



[News Releases](#)

[Conference and Events](#)

[Publications and Reports](#)



New Research Confirms Economic Importance of Scottish Estates

Press Release 04N02

Date: 14 January 2004

[Click here to access summary of the report](#)

Estates in Scotland play a vital role in supporting rural communities and make an important contribution to the economy, according to new research published by SAC (Scottish Agricultural College), today (Wednesday).

The study of estates carried out by SAC researchers revealed the variety of activity undertaken by estates brings a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits to their local communities

The study, the first of its kind in assessing the role of estates in Scotland, revealed:-

- Economic contributions from typical estates to local communities ranged from £250,000 to more than £2 million
- Estates are significant local employers and large estates often the largest employer in the local area
- Most expenditure by estates goes to local businesses
- Estates also provide a large portfolio of affordable rural housing and rents are below market levels
- Estates are environmentally responsible and successful at conservation through integrated land management
- The Tenant farming system has benefits for both estate owners and tenants although both could profit from enhanced relationships
- Further diversification of land use would be beneficial to estates and communities

Graham Kerr, senior rural business adviser at SAC, said: "This is the first time we have been able to collate this kind of information and our findings reveal estates have a very important role to play in a modern Scotland.

"The research confirms beyond doubt the extent of the significant contribution of estates in social, economic and environmental terms. Estates obviously bring a range of benefits to communities and the challenge for them in the future is to sustain and improve this track record."

Sandy Lewis, chairman of the Scottish Estates Business Group, which commissioned the research, added: "It is extremely valuable to have independent and authoritative research of this nature. Many people have opinions about estates without being aware of the full picture. This research clearly shows the major contribution estates make to

rural Scotland and this is possible because the vast majority of estates are run as rural businesses. It is sustainable economic output that is the basis for securing long-term conservation and social benefits.”

“A well-run estate is part of the local community and has responsibilities to that community. It is in everyone’s interests that the positive value of these businesses is recognised and encouraged.”

“Of course, there is always room for improvement and operating in a modern business-like manner is one of the main challenges estates face. The more estates operate in this way, the more they will be accepted as part of the fabric of rural Scotland.”

The SAC report, called ‘ The Contribution and Socio-Economic Role of Scottish Estates’ was compiled using a sample derived from a list of three thousand land holdings and estates. Estates were categorised into three types; small, medium and large.

General Findings

Small and medium sized estates:

- Typically less than 5000 hectares in size and comprises less than 15 distinct farm units. Small parcels of woodland form part of the estate.
- The estate has interest in around 24 rural properties and provides direct employment for 5 –10 people.
- The estate owner and family have a direct, ‘ hands-on’ role in management of estate.
- Objectives of the estate include creating employment, providing farms for let, rented residential accommodation, public access to land and developing the estate.
- Commercial and recreational sporting activity is commonplace and creates a significant number of jobs.
- The estate has a small portfolio of cottages and houses for use by estate employees and for residential lets.
- Commercial property has been developed where resources allow and is used for a variety of purposes including fish farming, golf courses and industrial units.
- Access to commercial property on favourable terms has been used to help establish business start-ups.
- The estate owner is typically resident and a range of public good and community activities involving the estate can be found such as public access, parking and picnic sites.
- Community and charitable projects are also supported by the estate.

Large estates

- A large mixed rural estate typically covers in excess of 10,000 hectares and the portfolio of farms can exceed 50.
- The estate owns a significant area of forestry and has a substantial residential property portfolio that can exceed 150 premises along with commercial properties, mainly shops and workshops.
- The estate is likely to have significant commercial interests in local commerce and tourism and recreation businesses.
- The estate is likely to be one of the largest employers in the local community providing over 100 full and part-time jobs.
- The estate owner normally takes a non-executive management role and



delegates the day-to-day management of the estate to a professional team of land and property managers.

- The objectives of the estate include sustaining its long-term viability, enhancing benefits for employees, business partners, stakeholders and the community and safeguarding rural heritage.
- To meet these objectives the estates have moved progressively from traditional agriculture to business that capitalises on non-agricultural property and where possible diversifies into other ventures such as leisure and tourism.
- The agriculture on the estate is primarily let and the estate often promotes the use by tenants of government funded conservation and farm development grant schemes.
- The estate includes a significant area of commercial and amenity woodland and like all rural estates has substantial sporting activity that makes a significant economic contribution to the overall estate business.
- The majority of the estate's residential portfolio is let on assured tenancy arrangements but estate workers occupy a significant number of houses.
- In seeking to secure the future of the estate the management team is likely to have developed commercial activities over the last decade.
- The estate supports a considerable range of public good and community activities, including the building and maintenance of public way-marked paths and the provision of visitor attractions.

Notes to editors

The research for 'The Contribution and Socio-Economic Role of Scottish Estates' was undertaken to provide the Scottish Estates Business Group and the Scottish Landowners' Federation with independent and authoritative statistical evidence on the contribution of estates in Scotland. Previously, this type of information was only available from individual estates and had not been collated and analysed to provide a broader assessment.

Data for the study came from membership of the Scottish Estates Business Group and the Scottish Landowners' Federation.

News release issued jointly by SAC and SEBG (Scottish Estates Business Group)

Janette Elder, Corporate Information Officer, SAC.
t: 0131 535 4185, e: j.elder@ed.sac.ac.uk

