

Land Reform Review Group Report

Initial reaction from Community Land Scotland

Friday 23rd May 2014: 12 noon

Reacting to the publication of the Land Reform Review Group's long awaited report, David Cameron, Chair of Community Land Scotland and a leading advocate of the need for more radical land reform measures said,

"I very much welcome the publication of the report. This is a very substantial and comprehensive piece of work and we want to take time to read it thoroughly and consider the detailed implications of what it raises.

"That said, it is already clear there are a number of very welcome ideas and recommendations which can be built into a comprehensive legislative agenda to bring about change to Scotland's anachronistic land ownership patterns. For too long a small elite have controlled too much of Scotland and it is long past time that more people and more communities had a direct stake in the ownership of land and what that offers in fashioning a better and more just future."

"In particular we welcome recognition of the need to provide for more compulsory interventions in land matters to secure more diversity in ownership and we welcome support for the principle of our idea of a Land Agency to assist secure more community ownership. The recommendations to control land holdings size, to have greater transparency of who owns what, and a stop to offshoring the ownership of Scottish land are all welcome, as are many other recommendations.

"As ever, the devil is in the detail and we need to better understand the reasoning for some of the particulars of the recommendations.

"The real challenge is now to the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament to take this agenda for change and make rapid progress in bringing that change about. It is only through the political will for change that it can actually happen, and that is what we are calling for today – taking early and radical action through the forthcoming Community Empowerment Bill to deliver necessary change; building from the agenda this report sets.

"We will be keen to work with the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament on the detail of how to turn the opportunity of this report into powerful legislative provisions."

ENDS

Community Land Scotland submitted strong evidence to the Land Reform Review Group calling for, inter alia:

- Extending the community right to buy to include circumstances where there was not a willing seller, to all communities
- The creation of a land agency to assist negotiated transfers of land to communities, with backstop powers of compulsory purchase being available
- Measures to ensure no one individual could acquire or hold large land holdings unless that was shown to be in the public interest
- Scottish Minister to be put under a duty to promote greater equity in the distribution of land ownership

Community Land Scotland will be publishing a fuller response to the report once it has had time to consider all the detail.

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