



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Minutes of the meeting of the Scottish Land Commissioners held on Tuesday 6th April 2021

Commissioners Present: Sally Reynolds, Lorne MacLeod, Megan MacInnes, David Adams (Land Commissioners), Bob McIntosh (Tenant Farming Commissioner)

In Attendance: Hamish Trench, Posy MacRae, Shona Glenn, Emma Cooper, Caron Munro, James MacKessack-Leitch (Scottish Land Commission)

Apologies: Andrew Thin (Chair)

Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest.

The meeting was chaired by Sally Reynolds in the absence of Andrew Thin.

The Commissioners expressed their thanks to Shona for arranging the Community Wealth Building discussion held before the Commissioners' Meeting.

1. Minutes of previous meeting 2nd March 2021

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate reflection of the discussion and all actions have been taken forward.

2. 2021/22 Business Plan and Budget

Hamish advised that he has taken comments from Commissioners into consideration following their discussion on the draft Annual Business Plan at their meeting in March. He noted that the priorities in this business plan are for the first year of the current three-year Programme of Work and Strategic Plan.

It was agreed that there is a need for flexibility in the business plan with the new Parliament coming in and the Commission needs to be willing to revisit the plan throughout the year to ensure work is in line with the priorities of the new Parliament.

Hamish highlighted that the Grant in Aid is £1.526m which is the same as 2020/21. He advised Commissioners that the fixed costs currently make up 72% of the budget. He advised that the Commission will seek to reduce accommodation costs over the coming two years, in tandem with an offer to staff for flexible home working to be made this year which may result in less office space being required and the Commission

may look at lower cost alternative accommodation over the next year. Commissioners were supportive of the suggestion to seek alternative lower cost accommodation in order to save on fixed costs budget. Hamish advised that with other Public Bodies making similar offers to staff he expects space may become available within office spaces in Inverness. Posy advised that she has started discussions with Scottish Government to reduce the floorspace that the Commission currently rents in Longman House.

Commissioners asked for further information on where the research budget is allocated within different workstreams. Hamish advised that the budget sheet sets out the split of the budget allocation against each workstream. Commissioners also questioned how the research budget compares to that of previous years. Hamish advised that the budget is similar to the 2020/21 budget but is lower than the Commission's early budgets which reflects the evolution of the Commission, in building up its staff team. Hamish advised the need for an effective balance between research spend and staff capacity in order to have impact.

Commissioners noted that the new project support post is intended to be a fixed term post and asked for assurance that it will be advertised clearly as such, and that the Commission retain the flexibility.

Commissioners questioned how the Commission identifies training needs in line with the staff training and development budget. Posy advised that this is done through the appraisal and monthly conversation process where staff and line managers discuss training or development needs in line with the business needs. She advised that the Commission is also planning to have a programme of training for staff in line with the organisational review in order to help create the desired culture of the organisation.

Hamish advised that the travel and subsistence costs remain low for 2021/22 as it is expected the majority of meetings will remain online for a significant part of the year.

It was suggested that the outputs for 1.4, 3.2 and 3.3 could articulate more clearly what is being delivered. Commissioners agreed the paper subject to consideration of minor amendments to these outputs and agreed Sally would sign off on their behalf once the changes were made.

Action 21040601	Hamish to consider revisions to the outputs and send final version to Sally for sign off.
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3. 2021/22 Communications Strategy

Posy advised the Commissioners that the strategy continues the main themes from the 2020 strategy with some of the activity being postponed to this year as a result of the pandemic. She advised that hosting online events has given the Commission an opportunity to reach a wider and more varied audience and share information across platforms.

She also advised that there will be a strong internal communications programme over the next year with the organisational review and changes to working.

It was suggested that there feels to have been a shift in awareness of the Land Commission over the past 12 months with others signposting people to our work although any confirmation of this will be picked up in the perceptions audit which will be carried out later this year. Some Commissioners expressed concern that the Commission needs to be seen more regularly as a leader in discussions and seek opportunities for staff and Commissioners to increase our profile. It was noted that staff are making specific efforts to join conversations and events regarding climate to ensure the voice of the Land Commission is heard.

