

21.04.14

POWERS NEEDED TO END SCOTTISH LAND GRABBING

A Scottish land owner plans to buy up thousands upon thousands of acres additional land to forge a vast uninterrupted wilderness and become Scotland's largest landowner (Press and Journal 21 April).

Following the revelations, Community Land Scotland the representative body of community landowners is calling for new powers to be available to test whether such acquisitions would be in the public interest and they have called on the private land ownership body Scottish Land and Estates to join their call for intervention powers over large estate acquisitions.

A spokesman for Community Land Scotland said,

"It seems absurd in the modern world that any one person, simply because of their vast personal wealth, can set out to buy up vast swathes of land and use it for their particular land use vision.

"Community Land Scotland has already floated the idea of new powers being available to intervene in the acquisition of large areas of land to protect the public interest.

"Scotland is already held back in becoming a fairer society by just 432 people owning half its private-owned land, and if this sort of planned land grabbing activity is allowed to continue unabated there will be even fewer owners owning even more land. We need more diversity in land ownership, more fairness and equity, not less.

"It is time for intervention powers to exist specifically over land acquisitions. It simply cannot be right that there is no means available to intervene when the public interest might be threatened, and it cannot be healthy in any society to have so few people in charge of so much land and buying even more to impose their vision of use on it.

"We hope that Scottish Land and Estates will join with us in calling for such intervention powers to be available, and that land use of the sort envisaged, where people once lived and could do again, is not an appropriate vision for Scotland's future. Surely even they will be able to see that the acquisitive land activities of small elite of wealthy individuals cannot be allowed to operate untrammelled in this apparently intended way. "

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Community Land Scotland has floated the idea of 'monopoly' or 'competition' commission type power being available over land in evidence on land reform to the Scottish Government and the UK Parliament.

Paradoxically, the owner in question, as a Danish citizen will be liable to pay tax in Denmark on his Scottish land holdings, and not in the UK where land taxes are generally not levied at present.

Community Land Scotland in its comments is explicitly **not** raising a question about the nationality of owners of land in Scotland, simply about the scale of land holdings that can be acquired by anyone of any nationality, including Scots.

The landowner referred to in the article revealing the intentions is Anders Holch Povlsen who currently owns a number of estates estimated at some 150,000 acres of land, including Glenfeshie Estate, near Kingussie. The reported interest in further acquisitions would take land holdings to greater than Scotland's existing largest landowner, the Duke of Buccleuch who owns an estimated 240,000 acres in Scotland.

Community Land Scotland has today (Monday 21st) published economic indicators data showing the economic growth achieved by community owners, out-performing past private ownership and helping grow population for the first time in generations in some of Scotland's most remote areas.