improved their understanding of the topic and 62% learnt something new or different, despite 69% stating they were somewhat or very familiar with the topic at the start of the session. 38% of respondents said they had not attended a Commission event or webinar before so the sessions were helpful in reaching new people.

We have used the learning from Land at Lunch to inform our new webinar series, Land Links, and will be gathering further feedback from attendees to help us improve future offerings.

Self-evaluations

Our self-evaluations began as self-assessments in late 2019. A draft review framework was developed based on the LRRS and its principles, and this was developed into a prototype self-assessment template. We piloted this with a cohort of landowners, and worked with Community Land Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates, and National Farmers Union Scotland who ran cohorts with some of their members.

Minor amendments and updates were made to the template during the pilot, with more changes being made later to reflect our protocols. Following the conclusion of the

different cohorts, feedback was gathered from intermediaries and participants and a report was written on the pilot programme, looking at its effectiveness. All landowners who voluntarily engaged with the project demonstrated a wide range of good practice and were able to identify how they aligned with the principles of the LRRS. Several participants identified ways they were furthering the LRRS that they were previously not aware of, and the majority of landowners identified reasonable actions they could take to further align with the LRRS. A number of improvements to the format and process were suggested.

We applied the learning from this pilot and from testing the approach further with individual landowners and it evolved into the self-evaluations, with a more informal approach than initially tested. We will continue to evaluate and improve this work as we seek to encourage more landowners to evaluate their practice.

Website and resources

Our protocols and guidance are published on the Good Practice pages on our website. The Good Practice landing page and sub-pages have been viewed more than 15,500 times in the last 3 years, by more than 6,500 active users.

As we have developed more resources and covered different topics, the number of sub-pages on our website has increased. We now have 45 documents on our Good Practice web pages (in addition to our case studies), from protocols to additional guidance to reports. This does not include reports and information from other sections of our website. We are aware that this can make navigation trickier so we are considering the best way to organise our information to ensure our website visitors can find the information they need.

Good Practice Advisory Group

In May 2024, we met with our Good Practice Advisory Group in person in Edinburgh. As part of this meeting, we held a workshop that considered the role of the group and how it operated, and how members would like to see it operate going forward.

Feedback from members was that the group is valuable and provides an important opportunity for people working in different areas of the land sector to hear different perspectives and find out about what the Commission is doing. There was a feeling that this grouping of people would not otherwise come together and that it is good to have a group focussed on practice rather than policy.

Members made several suggestions to develop the work of the group including a focus on case studies and real-world examples, inviting more guest speakers, and focussing on implementation of LRRS principles.

Land Reform Bill

The current Land Reform Bill has the potential to change the role of the Commission, introducing statutory requirements for landholdings over a certain size which will need

to be regulated and considered alongside ongoing good practice approaches. Going into this change it is important that we have clear and consistent expectations of what good practice looks like and that we can provide advice and support on delivering this in a variety of contexts. We need to ensure we maintain systems and processes that are effective and fair and a team able to support good practice in a variety of contexts.

We cannot pre-empt changes resulting from the Bill or redesign our systems around this, but we can ensure that the core elements of our Good Practice Programme are up to date and continue to develop so that we are able to adapt when required. Over the coming year we expect to have to consider further the interaction of our Good Practice Programme with legislative requirements that emerge from the Bill.

Those landholdings not within scope of the Land Reform Bill will continue to have a significant impact on communities and the wider public interest and need to continue to be encouraged and supported to deliver good practice. It is important that we reach land owners and managers in all sectors, making the most of our reputation as fair and reasonable, and that we recognise the need to maintain a voluntary Good Practice Programme in the long-term.

Internal engagement

A workshop was held with colleagues from our Good Practice, Policy and Research, and Communications teams to consider what we want to achieve from our Good Practice work, the pros and cons of our existing approaches, and opportunities to make more of our good practice work.

What are we trying to achieve with the Good Practice Programme?

Staff were asked to indicate what we want to see change or happen as a result of the Good Practice Programme. Responses covered a range of areas, including:

- Culture change
 - Communities challenging the status quo of land ownership
 - Each sector calling out land managers who act irresponsibly
 - Peer to peer exchange
 - It become socially unacceptable to be an irresponsible landowner
- Collaboration
 - Building relationships with stakeholders
 - Empowering communities and landowners
 - Bridging gaps between people to support joined up thinking and facilitate new collaborations
 - Supporting a sense of possibility and ambition
- Land Rights and Responsibilities
 - Easy access to good information on LRRS
 - LRRS principles implemented across all land holdings
 - People aligned with LRR principles in their decision-making
 - LRRS ultimately no longer needed

- Voluntary good practice
 - People choosing to follow good practice on their own
 - SLC seen as a useful source of advice and support for landowners, land professionals, and communities
 - Sector co-ordination and representation groups promoting good practice.

