



Scottish Land Commission
Coimisean Fearainn na h-Alba

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-29

PEOPLE, PLACE AND OPPORTUNITY



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Foreword

The Scottish Land Commission's strategic plan for the next three years is firmly rooted in the demand for continued progress with the process of Land Reform, articulated in the new legislation and in the views and actions of communities across Scotland.

Last year the Scottish Parliament passed the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025, and its measures now need to be implemented in a timely and effective way. The Scottish Land Commission will play a full part in that, particularly through the new functions of the Land and Communities Commissioner which include oversight of the mandatory community engagement obligation for large landholdings. We will also advise on the wider implementation of the Act in relation to large landholdings and the tenant farming measures. The Act adds to the remit of the Commission and we intend to fulfil those new demands upon us effectively.

Beyond this, we know from our public engagement through the ScotLand Futures initiative which we undertook in 2025 that there remains an ambition for delivery of land reform to go further, and to do so by means of a co-ordinated set of reforms that helps build clarity and confidence.

Our strategic plan for 2026-29 sets out the focus and priorities that the Commission brings to those tasks. As well as helping to implement the Act we will focus on opening up new opportunities for people to own, lease or use land; improving land data to enable policy reforms; and improving transparency, engagement and participation.

From early next year, as a result of the new legislation the Commission will be delivering three different statutory Commissioner functions. Our small and effective board will consist of the Land Commissioners, a Tenant Farming Commissioner and a Land and Communities Commissioner. While each of these roles brings specific focus and functions, the Commissioners will also work together as a collegiate board to deliver on the priorities we have agreed with the Scottish Government in this plan.

The many ways in which land in Scotland is owned and used present both opportunities and challenges for our communities, our economy and our nation's prospects. Over the next period we will continue to work in an open, collaborative and ambitious way to make the most of Scotland's land for all our people and all our places.



Michael Russell
Chair
Cathraiche



Hamish Trench
Chief Executive
Ceannard



**“The ways in which
land in Scotland is
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Our organisation

Who we are and what we do



Our remit

The Commission comprises the Land Commissioners, the Tenant Farming Commissioner and the Land and Communities Commissioner.* Their functions are set out in law.

The functions of the Land Commissioners are, on any matter relating to land in Scotland:

- to review the impact and effectiveness of any law or policy,
- to recommend changes to any law or policy,
- to gather evidence,
- to carry out research,
- to prepare reports,
- to provide information and guidance

The 'matters relating to land' in scope of the Land Commissioners' functions are widely defined in legislation as including ownership and other rights in land, management and use of land and the land use strategy.

