



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Strategic Plan

2023 – 2026



People

Power

Prosperity



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Foreword

Scotland's land is central to the country's ambitions for a just transition to net zero, economic prosperity and reducing inequalities. We are in a decade of change in which the Scottish Government has ambitious climate and nature targets for 2030 and a strategy for economic transformation. Meeting these ambitions requires bold thinking and changes in the ways that we own and use land in Scotland.

The Scottish Land Commission is here to provide leadership and fresh thinking, underpinned by sound research, analysis and advice. Our Strategic Plan for 2023-26 sets a focus for our work on people, power and prosperity:

- Enabling people to participate in and influence decisions about land
- Diversifying the power and control in land ownership and governance
- Using the value and benefits of land to create national economic prosperity.

As well as providing advice and evidence to inform policy, we have developed a growing role providing advice to landowners, managers, advisors and communities to support the practical implementation of Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities. We will continue to provide this advice that supports change on the ground, while we also look ahead to more strategic reforms to make more of Scotland's land.

We know people connect to Scotland's land in many powerful ways at an individual and national scale. We continue to put a strong emphasis on the Commission operating in an open and accessible way, engaging widely with people across urban and rural Scotland to shape reforms and culture.



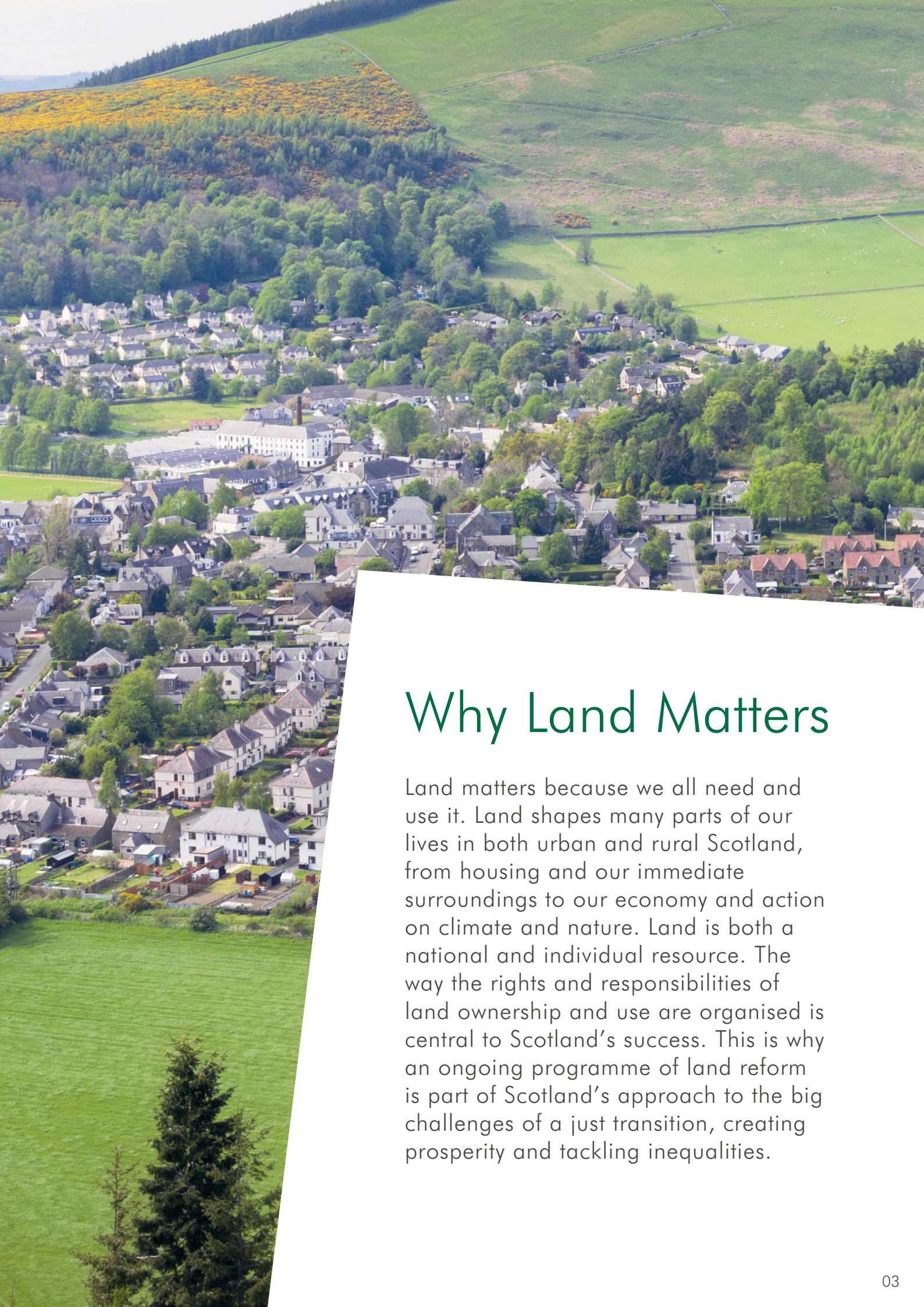
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Thin'.