Our ways of supporting good practice

Staff were asked to identify pros and cons of the following different ways of working with stakeholders to support good practice:

- Protocols and Guidance
- Webinars
- Workshops and tailored training
- Casework
- Advice and influencing
- Self-evaluations.

The results identified the strengths and drawbacks of each approach, drawing on the time, resources and effort required for delivery, the need for maintaining and updating materials, the effectiveness and impact of the methods, the audience targeted and how many people were reached, and the opportunities they provided to reach specific stakeholders and build relationships.

Overall, there were merits identified for all of the different ways we work with people, with each having a distinct purpose and audience.

Opportunities for good practice

We asked a series of questions focussed on which elements of the programme are most effective and have most impact, who we should work with, how we can make sure the policy and practice elements of our work are well-connected, and any other ideas to promote good practice. The main comments were on:

- Case studies
 - Case studies are impactful and useful for bringing principles to life, but not always easy to find
 - Opportunities to have more case studies to cover:
 - Public bodies
 - Diversification, balanced decision-making and transparency of ownership and decision-making
 - What happens when things go wrong / are not done well
 - Where communities challenge the boundaries of what is possible
 - Geographic mapping of case studies would be helpful
- Guidance and resources
 - Action-focussed documents are helpful

- Community benefits feels like an emerging topic of importance that brings several opportunities for us
 - All elements of the programme have their place, whether 1 to 1 approaches, one to many, or somewhere in between
 - Gap in resources on dealing with difficult issues and managing conflict
 - Opportunity to develop resources on crofting and small-scale land ownership
 - Need to work with public bodies on disposal of land
 - Difficult to measure impact of resources and case studies – how could we do this?
- Cross-team working
 - Opportunities in Governance workstream
 - Need for time and space for internal comms
 - Could build a good practice section in project plans and ensure policy work has route to implementation built in from the beginning
 - Could look at how to best draw out evidence for policy from good practice work
 - Re-introduce Good Practice and Policy team meetings
- Communications
 - Idea to create ‘pledge’ or accreditation scheme
 - Make more use of sector infrastructure to disseminate messages and resources
 - Collaboration with partners to share messages
 - Encourage Scottish Government to take more of a lead on LRRS
 - Improve triage for incoming contacts
 - Stronger Good Practice focus in inductions for all staff
 - Consider tailoring content by audience rather than topic.

Findings

Our review has shown that the Good Practice Programme has been effective in raising awareness of and promoting action on Land Rights and Responsibilities principles and that there is an ongoing need to promote and support voluntary good practice.

There are merits in all of the different ways we promote good practice, and that how we deliver our work is delivering positive impacts, raising awareness of land rights and responsibilities and encouraging actions that align with good practice. The different methods we use allow us to reach different audiences and to tailor our messaging to those we interact with. They are inter-dependent, and there are benefits to continuing with each strand of our work. However, we need to balance our ambition to drive change with limited resources.

It is important to make sure we prioritise our time well and target our limited resources to achieve the greatest impact. To help us to do this we will focus on:

- continue to utilise the full range of tested approaches and methods to deliver the Good Practice Programme, prioritising work that reaches more people and has the greatest influence on practice and cultureimproving access to and raising awareness of our existing resources, ensuring that we are making the most of our work to date
- updating our protocols, which provide the foundation of the programme
- strategic partnerships – working with others to deliver benefits as efficiently as we can, while still reaching a broad audience
- co-ordinated communication and collaboration to support proactive and voluntary good practice
- updating or adding to existing resources to make sure they are as useful as possible
- work related to community benefits and diversification of ownership and tenure, which build on the progress we have made with community engagement and transparency since the programme began.

The Good Practice team carries out a mix of proactive and responsive work and our review has shown us that there are benefits to our different approaches. We will plan our proactive work carefully, ensuring enough flexibility that we can still be responsive when required.

What we will continue doing:

Training

We will continue to run our programme of training programme and CPD for land agents. We will also continue to run our Leadership in Good Practice events, in partnership with stakeholders. We have had very positive feedback about these events, they enable us to build and strengthen relationships with people who can influence and champion good practice, and feedback shows that these events encourage action and change in practice.

We have found working in partnership with other organisations to be particularly effective, both in terms of time and resources and in reaching the right audiences, and we will continue to seek opportunities to do this.