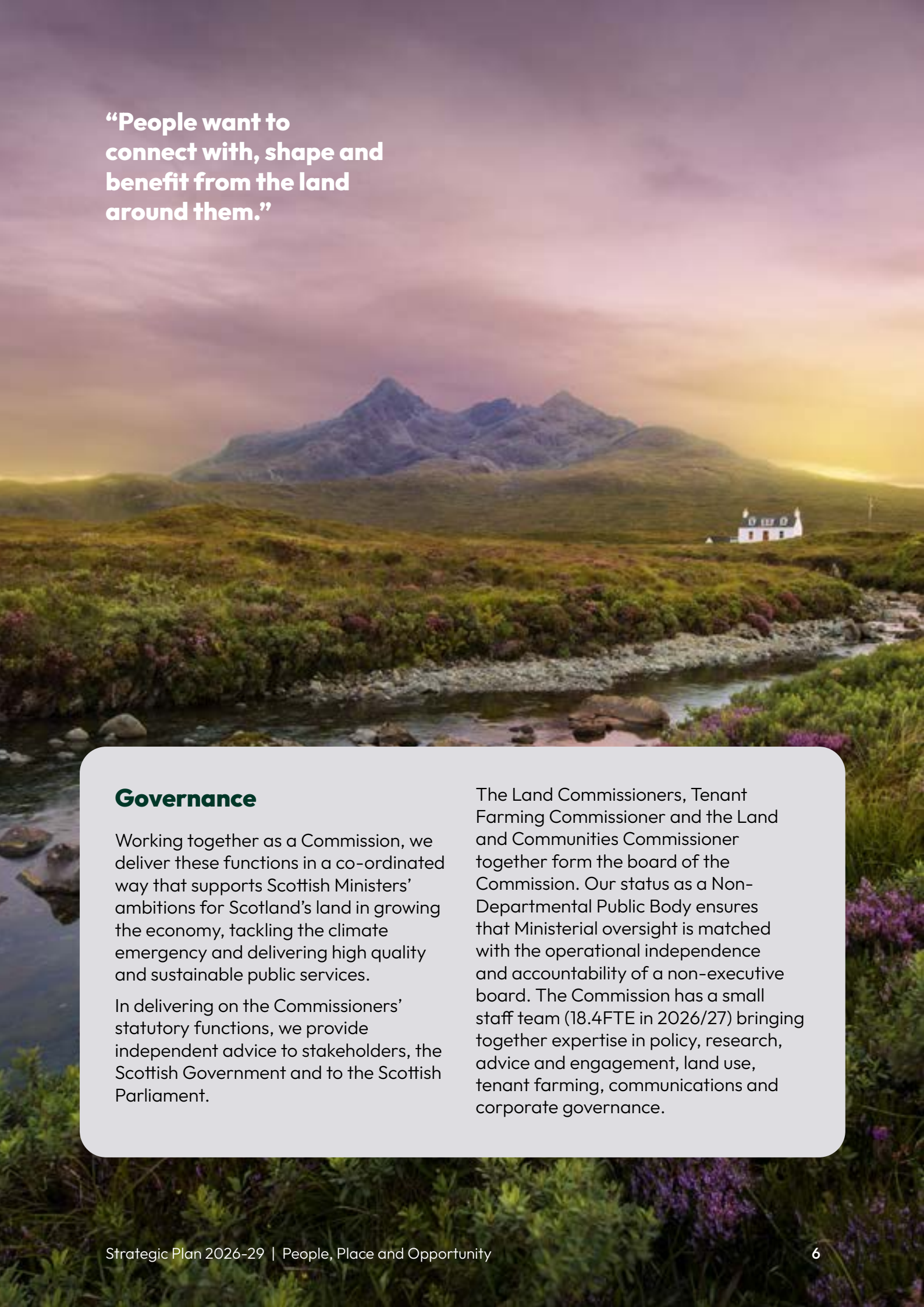
The Land Reform Act 2025 adds further specific matters as follows:

- the effects of natural capital markets in relation to other matters relating to land in Scotland;
- the relationship between scale and concentration of landholdings and local economic development;
- the desirability of achieving a more diverse pattern of landownership comprising more landowners and different types of landowners;
- measures to prevent depopulation and support the repopulation of land and the sustainability of communities.

The Tenant Farming Commissioner has a series of functions set out in legislation to support good relations between landlords and tenants of agricultural holdings and small landholdings. These include the preparation and promotion of Codes of Practice and inquiring into alleged breaches of the Codes of Practice.

The Land and Communities Commissioner is a new role with functions created by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 that relate to large landholdings. It is a public appointment and will be a member of the board of the Commission once appointed, which we expect to be in spring 2027. The functions are to enforce the community engagement obligation for large landholdings, including Land Management Plans, and to advise Ministers on lotting decisions in the transfer test for large landholdings.

* References in the plan to the Land and Communities Commissioner and their functions are relevant from their appointment and the relevant legislative measures coming into force.



“People want to connect with, shape and benefit from the land around them.”

Governance

Working together as a Commission, we deliver these functions in a co-ordinated way that supports Scottish Ministers’ ambitions for Scotland’s land in growing the economy, tackling the climate emergency and delivering high quality and sustainable public services.

In delivering on the Commissioners’ statutory functions, we provide independent advice to stakeholders, the Scottish Government and to the Scottish Parliament.

