

Foreword to the 2011 Edition

On 5 May 2011, the Scottish National Party won an unprecedented victory in the Scottish Parliamentary election. This historic win could lead to a resolution of many of the issues discussed in this book. That remains to be seen. However, with an overall majority in the Parliament, the Scottish Government can now look forward to a five-year term of office with the freedom to undertake quite radical reform of Scotland's land and property regime if it chooses to do so.

The First Minister, Alex Salmond, has already indicated that he wishes to see the administration of the Crown property rights that comprise the Crown Estate in Scotland brought under the control of the Scottish Parliament. The SNP manifesto also contains commitments to review the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and to re-establish the Scottish Land Fund. Many of the topics discussed in this book, such as succession law, land registration, common good land and land value taxation could all now be tackled and deliver lasting public and private benefits – if the political will exists.

The issues explored in this book are of long standing and remain to be resolved. Since the book was first published in October 2010, however, some of the detailed discussion surrounding these issues has moved on. To keep up with developments in the various debates, please go to www.andywightman.com/poor, where you will find quarterly updates. Many of the references can also be found there.

It is also worth saying something about the cover photograph, which is an allegory for the argument presented in this book. The image is of Ardoch farmhouse in Glen Gairn, Aberdeenshire.* Ardoch was a clachan of some 14 houses with a shop and a school. It was also the home of my wife's great-great-great grandfather's brother, Father Lachlan McIntosh, the parish priest in Glen Gairn for 64 years until his death in 1845, aged 93. The reason that this Highland community was abandoned is directly attributable to the fact that Aberdeenshire was excluded from the provisions of the 1886 Crofting Act and therefore the residents of Ardoch were never more than a year away from eviction. The reason that the last remaining house lies empty today on a large privately owned estate is eloquent testimony to our continuing failure to challenge landed power.

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* Further images of Ardoch Farmhouse can be seen at:
www.jamesdyasdavidson.com