Andrew Thin, Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hamish Trench'.

Hamish Trench, Chief Executive



Why Land Matters

Land matters because we all need and use it. Land shapes many parts of our lives in both urban and rural Scotland, from housing and our immediate surroundings to our economy and action on climate and nature. Land is both a national and individual resource. The way the rights and responsibilities of land ownership and use are organised is central to Scotland's success. This is why an ongoing programme of land reform is part of Scotland's approach to the big challenges of a just transition, creating prosperity and tackling inequalities.

Net zero, nature and a just transition



Land is central to Scotland's ambitious commitments on climate and nature action. Scotland is embarked on significant land use change to meet net zero. Making this a just transition will need a deliberate approach to reforming land ownership and shaping the land market so that land use change and investment strengthens local communities and economies. Land use change must be integral to wider efforts to create a modern successful wellbeing economy.

Economic prosperity and tackling inequality



Land is fundamental to Scotland's economy, it is one of our most basic resources and should underpin our prosperity. Over half of the UK's wealth is held in land and property, using this wealth productively is key to our shared prosperity and wellbeing. With rising inequalities, the way land is owned and the ways its value, responsibilities and benefit are distributed are key to shaping a fairer and more prosperous economy.

National and international contribution



Our work contributes to the delivery of the following Scottish Government National Performance Framework outcomes and UN Sustainable Development goals:

Scottish Government national performance framework outcomes



Economy



Environment



Communities



Human rights

United Nations sustainable development goals



Sustainable Cities & Communities



Reduced Inequalities



Climate Action



Life on Land



Decent Work & Economic Growth

A group of people is gathered outdoors in a park-like setting. In the background, there are dense green trees and a Scottish flag (Saltire) flying. In the foreground, several people are sitting at picnic tables, and one person is kneeling and taking a photo. The scene is bright and appears to be a public event or gathering.

Land Reform and the Scottish Land Commission

Land reform is about ensuring the ways we own and use land evolve to meet the changing needs and expectations of people in Scotland. It is about changes to the system of land rights, ownership and use and the way land markets work. It involves changing laws and policy as well as changing culture and practice and is relevant to people across urban and rural Scotland.

The Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, approved by Parliament, provides a strong framework to guide ongoing reform. This framework is underpinned by Scotland's ambition to realise economic, social and cultural rights through changes in the way land is owned and used. In short it is about unlocking opportunities for people across Scotland to make more of our land, now and for future generations.



...provide leadership and advice in reforming the ownership and use of land in Scotland.

Who we are and what we do

Our role is to provide leadership and advice in reforming the ownership and use of land in Scotland. We advise Scottish Government, Parliament and others on an ongoing programme of reforms to law and policy and we provide leadership for changes in culture and practice.

We are a non-departmental public body established in 2017 by Parliament in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016. Scottish Ministers appoint our board which comprises five Land Commissioners and one Tenant Farming Commissioner. The statutory functions of the Land Commissioners and the Tenant Farming Commissioner are set out in sections 22 and 24 of the 2016 Act. The Commissioners are supported by a small team of staff.

This is our third strategic plan. Over the last six years we have advised on significant proposals for reforms to policy and legislation as well as helping to lead substantial changes in culture and practice. This strategic plan builds on our work to date but refreshes our focus to keep pace with the changing context.



The Scottish Land Commissioners (left to right): Dr Sally Reynolds, Andrew Thin (Chair), Lorne MacLeod, Professor David Adams, Megan MacInnes and Dr Bob McIntosh (Tenant Farming Commissioner).



#MyLandScotland

MY LAND .SCOT

LAND IS OUR HERO FOR A SCOTLAND NET ZERO



The way we use and own land plays a key role in helping Scotland tackle climate change. So in the lead up to COP26, have a look at the land around you and see how you can get involved.

Visit myland.scot for more information and inspiring stories of how land is being used by communities across Scotland to fight climate change.

