

Submission by Paul Cochrane
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Bus Ticket History

Historically, Scotland's patterns of land ownership has evolved through feudalism and patronage as evidenced by the continued existence of the House of Lords and an honours system that rewards actions that benefit the landed and titled.

It is all too evident that speculation and restrictions on the release of land to our people has driven land prices up to a level where many of our young can neither afford a decent house and live or have to club together and live on the margins to pay massive rents or mortgages inflated because of the limited availability of land!

I would contend that the continued existence of phenomena such as feudal duties, title conditions and restricted access to areas of natural beauty demonstrate that we continue to be steered by a medieval inheritance on how we use land.

Monarchy

Land reform must also take into account the hold that such historical bodies such as the Crown Estate has on areas of land and shore. Recently we were meant to be pleased that the Crown Estate collected, deducted then returned some money garnered from Scottish resources! Our Monarchy is able to block legislation if it alters their hereditary rights, land or income!

"The guidance states that the Queen's consent is likely to be needed for laws affecting hereditary revenues, personal property or personal interests of the Crown, the Duchy of Lancaster or the Duchy of Cornwall. Consent is also needed if it affects the Duchy of Cornwall. These guidelines effectively mean the Queen and Charles both have power over laws affecting their sources of private income.

The Queen uses revenues from the Duchy of Lancaster's 19,000 hectares of land and 10 castles to pay for the upkeep of her private homes at Sandringham and Balmoral, while the prince earns £18m-a-year from the Duchy of Cornwall."

Accessed January 2013: Booth, R

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/jan/15/ministers-exploited-royal-veto-legislation>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/jan/14/secret-papers-royals-veto-bills>

The use of shell charitable trusts to avoid inheritance tax and land taxes as utilised by Elizabeth Windsor should be made illegal immediately.

Big Business, Trumpery and Land Justice

I also note that our land registration process is haphazard and liable to deliberate misinterpretation with the benefit of the rich knowing that expensive legal action not being probable for the poor. This was recently shown in the 'You've Been Trumped' film that showed Mr Trump moving fences and building beyond his remit with no recourse.

Land Taxation

It is now crucial that we move to a Land Value Tax to maximise land use and wealth generation in a most efficient form. Agricultural land should be included as a matter of course. The fact that the State, Estates and Absentee Landlords own nearly 70% of our forests is a disgrace. I would argue that all tax breaks and grant support should end,

forcing owners to use it or lose it instead of depending on millions in development grants. The fact that all of these bodies are unaccountable in the local sense shows a political inertia that shames us all.

Common Land/Holdings

An audit and publication of these areas should happen as a matter of urgency. They should then be handed over to Community Councils.

Land Use

I concur fully with Andy Wightman's view on hunting rights on page 18 of his submission.
http://www.andywightman.com/docs/andywightman_lrrg_20130113.pdf

I would go further. How can we rationalise fishing rights? Do owners tag salmon? This should be in public ownership and stewardship.

Paul Cochrane