

Ailsa Raeburn
Chair, Community Land Scotland

Màiri McAllan MSP
Minister for Environment,
Biodiversity and Land Reform

Via Email

23rd August 2021

Dear Màiri,

Land Reform for a Sustainable Scotland

I'm writing in my capacity as Chair of Community Land Scotland to express our support for the Scottish Government's commitment to pursuing further land reform policy measures during the current Parliamentary session, as detailed in proposals contained in the SNP's manifesto for the 2021 Scottish Parliament election and in the draft Shared Policy Programme published by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party. As you know, land reform has commanded strong cross-party support since the inception of the Scottish Parliament, resulting in key legislation being passed in the form of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003; the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015; and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016. Parliament signalled its ongoing commitment to retaining land reform as "*a key policy priority to change the entrenched and inequitable pattern of land ownership in Scotland so that everyone can benefit from land and assets*" by passing a Scottish Government motion to that effect on March 21st, 2019.

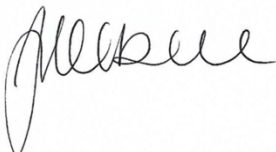
Community Land Scotland is particularly encouraged by the Scottish Government's commitment to introducing a new Land Reform Act to legislate for a public interest test for large scale and concentrated land ownership and related measures, as recommended by the Scottish Land Commission in its 2019 report on large-scale and concentrated land ownership in Scotland. We note that the Scottish Green Party and the Scottish Labour Party have also made manifesto proposals for a Land Reform Act covering public interest tests and related matters.

As you will be aware, Community Land Scotland has published '*Land Reform for a Sustainable Scotland*', a briefing paper for MSPs in which we welcome cross-party commitment for a new, wide-ranging Land Reform Act to be an early legislative priority for the Scottish Parliament. Such legislation will be entirely in keeping with recommendations from both the Scottish Land Commission and the Just Transition Commission to introduce a statutory public interest test relating to changes to landownership over particular thresholds.

A new Land Reform Act early in the current Parliamentary session will also resonate with the growing public support for accelerating the pace and scope of land reform. We know from recent Scottish Government research on attitudes to land reform that there is widespread public support for diversifying Scotland's concentrated pattern of land ownership. That support is further underscored by the recommendation from Scotland's Climate Assembly to help address the climate emergency "*through rapid and decisive movement on land ownership reform*" via specific policy measures. Community Land Scotland is particularly concerned that appropriate policy measures be introduced to ensure that financial and other benefits from carbon sequestration are shared equitably within communities rather than being accrued exclusively by the 'green lairds' increasingly dominating Scotland's largely unregulated land market.

Community Land Scotland is clear that further ambitious and progressive land reform offers a vital cross-cutting policy route towards a Scotland of sustainable, empowered rural and urban places that have experienced post-Covid pandemic recovery and a just transition to a 'net zero' carbon society. We therefore look forward to working with the Scottish Government and Parliament on new land reform and related legislation to ensure that Scotland's people benefit from Scotland's land in fair, inclusive and sustainable ways.

Yours sincerely,



Ailsa Raeburn, Chair, Community Land Scotland