STREET LEVEL

FOREST LEVEL



FOREVER CHANGES

FOREVER CHANGES

2014 - 2017

2014 - 2017

CONTEMPORARY WOODLAND PHOTOGRAPHY & CLIMATE CHANGE

CONTEMPORARY WOODLAND PHOTOGRAPHY & CLIMATE CHANGE

There are many areas in which the Commission could focus our attention and as a small organisation we will need to prioritise those in which reforms will have the most impact. In this plan our focus is particularly on supporting a just transition to net zero, in a decade of change for Scotland's climate action, nature and economy.

Some of our work to date



Land ownership reforms

Research and analysis of scale and concentration of land ownership and significant reform proposals informing the Scottish Government’s consultation for the Land Reform Bill.

Review of international experience in interventions in land ownership to inform fresh thinking for Scotland.

Review of international experience of community and municipal ownership and recommendations to support the expansion of community land ownership and make it a normal option across Scotland.

Review of Common Good Land and options for reform to modernise the way Common Good empowers communities.



Housing land reforms

Recommendations for reforms in the housing land market to move towards a public interest led approach.

Review of lessons from Europe in land assembly to identify different approaches relevant to Scotland.

Research and advice on land value capture to enable development and infrastructure.

Research on the value of early engagement in planning.

Investigation into land banking to inform action to improve housing land availability.



Transforming vacant and derelict land

Convened national taskforce to transform Scotland’s approach to reusing vacant and derelict land leading to a programme of recommendations including the Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme.

Proposal for the introduction of Compulsory Sales Orders to address ownership barriers to re-use.

Guidance on assessing the full economic benefits of land reuse to ensure wider social and economic impacts are taken into account as well as financial.

Review of funding sources to support delivery of land reuse.



Rural land market and natural capital

Publication of rural land market insights and data to inform policy and build up trend data.

Recommendations for reforms to regulation, tax and fiscal support to ensure investment in natural capital supports a just transition.

Guidance on ensuring land use change and nature finance delivers economic and social benefits to local communities.



Taxation reforms

Research on historic and international experience in land value taxation to inform options for Scotland.

Research and recommendations on land taxation reforms to tax land value more effectively.



Land Rights and Responsibilities Good Practice Programme

Publication of eight Land Rights and Responsibilities Protocols to establish practical expectations of responsible practice delivering the LRRS principles on the ground.

Casework supporting good practice and addressing concerns raised by communities or land owners.

Guidance, advice and training programme to support proactive implementation of the LRRS.

Guidance for public land owners on delivering Community Wealth Building through land and property management.



Tenant Farming Commissioner

Publication of Codes of Practice supported by casework and extensive guidance and advice to support good relations.

Guidance on alternative dispute resolution and support for the use of mediation for landlords and tenants.

Review of the role of land agents with recommendations for change to support good relations.

Our Strategy: People, Power and Prosperity





Our Vision:

The ownership and use of land supports thriving people and places.

We work to achieve the following long-term outcomes for people, power and prosperity. Delivering on these will mean more people are empowered, misuse of power where it occurs is challenged and opportunities for prosperity are unlocked. The outcomes will help to achieve the progressive realisation of economic, social and cultural rights that drive Scotland's approach to land reform.



People

People participate in and influence decisions about how land is used.

The Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement sets the expectation that people should be involved in decisions about land, including through meaningful collaboration and community engagement. Over the last six years we have seen growing commitment to community engagement across land sectors and recognition of the benefits it brings to land owners and managers as well as communities. This is a strong basis on which to build and further democratise decision making.



Our focus

Will be on increasing community agency in decisions about land and land use change, and on transparent and accountable ways that enable people to participate in land use planning, choices and priorities, in both an urban and rural context.

With significant pace and scale of change in rural land use for climate and nature goals, it is essential for a just transition that people are able to be part of this change and shape it in a way that is meaningful and beneficial to their local communities and economies.

In Scotland's towns and cities people should feel agency in being able to participate in shaping change, development and improvement. People should be able to initiate change, overcome ownership barriers where this is a constraint and take action, for example to ensure derelict sites are brought into productive re-use.



Power

Power and control in land is shared more widely through diverse ownership and governance.

Our current pattern of land ownership and land rights concentrates power among relatively few people and organisations and can create localised monopolies. Reforms to the way land rights are organised that widen participation can drive economic, social and environmental innovation and opportunities as well as helping to reduce inequalities.

Our focus

Will be on ways to establish more diverse forms of ownership and governance. As well as ways to enable direct ownership by communities, individuals and others, we will focus on the ways different governance options can open up more opportunities for shared ownership and control.

In rural Scotland growing investment in natural capital creates an opportunity to establish mixed ownership and governance approaches in which communities have more agency. We will continue our work to support the implementation of the Scottish Government's Interim Principles for Responsible Investment in Natural Capital. In an urban context we will focus on ways to move from passive to active ownership, particularly where ownership is a constraint in unlocking opportunities.