The Land Commissioners, Tenant Farming Commissioner and the Land and Communities Commissioner together form the board of the Commission. Our status as a Non-Departmental Public Body ensures that Ministerial oversight is matched with the operational independence and accountability of a non-executive board. The Commission has a small staff team (18.4FTE in 2026/27) bringing together expertise in policy, research, advice and engagement, land use, tenant farming, communications and corporate governance.

The context

Land is central to Scotland's economy, identity and communities. The ways it is owned and used shape everyday life, from housing, infrastructure and community development to food, nature, climate action and greenspace. Across rural and urban Scotland, people want to connect with, shape and benefit from the land around them.

The Commission was established in 2017 and over the nine years since then has published a wide range of recommendations for reforms to policy and law, backed by a significant body of research and evidence. We have established an advice programme, providing advice and guidance on good practice to communities, landowners, land managers and professional advisers. This programme supports people to put into practice Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, helping deliver better relationships and outcomes on the ground.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 brings significant additional responsibilities to the Commission, particularly in the new functions of a Land and Communities Commissioner and extending the scope of the Tenant Farming Commissioner. This strategic plan will be a period of change as the new Commissioner is appointed and as the Commission begins delivery of the new functions and supports government in timely implementation of the 2025 Act.

Land reform has been articulated as a consistent priority in the Scottish Parliament since devolution in 1999, evident in a series of Acts and policy priorities.

Over 2025/26 the Commission engaged widely on the next steps for Scotland's land reform journey through our ScotLand Futures initiative. Two strong messages emerged, an appetite for further change and a desire for more clarity and confidence in how reforms are delivered in a joined-up programme.

We are committed to contributing to Scottish Government's delivery of public service reform. As a small public body, we will continue to seek efficiency and innovation in our own cost-effective operating model which supports the delivery of three statutory Commissioner functions and we will advise on wider land systems reforms that can unlock more public value and delivery.

In developing our strategic plan, we have drawn on public engagement over the last year, held a focused stakeholder workshop and carried out a stakeholder perceptions audit which provided insight and reflections from a wide range of perspectives to inform our approach and priorities.

In setting out our strategy for 2026-29 we are:

- building on the experience of the Commission and the body of our published work to date;
- preparing to implement the new functions set out in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 and support Scottish Government in its wider implementation of the Act;
- focused on shaping and supporting deliverable reforms to the ways land is owned and used.



**“The ownership
and use of land
supports thriving
people and places for
all Scotland.”**

Our strategy

Our vision

The ownership and use of land supports thriving people and places for all Scotland



Our outcomes

We work towards these outcomes that will help create a land system that is fair, fit for our time and carries public confidence:



OUTCOME 1

New land opportunities – there are opportunities for more individuals, communities and businesses to own, lease or use land through a range of tenures;

OUTCOME 2

Rebalancing the power of land ownership – the concentration of land ownership and its impacts are reducing;

OUTCOME 3

Shaping land use change locally – local communities are confident that they can shape and benefit from significant land decisions affecting their places.

Our priorities

Our priorities in 2026-29 for the Commission are:

- Supporting timely and effective implementation of the 2025 Act
- Opening up new land opportunities
- Improving land data
- Transparency, engagement and participation

This section sets out, for each priority, what the intended impact is, how we will go about it and what we aim to do by 2029.





Supporting timely and effective implementation of the 2025 Act

Implementing the new functions of the Land and Communities Commissioner and the amended functions of the Land Commissioners and Tenant Farming Commissioner.

The intended impact is to realise the positive benefits intended by Parliament in the measures addressing large landholdings, bringing small landholdings into scope of the Tenant Farming Commissioner and the amendments to the role of Land Commissioners including the obligation to review the impact of Part 1 of the Act within five years of implementation.

We will do this through developing the operational approach for the Land and Communities Commissioner functions in relation to the community engagement obligation and transfer test; supporting the resource necessary for Tenant Farming Commissioner functions and advising Scottish Government on the wider implementation of the Act.

By 2029 we aim to have:



- ✓ Established the role and operational approach of the Land and Communities Commissioner;
- ✓ Been proactive in supporting small landholdings through the functions of the Tenant Farming Commissioner;
- ✓ Established baseline information and the approach to inform a future review by Land Commissioners of the impact of Part 1 of the Act as required by statute;
- ✓ Supported capacity and readiness among communities, landowners and managers to make the most of the new measures;
- ✓ Advised on and begun to use the secondary legislation to implement the community engagement obligation, prior notification and transfer test.



Opening up new land opportunities

Supporting ways for individuals and communities to own, lease or use land, particularly small-scale landholdings.

The intended impact is to enable rural repopulation and housing, diversify ownership, support access into farming, support regeneration and community development.

We will do this through advice on policy and practice, supporting ways to deliver opportunities through public, private and community land.

As well as legislative mechanisms, we will support non-legislative ways to deliver through a mix of governance and tenure models including ownership, co-operative models, leases and other agreements.

By 2029 we aim to have:



- ✓ Advised on an effective model lease for environmental purposes and be monitoring its introduction;
- ✓ Published guidance on the creation of new small landholdings;
- ✓ Worked with partners to create new opportunities on the ground for access to small-scale landholdings in varied forms of tenure;
- ✓ Informed Scottish Government's review of crofting legislation;
- ✓ Convened sector leadership to increase opportunities in the tenant farming sector;
- ✓ Contributed to community wealth building delivery by supporting anchor organisations in public, private and third sectors owning land to create new opportunities.



Improving land data

Creating a more joined-up land data system, improving data quality, collaboration and accessibility for data on land ownership, value and use.

The intended impact is improved transparency and more accessible data for use in practice and to enable delivery of public policy reforms.

It will develop foundational data systems that unlock options to deliver reforms, including tax and fiscal reforms.

It will also support the Commission's work on the future of the tenant farming sector, the new Land and Communities Commissioner functions and future review of the impact of the 2025 Act.

We will do this through convening collaboration of key public bodies, providing research, evidence and analysis to shape practical steps that work towards a more joined-up land information system.

By 2029 we aim to have:



- ✓ Convened key public bodies and be implementing practical short-term improvements to data collation and availability;
- ✓ Developed an achievable route map for deliverable steps towards the goal of a more integrated land information system;
- ✓ Improved data to support development of the tenant farming sector;
- ✓ Secured continued annual rural land market reporting, further building the trend data and providing annual insight;
- ✓ Advised on steps to put in place the data and systems necessary to underpin potential reforms in taxing land;
- ✓ Collated data and baseline information needed to inform review of the impact of land reform measures, including Part 1 of the 2025 Act.





Transparency, engagement and participation

Supporting effective transparency in land ownership, engagement and participation in land use decisions through advice and good practice, the statutory community engagement obligation and Land Management Plans, and transparent reporting.

The intended impact is improved accountability in land ownership, participation in decisions and improved public confidence in the land system. This work also seeks to strengthen regional and local decision-making, supporting local democracy and governance.

We will do this through direct advice and engagement to shape practice on the ground, feeding experience into policy change, using the new statutory measures of the 2025 Act and supporting good practice across all landowning sectors.

By 2029 we aim to have:



- ✓ Informed and be using effective regulations for the community engagement obligation on large landholdings;
- ✓ Be providing advice on the community engagement obligation and Land Management Plans for large landholdings and implementing the functions of the Land and Communities Commissioner;
- ✓ Informed Scottish Government's review of the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement and be using the refreshed statement;
- ✓ Supported the capacity of communities, landowners and managers to engage effectively, through both statutory and good practice approaches;
- ✓ Expanded the impact of our good practice programme, providing a casework service while also supporting proactively those that are able to take a leadership role within the land sectors;
- ✓ Increased our visible presence supporting practice in the south of Scotland, in collaboration with other organisations;
- ✓ Shared examples of good practice to further inspire and support improvement.



Focus of Commissioners

The Commissioners together form the board of the Commission and deliver collectively through:



Evidence, analysis and recommendations to inform changes in law and policy



Advice and support to shape practice on the ground



Convening leadership and engagement to shape and deliver change

Working collectively, the key focus for the Commissioners will be as follows.

Land Commissioners

Responsible for the statutory functions set out in the 2016 Act and amended in the 2025 Act

Over the next three years, the Land Commissioners will focus on:

Reforms to law and policy – advising on practical options to deliver change

- Advising on implementation of the 2025 Act, to maximise the effectiveness of the new measures regulating large landholdings;
- Advising on practical ways to open up new land opportunities for individuals and communities, particularly small-scale landholdings;
- Convening and advising on improvements to the land data system;
- Advising on potential reforms including tax, the role of public land ownership and ways to address the power imbalance of concentrated land ownership.

Advice and good practice – supporting delivery on the ground

- Advice and guidance bringing to life Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement and feeding experience back into policy review;
- Case studies and sharing learning to shape positive culture change;
- Strengthening our presence in the south of Scotland.

Tenant Farming Commissioner

Responsible for the statutory functions set out in the 2016 Act and amended in the 2025 Act

Over the next three years, the Tenant Farming Commissioner will focus on:

Supporting good relations between landlords and tenants of agricultural holdings and small landholdings

- Engaging with small landholding stakeholders, developing a suite of relevant Codes of Practice and Guidance and providing casework advice, delivering on the extension of the remit to include small landholdings established by the Land Reform Act 2025 and supporting establishment of new small landholdings;
- Developing new tenant farming Codes of Practice as required by the Land Reform Act 2025 and refreshing and updating the existing Codes of Practice, informed by experience and stakeholder engagement;
- Providing casework advice and guidance to landlords and tenants;
- Fulfilling statutory functions to appoint a valuer in defined circumstances;
- Supporting a mediatory approach to dispute resolution.

Convening sector leadership

- Convening the Tenant Farming Advisory Forum with refreshed terms of reference and work programme to support sector leadership;
- Advising on the implementation of legislation and proposed changes to legislation or policy with a view to strengthening the tenanted sector.

Land and Communities Commissioner

Responsible for the new statutory functions set out in the 2025 Act

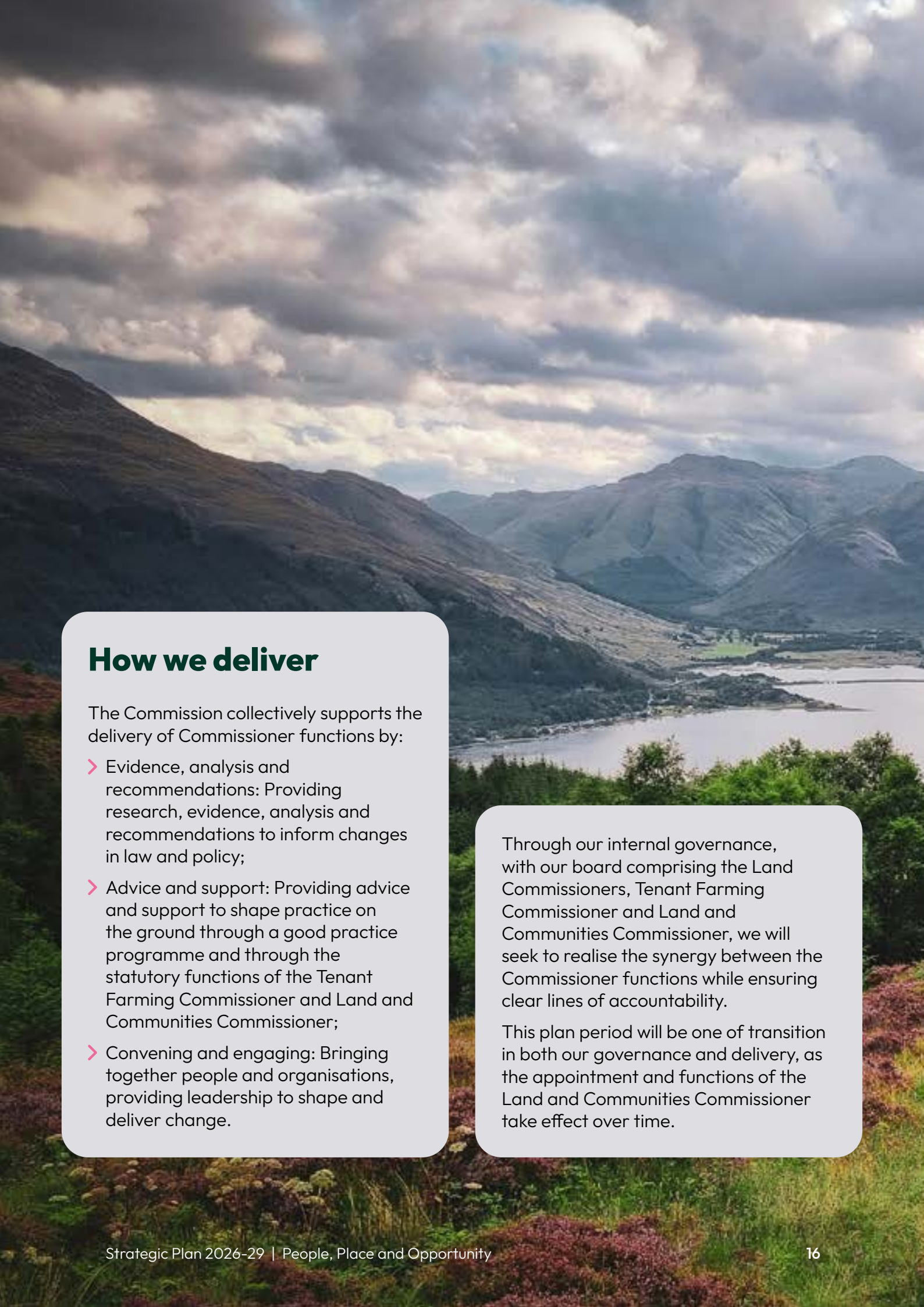
Over the next three years, the Commission and Land and Communities Commissioner, when appointed, will focus on:

Appointment and governance

- Supporting the public appointments process for the new Commissioner and putting in place the internal governance and staffing provision that will support the new Commissioner.

Operational approach

- Advising Scottish Government on the secondary legislation that relates to the functions of the Land and Communities Commissioner;
- Developing clear and transparent delivery arrangements ahead of the new Commissioner's functions commencing;
- Identifying and putting in place the data and monitoring requirements to support effective delivery of the Commissioner's functions;
- Early and regular stakeholder engagement on the approach to delivering the new functions.



How we deliver

The Commission collectively supports the delivery of Commissioner functions by:

- Evidence, analysis and recommendations: Providing research, evidence, analysis and recommendations to inform changes in law and policy;
- Advice and support: Providing advice and support to shape practice on the ground through a good practice programme and through the statutory functions of the Tenant Farming Commissioner and Land and Communities Commissioner;
- Convening and engaging: Bringing together people and organisations, providing leadership to shape and deliver change.

Through our internal governance, with our board comprising the Land Commissioners, Tenant Farming Commissioner and Land and Communities Commissioner, we will seek to realise the synergy between the Commissioner functions while ensuring clear lines of accountability.

This plan period will be one of transition in both our governance and delivery, as the appointment and functions of the Land and Communities Commissioner take effect over time.

A high performing organisation

The Commission is a small public body and we place high value on being open, accessible and public facing. We will continue to be outward-looking, building strong networks to inform our work, increase our impact and contribute to public service reform. We seek to retain and evolve a highly motivated team of people, bringing a mix of skills, experience and perspective to the Commission.

The next three years will be a period of organisational change, as a new Land and Communities Commissioner joins the board, as we develop our staffing and systems to support the new statutory functions, and as we begin to deliver on these. This needs a proactive approach to managing change and developing the organisation.

Our priorities include:

- Integrating the new Land and Communities Commissioner post into the Commission, with refreshed internal governance arrangements to support effective collaboration across Commissioner functions;
- Developing the operation of the board to reflect the additional Land and Communities Commissioner and the proposed reduction in the number of Land Commissioners;
- Building our staff team, skills and capacity to support delivery of the new Land and Communities Commissioner functions in a way that builds on the Commission's existing strengths;
- Designing and implementing the systems changes and improvements that are needed to support effective delivery of the new functions;
- Supporting a positive organisational culture embracing change, feedback and improvement;
- Maintaining trusted relationships with stakeholders and communicating effectively on changes in functions.

Financial strategy

Our work is financed through grant-in-aid from the Scottish Government. In passing the Land Reform Act, the Scottish Government recognised that the Commission will need an increase in funding to deliver on the additional statutory responsibilities, as well as an expectation that we will reprioritise within our existing resource. The financial memorandum accompanying the bill estimated the additional costs falling on the Commission when measures are fully operational to be £470k pa in respect of Part 1 (large landholdings) and £169k pa in respect of Part 2 (tenant farming).

We are reprioritising within our existing staff resource to begin the work needed to implement the new functions, but the Commission will need to draw on additional resource as above for them to become fully operational. The timing of this depends on Ministers' implementation timetable for the Act. The resource need will include both the staff support and corporate systems necessary to implement the new Land and Communities Commissioner functions effectively.

We recognise the resource challenge in public spending over the coming three years and the public service reform imperative. Our financial strategy seeks to ensure we are able to adapt and prioritise spend to best effect, seeking collaborative or shared service options when effective. The nature of our role means our primary costs are staff costs, though the additional statutory functions also have systems cost implications.

We manage our medium-term financial planning by:

- a) maintaining tight control on fixed costs and seeking savings and/or opportunities for collaborative spend where possible;
- b) reviewing our deployment of staff and Commissioner posts as vacancies arise;
- c) making use of shared services and co-location we have reduced our office costs through co-location and will continue to make use of shared service opportunities where possible.

In 2026/27 the Scottish Government has allocated £1.81M to the Scottish Land Commission as grant-in-aid. Our allocation of resource will develop over the three-year period as the new Land and Communities Commissioner functions are implemented.

Performance monitoring



Over the period of the strategic plan, our annual reports will track our progress using the following key performance indicators.

Delivery key performance indicators

Topic	Indicator	Data source
Implementing the 2025 Land Reform Act	Baseline in place for 2025 Act monitoring;	To be identified
New land opportunities created	Reported use of model lease, new small landholdings and crofts	SLC survey of agents; Scottish Government data on crofts and small landholdings;
Improving land data	Increased availability and access to up-to-date public data sets	Mapping of data gaps; Cross-sector working agreements in place
Transparency, engagement and participation	Pre-engagement with holdings in scope for community engagement obligation	Quarterly monitoring
Casework	Number of recorded cases for Good Practice, TFC and LCC	Quarterly casework monitoring

People key performance indicators

Staff wellbeing	Increase in proportion of staff who feel their wellbeing is supported by the Commission, with no reading below 60%	Staff survey
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Corporate key performance indicators

Finance	Annual budget within 2% underspend	Annual accounts
Governance	% internal audit recommendations completed	Annual audit follow-up report
Freedom of Information	% of FOI requests responded to within the statutory 20 working day timescale	Quarterly monitoring

Communications key performance indicators

Communications	Increase in subscribers to Commission newsletters	Quarterly monitoring
Social media	Engagement rate by platform	Quarterly monitoring
Stakeholder impact	% of event attendees reporting improved understanding as a result of working with the Commission	Quarterly monitoring
Policy influence	Number of Commission reports/ recommendations cited by Scottish Government, academic journals and key stakeholders	Quarterly monitoring via media monitoring and review of official reports and Committee papers

Ma tha sibh ag iarraidh lethbhreac den sgrìobhainn seo sa Ghàidhlig, cuiribh post-d gu **commsteam@landcommission.gov.scot** no cuiribh fòn gu **01463 423 300**.

If you would like to request a copy of this document in Gaelic, please email **commsteam@landcommission.gov.scot** or call **01463 423 300**.



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