

Response to the Land Reform Review Group: Call for Evidence

Consultation Response 2013

The Carnegie United Kingdom (UK) Trust is pleased to respond to the Land Reform Review group's call for evidence.

The Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913.

We have chosen to respond by way of six key recommendations which reflect our experience and where we have relevant evidence. These recommendations demonstrate our vision for change, and if delivered as a package, we believe would help to remove barriers to change and facilitate progress.

Further information on our work is available on our website www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk.

Land Reform and Wellbeing

The Carnegie UK Trust is strongly supportive of Land Reform in Scotland.

Community ownership of land or other local assets can have a transformative effect in communities. Half a million acres of land are now in community ownership in Scotland resulting in repopulation; new homes; new businesses; and a new sense of confidence, energy and opportunity.

Our own research has shown that it can be a powerful catalyst for a wide range of social, environmental and economic improvements in local communities with a positive impact on individual and community wellbeing. See for example:

- **[Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities](#)**: which highlights how community-led projects from Belfast to Glasgow have tackled issues such as vandalism, graffiti and litter and have delivered wide reaching positive community and individual benefits;

- **[Rural Broadband – Reframing the Debate](#)**: which examines how rural communities can take the lead in the deployment of superfast broadband in their area, and includes case studies of community led broadband projects;
- **[Appreciating Assets](#)**: which includes a number of case studies of local success stories from communities in Canada, Australia, and Scotland that have achieved social regeneration through the community ownership of land and tangible assets;
- **[The Effectiveness of Rural Housing Burdens](#)**: which highlights the importance of access to land for a range of affordable housing options for the sustainability of fragile rural communities.

Our experience has shown that the benefits of community ownership and/or management can be:

- financial: leveraging in finance from other sectors and other fund raising activities.
- economic: contributing to the regeneration of the local economy which will improve the value of local land and buildings.
- social: opportunities for participation, pride in the local environment and individual and community wellbeing.

In recognition of these positive impacts the Trust believes that Land Reform should be driven by a core purpose: to *improve wellbeing* in Scottish communities.

There is great potential for more rural and urban communities across Scotland to access the many benefits that owning and controlling local assets, including land, can offer.

Improving wellbeing through Land Reform – six recommendations

We have identified a package of six key components that we believe need to be in place in order to deliver improved community and individual wellbeing for Scottish communities through ownership and/or management of land/ local assets. While each component below is important in its own right the full benefits of each measure can only be derived if all are in place.

1. **Community Right to Buy for rural and urban Communities:** we believe all communities, regardless of rurality, should have the right to buy or manage land and/or assets in their local area. We note that there is crossover between the remit of the Land Reform Review Group and the development of the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill (see our response [here](#)) and we urge the adoption of a joined up approach. We caution against creating two markedly different structures for ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ communities as this risks inadvertently creating gaps in coverage, generating confusion and may hinder community ability to access such support. Ultimately this could lead to a duplication of effort in both the public and third sector.
2. **Financial assistance:** without the financial means to purchase land or assets Land Reform is simply the *right* to buy land or assets and not the *means*. A dedicated Land Fund helps provide equal access for all communities to financial capital to purchase land. The Trust strongly recommends that the recently renewed Scottish Land Fund should be continued in the future.
3. **Bridging the gap between unequal communities:** ‘Tangible’ community assets such as land or buildings can only be sustained if communities also have the appropriate ‘intangible’ or people assets (skills, knowledge and access to networks) in their community. Communities across Scotland are not equal and there may be a need to invest more heavily in some communities than others, to bring them to a level where they are able to contemplate management or ownership. Without this investment there is a risk that the gap between affluent and deprived communities in Scotland is exacerbated by Land Reform as more affluent, asset rich communities derive greater benefits from community ownership leaving less capable communities further and further behind. Community development support should be made available to all rural and urban communities at each stage of the journey toward ownership through vehicles such as rural development networks. Recent Trust research on [Rural Development Networks](#) found that there is currently a gap in support for communities taking on ownership of community assets and communities may benefit from professional mentoring and facilitation to increase their confidence and capacity in this area.
4. **Access to information:** information on what assets are in a community is an essential pre-requisite to empowering communities to take on community ownership. In addition, to make informed decisions about taking on community ownership and/or management communities need access to good information

on the on-going costs of running the asset/ managing the land including any back office functions (such as payroll). It may be appropriate to place a duty on public bodies to publish their asset registers

5. Flexible Models of Ownership and Supporting Legislation: Every community is different and land reform should be flexible and responsive to these local differences. Communities come to the decision that they want to take ownership of assets or land for a range of reasons and have a variety of experience, knowledge and local capacities. No one size of ownership fits all. Communities should be able to access a range of ownership/ management options from outright ownership to cooperative ownership or long lease so that they can achieve the benefits of community ownership or control in the way that makes best sense for them. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 should be structured in favour of communities and allow communities to pursue the ownership/

management option that is right for them. It is also worth noting that community ownership should not be something that communities are forced into through a retraction of the state but come from a genuine desire to do things differently.

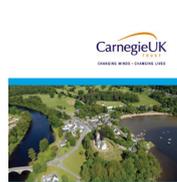
6. Ongoing Review: A regular programme of review and development should be identified so that outcomes are improved over time and the legislation and package of supporting measures remain relevant and appropriate over time. A series of indicators including indicators of social, economic and environmental wellbeing within communities with control over local assets should be identified in order to track progress over time. We note that nine years have passed between the introduction of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and this current review group being established and suggest that a three year review programme is established in the future.

APPENDIX 1: THE TRUST’S EXPERIENCE OF LAND REFORM AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

The Trust has long recognised the important role that the places and communities that we live in have on our individual and collective wellbeing. We have a history of working on issues to do with land reform and community ownership. Of particular note is our long standing association with Community Land Scotland and partnership work with the Community Land Trust Network in England. Click on the images below for information and the relevant reports on our website.



Pride in Place



Rural Housing Burdens



Rural Broadband



Appreciating Assets



Future Directions on Rural Development



From the Low Tide of the Sea to the Highest Mountain Tops



Response to Scottish Government Consultation on proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913 and we are delighted to be celebrating our centenary in 2013. Please see our website for further information on our centenary plans.

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