We will continue to advise on statutory changes as required, for example to inform the Land Reform Bill. We will also focus on opportunities for leadership that do not require statutory change, including working with land owners in all sectors to put different governance approaches into practice.

The Tenant Farming Commissioner will support good relations between agricultural landlords and tenants, including addressing the implications for this relationship of changes in wider policy, for example on housing or natural capital, and advising on legislative changes as required.



Prosperity

The value and benefits of land are used fairly to create economic prosperity and wellbeing.

Scotland's land is increasingly valuable and in demand. Scotland has an opportunity to grow and use this value more strategically than in the past, to help underpin shared prosperity and wellbeing in the long term.



Our focus

Will be on the ways land value is changing, where value comes from and how it can be better used to underpin community wealth building and increase long-term national prosperity. We will look at how approaches to value are changing and how the public value in land is increased. This could include looking at the policy levers available, for example tax and fiscal policy, and international experience where relevant.

As well as being fundamental to increasing Scotland's prosperity and its economic policy, scrutinising land value and how is treated is relevant to delivering on several areas of policy priority in Scotland including housing delivery, access to land for agriculture and farm business development, acquisition of land by communities and infrastructure delivery.

These three high level outcomes are closely inter-connected and in our [Programme of Work](#) we will prioritise areas of work that deliver against all three.

How we deliver

Our role combines leadership with statutory functions to review and advise on changes to law and policy. We will strive to stimulate fresh thinking, work in an open and accessible way, to challenge and be challenged in ways that are underpinned by evidence and analysis.

We will deliver our strategy by doing the following:



Advising on reforms to law, policy and practice – we will provide evidence, analysis and advice to Scottish Ministers, Parliament and stakeholders.



Supporting practical implementation of Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement – we will provide advice and guidance to help people and organisations implement the LRRS principles including through delivery of our Good Practice Programme.



Promoting good relations between agricultural landlords and tenants through the functions of the Tenant Farming Commissioner – we will support delivery of the statutory functions of the Tenant Farming Commissioner, seeking synergies with our wider work programme.



Engaging people in why land matters and how they can be involved – we will involve the public and stakeholders in our work, build collaboration and use our convening role to bring different expertise and perspectives together with a shared focus.

Programme of Work

Our priorities for delivery are set out in our [Programme of Work](#) which is published and laid in Parliament. We expect to update our Programme of Work at least every 18 months so that we remain relevant and able to respond to an environment that is evolving quickly.

Our annual business plans set out how we use our resources in each financial year to deliver our Programme of Work and the Strategic Plan.

Maintaining a high performing organisation

Our values



Integrity

We work for and are accountable to the people of Scotland



Challenge

We challenge ourselves and others to lead change



Innovation

We develop ambitious and progressive thinking



Empowerment

We motivate ourselves and others to realise Scotland's ambitions through land reform

Organisational development

Our organisation has evolved significantly since our establishment six years ago and we will continue to be deliberate in shaping our culture and ways of working so that we attract and retain high quality staff, motivate an ambitious team and ensure sound governance.

Our priorities in the coming three years are:



Ensuring a successful transition through changes in board appointments in 2023 and 2024



Retaining a flexible and dynamic approach to draw on a mix of skills through staff and collaborative working within the available resources



Encouraging a culture of continuous improvement through a programme of organisational development

We put significant emphasis on being an open and accessible public-facing organisation and will continue to build strong networks that inform our work and increase its impact. We will continue to be outward-looking and seek to learn from others in Scotland and internationally.

Financial strategy

Our work is financed through grant-in-aid from the Scottish Government and we recognise the resource challenge in public spending over the coming three years.

Our financial strategy seeks to retain sufficient flexibility in spend to enable us to be agile and responsive, for example to allow us to secure necessary skills and expertise through both staff posts and commissioned work. We do this by:



Maintaining tight control on fixed costs and seeking savings and/or opportunities for collaborative spend where possible



