

Community Landownership and Land Reform in the Scottish Parliament

The formation of the new Scottish Parliament comes at a crucial moment. Scotland is facing multiple and overlapping crises: economic stagnation, housing shortages and depopulation, climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, a cost-of-living emergency and deepening inequality. Across the Chamber there is recognition that doing more of the same will not deliver change at the speed or scale that we need.

Community Land Scotland want to brief you on one of the often overlooked but crucial policies for delivering economic, social and cultural regeneration in Scotland: land reform.

Land reform is not just the title on the face of a new bill. Land reform cuts across multiple key legislative and policy areas from housing to the natural environment, from city centres to crofting communities. It is essential to delivering inclusive economic growth, putting Scotland in the hands of its people and ensuring a more equitable and sustainable future.

The Scottish Parliament has a proud history of land reform, both from Labour and Liberal governments to the Scottish National Party. However, the journey towards reforming our antiquated and deeply unjust pattern of landownership, with just 408 landowners owning 50% of the rural land, is nowhere near complete.

Independent research last year by the Diffley Partnership has shown that 80% of Scots believe the Scottish Government should do more to encourage community ownership, 78% support requiring large landowners to meet climate and nature targets, 67% back a land tax for large estates and 59% agreed Scotland would benefit from more diverse land ownership.¹ Similarly the Scottish Land Commission's ScotLand Futures 2025 project found that 96% of respondents from the Scottish public said change was needed on land issues.²

Our new Parliament needs to move swiftly and ambitiously to match the public desire for change and the vision of earlier Scottish parliaments. This means providing the structural changes which can fundamentally rewire our economy to deliver benefits for people, the climate and nature. Changing who owns our land and assets and the responsibilities associated with that ownership is foundational to this.

Community landownership has developed in Scotland over the past 100 years.³ It is a uniquely Scottish model rooted in our history of land dispossession, local communalism and community self-reliance. Communities have responded to the pressing land issues in their local area for centuries by coming together, from the insecure land rights and forced migration of the 19th century to the climate crisis and depopulation of the 21st. In 2026 we now have a resilient, democratic and economically dynamic model of community ownership which is place-based yet replicable across the country.

¹ [Land Reform: What Scotland Wants](#)

² [ScotLand Futures - What We Heard](#)

³ [Linn an fhearainn: 100 Years of Community Ownership | A century of community land in Scotland](#)

Communities across Scotland have already demonstrated a clear track record of successful delivery on a range of projects, including warm and affordable homes, nature restoration, renewable energy, and sustainable economic regeneration. Let's build upon this legacy to give communities the autonomy and power they need to continue delivering transformational change.

Community Land Scotland urges you to strongly consider the following proposals to drive diverse economic innovation and sustainable development, delivering a net-zero wellbeing economy where wealth is retained and reinvested in Scotland's communities.

Our Proposals

1. An Enhanced Scottish Land Fund

The Scottish Land Fund (SLF) is a crucial and widely valued part of the Scottish Government's commitment to land reform. This investment in communities is key to inclusive national growth and local economic regeneration, delivering significant social and economic returns on public expenditure. The Scottish Government need to confirm and strengthen the SLF as a matter of urgency. This includes offering multi-year funding to maximize opportunities, ring-fenced funding for large acquisitions and provide realistic timescales for communities, as well as committing to the Fund being £25 million per year by the end of the Parliament to match the already established pipeline of community projects.⁴

2. Community Right to Buy Review and Reform

The Scottish Government have committed to updating and reforming CRtB. These world-leading rights were introduced in 2003, and then added to in 2016, to enable communities to purchase land from private owners to meet the public interest and pursue sustainable development. However, these rights are no longer fit for purpose in the context of 2026. Extensive consultation and review happened in the last Parliament, with a broad consensus about the need for common sense reform and simplification. The widely agreed changes to a vital piece of land reform legislation need to be addressed urgently in this new Parliament and cannot wait for inclusion in later legislation. Discrete and precise legislation could be produced quickly and with widespread support publicly and in the Chamber.

3. Compulsory Purchase and Sales Orders (CPO/CSO) Reform

There has been a longstanding Scottish Government commitment to reforming CPO powers and introducing CSO powers. These vital land reform mechanisms ensure that land or buildings not being used in the public interest or contributing to blight and dereliction can be brought back into productive use, through either public, community or alternative private ownership. These powers were consulted on in the last Parliament, and the new Government have the information needed to move swiftly to reform and introduce these powers early in this Parliament. There would be widespread public and parliamentary support for these long overdue changes to be dealt with quickly through precise legislation in the first year of Parliament.

⁴ [Scottish Land Fund – Community Land Scotland](#)

4. Implementation of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025

This piece of legislation from last year needs to move swiftly to implementation so that the benefits of Land Management Plans, Prior Notification and the Transfer Test are felt by communities as quickly as possible. It would be a significant missed opportunity if eligible land transfers and poor examples of landownership over the next year are not addressed due to slow-paced implementation. This requires adequate human and financial resourcing of both Scottish Government and Scottish Land Commission teams to do this work promptly and effectively, in collaboration with sector stakeholders such as Community Land Scotland.

5. A National Land Information System

Scotland has some of the poorest landownership data globally. We do not know who ultimately owns much of our land. There needs to be the establishment of a national Land Information Service to systematically collect and manage data on landownership and land use, with a clear goal of producing a Land Cadastre. This should be supported by a clear government target date for completion of the existing register and specific triggers to accelerate first registration of all other lands. If we do not know who ultimately owns land, nor who has options agreements or how that land is valued and used then we cannot address corruption or start to build the policies that will fully address pressing public priorities like house building and progressive taxation.

These are just five of the most pressing priorities for land reform in 2026 that the Scottish Government can move quickly and decisively to address with popular parliamentary and public support.

[To find out more about CLS's priorities for this parliament please refer to our 2026 manifesto.](#)

About Community Land Scotland

- Community Land Scotland was established to provide a collective voice for community landowners in Scotland.
- We have over 140 member organisations across Scotland, ranging from community landowners of major crofting estates in the Western Isles to inner city community hubs in diverse communities.
- We believe that we cannot create a more socially just Scotland without addressing the issue of concentrated landownership, with the growth of community landownership a key part of developing a more diverse landownership pattern
- We believe that communities should have the opportunity to lead development in their areas and an important way of achieving this is the democratic ownership of local land and assets.
- We are a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. We are members of the [International Land Coalition](#), which seeks to support community land rights and land reform movements around the world.

Contact: Dr Josh Doble josh.doble@communitylandscotland.org.uk Mobile: 07940 993 555