



## Lochhead meets new group board members

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Following the [radical shake-up of land reform](#) announced by the Scottish Government in July - Rural Affairs Secretary Richard Lochhead visited a successful community buy out project yesterday at the Old Bank in Neilston, East Renfrewshire.

The Old Bank site was purchased by the local community under right to buy legislation and has been operating as a shared community space since 2007, with plans also in place to create a community windfarm.

At the Old Bank Mr Lochhead met with the new board members of the Land Reform Review Group – Chair Alison Elliot and Vice Chairs Prof James Hunter and Dr Sarah Skerratt – which has been established to oversee a wide-ranging review of land reform.

Commenting on the importance of the radical review of land reform, Mr Lochhead said:

"Land reform is a critically important policy that has an impact in communities right across Scotland. That's why we are reviewing how land reform is delivered in both urban and rural parts of the country, so we can ensure that local communities benefit.

"Projects like the Old Bank in Neilston – which was the first community buy out of a commercial property under the right to buy legislation – show what can be achieved when local communities unite together. I want more Scottish communities take advantage of the opportunities presented by land reform and the current review will seek to make that happen."

Review Group Chair Ms Elliot said:

"We've got a big task ahead of us and we relish the chance to get to grips with it. But it's not just going to be hard work; it's going to be a privilege to hear from people across the country who have direct experience of how land use and ownership have an impact on their lives.

"These are questions that are important for all of us. If we care about justice and progress for everyone in our country, we need to address the systems and practices that hinder that flourishing. Land reform can release the energy and potential that there is in the land and its people so as to serve better the needs of today and tomorrow. Let's get on with it!"

### **LAND REFORM REVIEW GROUP REMIT:**

The Scottish Government is committed to generating innovative and radical proposals on land reform that will contribute to the success of Scotland for future generations.

The relationship between the land and the people of Scotland is fundamental to the wellbeing, economic success, environmental sustainability and social justice of the country. The structure of land ownership is a defining factor in that relationship: it can facilitate and promote development, but it can also hinder it. In recent years, various approaches to land reform, not least the expansion of community ownership, have contributed positively to a more successful Scotland by assisting in the reduction of barriers to sustainable development, by strengthening communities and by giving them a greater stake in their future. The various strands of land reform that exist in Scotland provide a firm foundation for further developments.

The Government has therefore established a Land Reform Review Group.

The Group will identify how land reform will:

- Enable more people in rural and urban 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;

- Assist with the acquisition and management of land (and also land assets) by communities, to make stronger, more resilient, and independent communities which have an even greater stake in their development;
- Generate, support, promote, and deliver new relationships between land, people, economy and environment in Scotland;

In making these inquiries, the Group will bear in mind:

- the sustainability of its proposals for reform, including their economic impact;
- the importance of good stewardship and governance of land;
- the relationship between urban and rural concerns and opportunities;
- the relationship between local and national interests.

The Group will:

- seek representations from, and consult with, organisations (private, public and voluntary sector) and individuals with an involvement or interest in land ownership, farming, crofting, forestry, the natural heritage, social and affordable housing, planning, economic and community development, and with others as appropriate;
- draw on the advice of the Advisers appointed to it;
- make its own independent assessment of this advice and of the varying (and possibly conflicting) views put to it.

The Group will make:

- Interim Reports to Ministers on such improvements as the Group considers can readily and speedily be made to existing legislative and other means of bringing about land reform;
- a draft Final Report to Ministers by December 2013.

It is expected by the Government that the Group's Final Report will include:

- recommendations as to how, by legislative and other means, further land reform can be promoted and secured;
- an indicative analysis of the economic, social and environmental impact and sustainability of its proposals
- indication of how the impact of the recommendations on land reform might be measured, monitored and otherwise assessed.