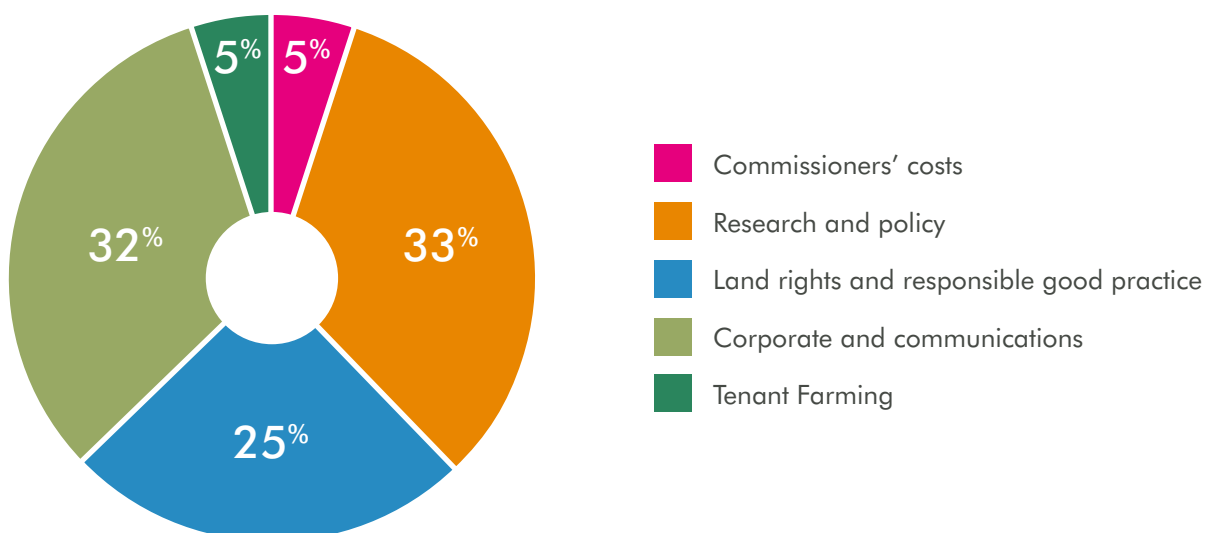
Reviewing our deployment of staff posts as vacancies arise



Shared service and co-location – We have recently reduced our office costs through co-location and will continue to make use of shared service opportunities where possible





In 2023/24 the Scottish Government has allocated £1.559M to the Scottish Land Commission as grant-in-aid. Our financial strategy for the period 2023-26 anticipates a similar level of annual funding based on the Commission's current role and functions. How we plan to spend our budget is outlined below with staff and project costs allocated to our key areas of work.

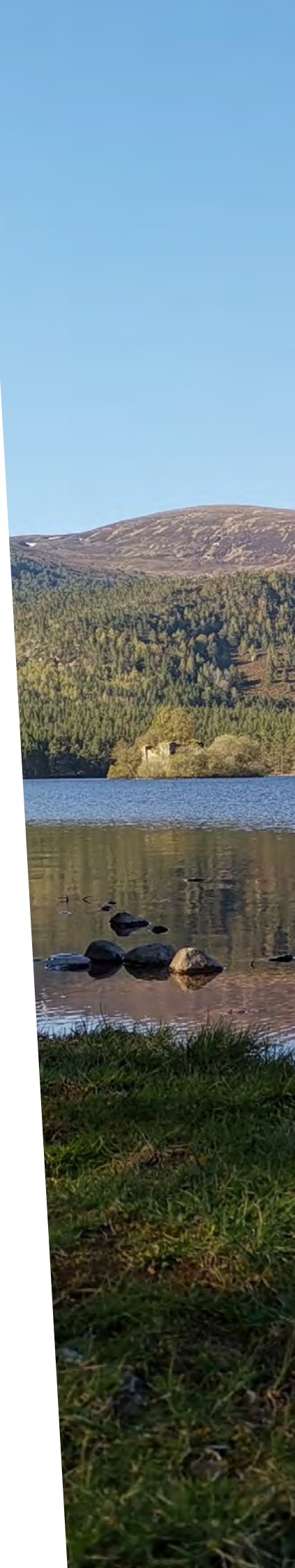
Allocation of budget 2023-26



Performance monitoring

Over the period of this Strategic Plan our annual reports and accounts will track our progress and provide 'at a glance' updates on our performance using the following key performance indicators:

| Performance area | Key performance indicator | Target 2026 |
|---|---|---|
|  Delivery | % of planned outputs in annual business plans delivered | 95% of planned outputs delivered |
|  Financial | % end of year outturn | Within 2% of total allocated budget |
|  Staff satisfaction | % staff satisfaction | ↑% Increase in % satisfaction |
|  Stakeholder relations | Feedback as reported through stakeholder perceptions audits | ↑ = Increase/maintain perceptions of the relevance and impact of the Commission |







SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

Contact us

Scottish Land Commission
An Lòchran
10 Inverness Campus
Inverness
IV2 5NA

@ info@landcommission.gov.scot

01463 423 300

www.landcommission.gov.scot

Find us on:

