



Land Reform Review Group

NEWS RELEASE

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INTERIM REPORT PUBLISHED BY LAND REFORM REVIEW GROUP

LRRG sets out further areas of study for Phase Two of review

Today (20 May 2013), the Land Reform Review Group (LRRG) has published its interim report findings and plans for future research.

The LRRG is re-examining the 2003 Land Reform (Scotland) Act, and how communities in Scotland could benefit from further land reform. In Phase Two of its research, the LRRG will consider what steps can be taken to better encourage more communities in both rural and urban Scotland to have a stake in the ownership, management and use of land.

As Phase One of the group's review draws to a close, the LRRG has made a number of recommendations in its report, which it will take forward during the second phase of its work. These include:

- Enabling more people in urban and rural Scotland to have a stake in the ownership, governance, management and use of land, which will lead to a greater diversity of land ownership and ownership types, in Scotland -
 - Looking at parts of rural Scotland that have not embraced community ownership as enthusiastically as its heartland in the North West;
 - Looking at urban Scotland, which was not covered by the Land Reform Act, and;
 - Looking at forms of engagement that give people a stake in the land without going as far as ownership

- Assist with the acquisition of land by communities -

- Looking at how to simplify Part Two of the Act, including the urban element
 - Explore whether it would be beneficial to set up a specific land agency to give guidance on all aspects of land acquisition and to negotiate transfers of land and assets. They will be considering what forms of compulsion or sanctions would be appropriate in extreme cases
 - Explore what safeguards can be put in place to support communities through the process of taking responsibility for new developments that they have taken on
- Generate, support, promote and deliver new relationships -
 - Explore whether minimum engagement standards, between landowners and communities, might be established
 - Whether an accreditation system for active engagement, might be considered, with possible sanctions where such engagement is evidently (and repeatedly) not forthcoming
 - Look at practical case studies of positive engagement, including where there is a will to provide land, but the planning restrictions complicate the process
 - As practical case studies of positive engagement, affordable housing and space for community growing are prominent outcomes that communities have, as well as demand for small business units. There are indications that many owners are keen to provide land for these activities, but on occasion, there are planning restrictions that complicate the position
 - A practical area where both urban and rural Scotland both have an interest, is in the development of community energy. There is a concern that the benefits of community energy could be better distributed around the country to enable more communities to become strong, resilient, and independent, so the LRRG is keen to keep this on it's agenda

By focussing on these subjects, the LRRG hope its recommendations will generate, support and promote new relationships between the land, people, economy and the environment in Scotland.

The interim report represents where the LRRG has got to so far, based on evidence received through visits, meetings and a wide call for evidence, which received over 475 submissions.

The report outlines the next steps and themes which are likely to be the focus of investigation in Phase Two of the review before the LRRG present their findings to Ministers in 2014.

LRRG Chairperson, Dr Alison Elliot, said: “We have been given a wide ranging remit by the Scottish Government to look at how positive outcomes for people and communities throughout Scotland can be achieved through land reform.

“Our research so far has clearly outlined the potential for fresh approaches to land reform and the importance of engaging the whole community in this. I’m looking forward to exploring these issues in more detail in the second phase so that our land can continue to contribute to the success of Scotland for future generations.”

Announced by the First Minister in July last year, the LRRG has been set up to help shape the next phase of land reform in Scotland. The Group is chaired by Dr Alison Elliot and includes Ian Cooke, who succeeded Professor Jim Hunter in April 2013. Dr Sarah Skerratt, who co-authored the report with Alison Elliot, and was also vice chair for the group, has announced her resignation from the LRRG due to pressures of other work although she will continue to advise the Scottish Government on land reform and other rural issues. An announcement on her replacement will be provided shortly.

Dr Alison Elliot said “Sarah brought a wide understanding of rural Scotland, rigorous thinking and a wise perspective to the review. She will be extremely difficult to replace.”

Sarah Skerratt said, “I would like to thank the Scottish Government for affording me the enormous privilege of being vice-chair of the Land Reform Review Group. Due to my promotion to scientific and strategic lead of a 30-strong research group at SRUC, I have made the extremely difficult decision to step down from the LRRG, in order to be able to concentrate full-time on the delivery of our on-going research. I wish Alison, and the wider LRRG, all the very best in continuing the important work of Land Review through its next phases”

Minister for Environment and Climate Change Paul Wheelhouse said: “I would like to thank Dr Elliot and all the members of the Land Reform Review Group for their hard work in producing this interim report. In particular, I want to say how much I have valued Sarah’s contribution to the work of the review, and her wealth of knowledge has undoubtedly been a tremendous asset leading up to this stage. I offer Sarah my sincere thanks, and my

personal congratulations on her promotion, and wish her very well for the future. I know she will keep a keen eye on how the LRRG's work develops as well as the wider rural policy issues in her new post.

"The LRRG has made good progress over the past few months as they have travelled across Scotland meeting a wide range of people with an interest in land reform and in an effort to understand how Scottish Government can utilise Scotland's land and assets to empower Scotland's communities – both rural and urban. The interest in the review has been great with the Group receiving over 475 responses to their initial consultation.

"I now very much look forward to the next stage as the LRRG move into the second phase of it's work looking at radical options for community land ownership before the final report in 2014."

Ends

For more information or interviews, please contact Jenny Stewart at Stripe Communications on 0131 561 8686 or landreform@stripecommunications.com

Notes to Editors

The interim report can be found here: www.landreformreview.org.

More detailed information about the Land Reform Group – including the Group's Remit and Call for Evidence as well as brief biographies of Alison Elliot, Sarah Skerratt and Ian Cooke – is available on the Group's website at www.landreformreview.org.