Casework

We will continue to respond to cases and enquiries, while ensuring that our recording and monitoring of information draws out useful lessons for our wider work. Casework is a useful tool for learning about the lived experience of communities and individuals. It enables us to identify issues and gaps in support or guidance. We will make sure that our website and resources are well laid out and that people can find helpful information before needing to contact us, and we will look for more opportunities for proactive casework that enables us to make connections and better understand issues.

Proactive advice to landowners and land managers

We will continue to provide advice and guidance to landowners and land managers who wish to demonstrate good practice. Influencing practice in this way is helpful as it allows us to learn from what landowners are doing, can inform future guidance, and can lead to good practice case studies to share with others.

Webinar series (Land @ Lunch, Land Links)

We will continue to work with our Comms team to deliver regular series of webinars. These are particularly helpful for reaching new audiences and raising awareness of land rights and responsibilities. Outwith the regular programme, we will use webinars to introduce topics, discuss specific reports or guidance, and raise awareness of key issues.

What we will update:

Protocols and guidance

As the programme has progressed, we have reviewed and made updates to protocols and guidance as necessary, e.g. after the updated Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement was published in 2022.

We recognise that the protocols provide the basis for all of our other Good Practice Work so we will prioritise reviewing and revising the content thoroughly, ensuring it is accurate and up to date. As we do this, we will take into account the evolving context around the Land Reform Bill.

Web pages

To ensure that people can easily find the information they need on our web pages, we will review how it is organised and the structure of the pages. The evaluation of our Land @ Lunch webinar series indicated that people find it helpful to have the resources for each topic collated in a single place. As our work has developed, we have added additional pages to the website, and we will revise these to make it as straightforward as possible for users to navigate to the information they are looking for.

Our Comms team will be taking forward a new website next financial year and we will feed into this to ensure that the good practice pages work well for all our audiences.

Case studies

We have a wide range of case studies, covering key topics with rural and urban examples from across Scotland. To make the most of these we will create a map of the case studies that we can embed on our website. This will enable people to identify case studies from specific geographic areas and to filter by topics to identify the examples most relevant to them.

Our case studies have been collated into a spreadsheet with information about locations, topics and audiences and staff will be able to use it to identify appropriate examples when creating workshops and presentations. It has also allowed us to analyse where we have gaps, and we will use this information to inform the creation of future case studies.

Community Wealth Building (CWB)

We know that the public sector plays an important role in influencing good practice in land ownership and use. Our Guidance on Community Wealth Building and Land is targeted at public bodies, and we worked with a cohort of bodies to help them evaluate their practice in relation to CWB and land. As part of this we developed a workbook that can be used to create an action plan. We will refine this workbook and publish it on our website, encouraging anchor organisations to identify good practice to share with others and actions that they can take to improve their practice.

Self-evaluations

Our work on self-evaluations will continue, with the template for carrying them out published on our website. This will enable landowners and land managers to carry out self-evaluations independently if they wish to do so. We will carry on providing support and guidance to those who need it and will consider further targeted cohorts in future, if there is sufficient demand for these.

We will develop a workbook, in line with our CWB workbook, to supplement the information we already have, and will create a dedicated web page for self-evaluations to encourage landowners to independently review their practice and take actions that align with the LRRS principles.

How we will communicate:

Communications Plan

We will put a structured communications plan in place for the Good Practice Programme, ensuring we are making the most of existing resources and highlighting new information and opportunities.

As part of this, we will consider opportunities to expand our range of content, particularly for use on social media and in our presentations and workshops.

Case study templates

We will work with Comms on a set of templates for case studies. We will consider the rationale for creating new case studies to ensure they are filling gaps, whether for topic,

geography, or audience. New case studies will aim to inspire and educate those who read them, while encouraging action.

Blogs

We will work with our Comms team to plan a regular programme of Good Practice blogs across each year. These will focus on topics related to our protocols and the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, and highlight actions that people can take, questions that they should consider, and inspiring case studies.

How we will collaborate:

Strategic Partnerships

To have the maximum impact, we will seek strategic partnerships, working with key stakeholders to deliver good practice work and encourage culture change. Stakeholders play an important role in influencing land ownership and management, and we will prioritise maintaining the strong relationships we already have with key organisations and building relationships with others who can support good practice across different sectors.

Landowner commitment

We have had a number of discussions over the years about the creation of a voluntary commitment to good practice in land ownership and management. We will explore the practicality of this approach and intend to take forward internal discussions before talking to stakeholders about this.

Champions / ambassadors

Our Good Practice Programme Evaluation recommended that we with key stakeholders to encourage them to take a more active and prominent role in promoting good practice. We will explore the option to take this forward by creating a network of champions or ambassadors who can promote good practice within their own organisations. This can build on our learning and connections from our Leadership in Good Practice events. This could offer an opportunity to work with public sector organisations on governance and accountability in relation to land.