Commissioners questioned the value the Commission gets from the media contract with Pagoda. Posy advised that the contract has delivered key connections with journalists and exclusives on areas of our work as well as finding opportunities to hook our publications and work into other areas of news to help gain traction. Posy also advised that the contract is coming to an end in the summer and will be retendered through PCS. It was noted that there will be an evaluation of this contract undertaken when it comes to an end in the summer.

Commissioners queried if and how we should connect land reform and climate action to our Conference to link to COP26. Posy advised that this is the intention, and a specific discussion on this will come back to the board.

It was suggested that the format of the Rural Housing Conference in 2020 with different events over a week which people could choose to join the ones relevant to them was successful could work well for the Commission's conference. Posy advised that she has held discussions with the organiser of this conference to get information on how it worked, and any lessons learned they had from their event. She advised that holding the conference online gives the freedom to be flexible with some live and pre-recorded content and hold it across platforms. It was agreed that the Commissioners will have a discussion on the conference plans at a future board meeting.

Commissioners noted that there is a lack of Gaelic communications in the Communications Plan. Posy advised that this information is set out in the Gaelic Language Plan, but she will cross reference the two to ensure this is picked up.

The Commissioners approved the Communications Strategy for 2021.

4. Cyber Update

Posy advised that there have been a small number of well publicised cyber attacks on public bodies recently and reminded the Commissioners that all staff and Commissioners have a responsibility for cyber security. She also reminded

Commissioners to use only Commission devices for accessing Commission systems such as emails and SharePoint.

Commissioners were advised that the Commission has recently submitted an application for Cyber Essential Plus certification. Posy also advised that the Commission is a member of the public body Cyber Security Leadership Group.

Lorne advised the Commissioners that the ARC has had a lot of discussion around Cyber Security, and he attended a training session with some members of the staff and IT which gave reassurances around the processes that the Commission has in place. It was highlighted that the Commission can't become complacent on this.

The Commissioners noted their thanks to Lorne and Posy for their work on this and noted the importance of keeping regular oversight of this.

5. Land and Human Rights Advisory Group remit

Sally advised that following feedback from the Staff Engagement Forum the Commissioners will not nominate a Commissioner to participate in the group at this meeting, pending the board's wider consideration of the role of Commissioners in specific groups. The board should, however, consider the substance of the paper presented on the terms of reference and operation of the proposed group.

James advised Commissioners that the intention for creating the advisory group is to bring together leading legal minds from both academia and practice to advise the Commission. The Commission has identified University of Strathclyde as a good partner to host the operation of the group.

Commissioners questioned the nature of the agreement between the Commission and Strathclyde University. James advised that the partnership agreement is non-exclusive and there will be members of the group from other institutions and organisations, and there is no financial commitment made to Strathclyde University.

Commissioners suggested that the Terms of Reference should go further in reflecting that Human Rights are highlighted throughout the entire 2016 Act and not solely in relation to the LRRS, specifically in terms of the progressive realisation of human rights through land reform.

The Commissioners were supportive of the paper and the topics included in the draft Terms of Reference. It was agreed that this discussion will be revisited at a later Commissioners' Meeting and there will be an opportunity for the Commissioners to have an informal discussion with representatives as the group considers key issues over the next year.

Action 21040602	Further discussion on the Land and Human Rights Advisory Group to be added to a future board meeting
Action 21040603	Informal discussion with the board and members of the group to be arranged when appropriate

6. Scottish Government Report on Public Attitudes to Land Reform

Hamish noted the benefits of this report and how it can help the Commission to shape communications for the year ahead in engaging with the public.

Commissioners discussed some key messages from the report, particularly the need to connect the work of the Commission to issues people identify with, and in turn, build understanding of the role of land reform.

7. Any Other Business

Land Fund

It was noted that the Scottish Land Fund are currently recruiting for a Chairperson and Board Members and suggested that the Commission may wish to consider how this dovetails with our work in this area. Hamish noted that the work the government asked the Commission to do has a very specific focus on options to complement the Land Fund with wider sources of finance.

Date of Next Meeting: 11th May 2021

**Scottish Land Commission
April 2021**