Cross-team working

It is important to recognise that there are good practice elements in all of our work across the Commission, not just the work carried out by the Good Practice Team. Work is ongoing to review and refine the Commission's project management processes. We will make sure that consideration of connections to and impacts on good practice are built in at the project planning stage and continue to be considered through workstreams as they progress. We will also review opportunities to draw further learning from good practice work to feed into our policy work.

Monitoring and evaluation processes

We will revise our monitoring and evaluation processes across different aspects of our work, aligning with our organisational project management processes. This will include

following up after working on cases or giving advice to ensure we are capturing the impact of our work and identifying any changes that have taken place.

Recording enquiries and casework

Our Records Management Project Group is working on reviewing our current records management plan and processes and our data management arrangements, including retention policy and naming conventions, to ensure compliance across the whole organisation. This is important for how we manage and record casework, and how we analyse it and draw lessons from it.

Next Steps

Our review so far has highlighted that much of our work is inter-dependent. The protocols and guidance are foundational to the work we do, setting out the basis for our training, advice, and self-evaluations, and strong relationships with stakeholders are key to making progress.

We have identified that is most efficient for us to work through others, as we have been doing with our self-evaluations and training and workshops. Stakeholders have memberships and networks that are important for changing culture and practice, and when we collaborate with them, they can find the best audiences for our work and bring them together for important discussions and action-planning.

The following actions are our next steps in taking the refresh of the Good Practice Programme forward:

Further engagement

- With Good Practice Advisory Group
- With staff to develop principles for prioritisation and map stakeholders
- Internal engagement on project planning processes and comms

Updating resources

- Create schedule for protocol updates
- Confirm priority list for case studies (to fill existing gaps)
- Begin mapping of case studies
- Review resources and processes in line with Record Management Project Group

Communications

- Work with Comms to create Good Practice communications plan
- Create Good Practice blog schedule for 2025
- Develop case study templates



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Commissioners' Meeting 3rd December 2024 Inverness

PAPER 4

2025/26 Planning

Purpose:	To consider key priorities to inform business planning for 2025/26
Previous board papers:	
Action required:	For discussion

The Commission will publish an updated Programme of Work in April 2025 as well as its annual business plan for the financial year 2025/26.

Detailed business planning work will take place through January and February, with a draft business plan and Programme of Work for consideration at the February board meeting. To provide a firm foundation for this, the board is asked to consider the strategic priorities for 2025/26.

Our grant-in-aid for 2025/26 will shortly be known when the Scottish budget is published. Preparatory scenario and resource planning means we will be able to bring more detailed information on budget implications and priorities for consideration in February.

In the meantime, the table below sets out proposed priorities to provide a basis for business planning. These are informed by the key themes emerging from the board and staff workshop held on 1st October, together with other board discussions to date on future priorities.

Proposed Priorities for 25/26

Workstream	Priorities	Key considerations
Land Reform Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue to advise on the bill, subsequent steps, and the implications for potential new functions for the Commission;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Subject to bill timetable & possible amendments; need to be ready to advise
LRRS Good Practice Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue to deliver the Good Practice Programme, providing advice, guidance and training;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Demand & opportunity greater than available resource so

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh the Good Practice resources to remain relevant and improve accessibility; 	programme will focus on core priorities
Route map to a land reformed Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage publicly on what a land reformed Scotland looks like including publishing a series of discussion papers and convening discussion events; Identify and advise on key building blocks for further reform including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community ownership, rights to buy and the Scottish Land Fund; The leadership role of public land ownership; Improving opportunities for small-scale land holdings; Land information and data; The role of taxation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs a strong communications & collaborative focus Drawing on our existing research and analysis, aiming for a synthesis output Qtr 4 25/26 Provides framing for our policy advice on key topics Includes continued joint working with Scottish Government on tax
Research Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh our approach to research, seeking to draw on collaborations and external funding partnerships; Publish annual reports on rural land market insights and data; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited SLC finance resource means research will need external financing
Tenant Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide tenant farming advice guidance and responsive casework; Convene TFAF and continue to advise on the tenant farming provisions in the Land Reform Bill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New TFC will be building relationships and further developing the approach
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve our website accessibility and the availability of information to inform public debate; Focus on engaging people in a vision and route map for a land reformed Scotland; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited resourcing will mean a tight comms focus on key priorities
Corporate Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound organisational governance, financial and project management Organisational development and refresh of organisational values Medium-term planning to support any changes in the Commission's role resulting from the Land Reform Bill; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to clarity in new functions and bill timetable

Recommendation: the Board is asked to agree the priorities in order to inform business planning.

Hamish Trench